

**ACI EUROPE**

10 Rue Montoyer (Box 9)  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
[www.aci-europe.org](http://www.aci-europe.org)

# Airports welcome improvements to EU rules supporting connectivity

For immediate release

8 June 2017

- New proposed Regulation on fair competition will help resolve disputes & move forward
- Europe's airports fully support EC's ambitions for more Open Skies agreements
- Clarification provided on Public Service Obligation air services
- All new analysis on Airport Connectivity due out next week

**Brussels, 8 June 2017:** ACI EUROPE welcomed the package of measures adopted today by the European Commission to further support air connectivity and move forward with the EU Aviation Strategy – complementing its ambitious drive to open up access and investment opportunities for European aviation in external markets.

## ON FAIR COMPETITION

The key proposal in this package is a new regulation allowing the Commission to investigate unfair competitive practices in aviation from non-EU countries, with the possibility to adopt redressive measures. Europe's airports consider fair competition to be an essential feature of any well-functioning open aviation market. However, in recent years the concept of fair competition has been at the centre of claims targeting a number of Middle Eastern airlines in particular – without compelling legal evidence being provided so far.

**Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE** commented "*The new rules tabled today should provide an objective, transparent and robust process to investigate alleged distortions of competition in air transport. This will hopefully allow us to move on from mere allegations and somewhat sterile debates to established facts and legal action, where needed. But this regulation should only really be applied as a last resort – when all the other avenues of agreed dispute resolution have been exhausted.*"

He added "*Ultimately, this regulation must be about ensuring equality of opportunity in the Global aviation market – rather than equality of outcomes, which always ends up interfering with market forces, hindering connectivity and innovation. A crucial aspect of the new rules is the fact that they require an assessment of not just the interest of the complaining airline or State, but a wider assessment of all EU interests at stake. This means looking at the impact on consumers, but also on other industry stakeholders – including airports and their communities.*"

## MORE OPEN SKIES

In parallel, the Commission reiterated its call for EU States to allow the opening of new aviation negotiations to further open market access on a reciprocal basis with countries such as Mexico, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia – a call which was echoed by Europe's airports.

## MAINTAINING CONNECTIVITY TO REMOTE REGIONS

Today's Commission package also provides clarifications on the way EU States can implement Public Service Obligations on smaller air routes which are vital for regional development, but where insufficient demand or market failure do not ensure adequate services.

Given that many smaller regional airports and their communities have come to depend on Public Service Obligations for their connectivity, ACI EUROPE is reassured that the Commission recognises the continuous need for this system – which acts as an essential tool of economic and social cohesion.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Taking note of the Commission's intention to carry out a wider review of Public Service Obligation rules, ACI EUROPE stressed the need to keep flexibility and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches given the wide variety of local circumstances in Europe's more remote regions.

#### ALL NEW ANALYSIS ON AIR CONNECTIVITY

The provision and improvement of air connectivity is inherent to the business and social mandate of airports – and is a strategic priority for ACI EUROPE. Accordingly, a new *Airport Industry Connectivity Report* will be released by ACI EUROPE next week - on 13 June at its 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress in Paris. Contributing new data, hard facts and analysis to the EU Aviation Strategy, this report will look at the air connectivity developments over the past 10 years, with a focus on the impact of the different airline business models on air connectivity as well as of specific non-European airlines.

**## ENDS ##**

For more information, please contact:

Robert O'Meara, Director, Media & Communications, ACI EUROPE  
mobile: +32 (0)486 54 14 71 or tel: +32 (0)2 552 09 82.  
Email: [robert.omeara@aci-europe.org](mailto:robert.omeara@aci-europe.org)

*ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents more than 500 airports in 45 European countries. In 2016, our member airports handled over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than 2 billion passengers, over 19 million tonnes of freight and 22.8 million aircraft movements.*

**EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.**