



European airports urge Schengen must remain intact & efficient

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ACI EUROPE

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Brussels, 1 March 2016: In recent months, the Schengen system has faced mounting challenges due to an unprecedented migration crisis and renewed terrorist threats. Today, the European airport industry weighs in on the debate.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCHENGEN IN AIR TRANSPORT

For Europe's airports, the removal of internal air border controls between the 26 Schengen States has played an essential role in the availability of efficient and affordable air services for European citizens. It has allowed intra-European air transport to become a commodity, as evidenced by the continued growth of air traffic. While just over 600 million passengers used Europe's airports in 1990, an estimated 1,95 billion did so last year – with over 60% (1,2 billion) of them using one of the 443 airports located within the Schengen area.

INTEGRITY & CONTINUITY OF SCHENGEN MUST BE ENSURED

With the achievements and ongoing benefits of that system in mind, ACI EUROPE today calls for the integrity and continuity of Schengen to be ensured. The European airport trade body supports the swift implementation of the Commission's agenda to reinforce Schengen's external borders to safeguard its internal area of free movement. ACI EUROPE also highlights the need for Schengen States to commit adequate resources for such task at their airports.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General, ACI EUROPE said *"Schengen is part of the fundamental fabric of European air travel. For more than 25 years, the distinction between Schengen and non-Schengen traffic flows has conditioned and shaped the development of terminal facilities at airports. A reinstatement of air border controls between Schengen States is not on the cards - and it should never be as the impact would be quite devastating. This would require a difficult restructuring of airport facilities, involving investments easily reaching hundreds of millions of euros for each of the largest Schengen airports. The immediate impact would be unprecedented levels of congestion and flight disruptions, with potential spillover effects across the entire European airport network. Hubs would no longer be able to guarantee their current minimum connecting times between flights – and the result would be longer travel times, reduced choice for consumers and degraded connectivity for Europe. The impact would not just be felt on aviation, but also on tourism and the wider economy."*

CALL FOR MORE BORDER CONTROL & POLICE RESOURCES

He added *"The Council of Ministers last week endorsed the Commission's Border Package which provides for systematic document and security check at airports of all persons - including citizens of Schengen States – against relevant databases, whenever they exit or enter the Schengen common area. This is an essential step to reinforcing Schengen's external borders and it should be implemented as soon as possible."*

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"But it requires the deployment of additional police and border control staff at airports – resources over which airports have no control, but with whom we work in constant partnership. With current border control staffing levels under stress at many airports, we are deeply concerned about whether more resources can be made available. Maintaining passenger service levels is already a challenge, and if we do not get adequate staffing, the situation will get worse. We hope Governments will fulfill their State responsibilities."

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*ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents close to **500 airports** in 45 European countries. In 2014, our member airports handled over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than **1.8 billion passengers, 18.4 million tonnes of freight** and **21.2 million aircraft movements**. These airports contribute to the employment of **12.3 million people**, generating **€675 billion each year (4.1%) of GDP** in Europe.*

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.