



For immediate release

18 April 2010

Europe's airlines and airports call for immediate reassessment of flight restrictions

Brussels, 18 April 2010: For the fourth consecutive day, airlines and airports across Europe are facing the unprecedented closure of almost all the continent's air space, due to the threat of volcanic ash dispersion. The situation has resulted in the total standstill of intra-European mobility by air, coupled with a huge ripple effect on long-haul aviation to the US, Asia and elsewhere. With over 63,000 flights cancelled since Thursday, many millions of passengers affected so far and a devastating impact for the aviation industry, the consequences are now expanding to the wider economy given the reliance of businesses on aviation.

While Europe's airlines and airports consider safety to be an absolute priority, they are questioning the proportionality of the flight restrictions currently imposed. The eruption of the Icelandic volcano is not an unprecedented event and the procedures applied in other parts of the world for volcanic eruptions do not appear to require the kind of restrictions that are presently being imposed in Europe.

AEA and ACI EUROPE support the efforts initially deployed by the European Commission, EUROCONTROL, air navigation service providers (ANSPs) and national authorities to gain control of the threat posed to safety, but call for an immediate reassessment of the present restrictions at European level.

Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, Secretary General AEA said *"Verification flights undertaken by several of our airlines have revealed no irregularities at all; this confirms our requirement that other options should be deployed to determine genuine risk. For example, the FAA has a world-established process of identifying clear no-fly zones. Airlines must be able to fly where it is safe to fly and make decisions accordingly. It is what our passengers demand of us."*

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE commented *"With 313 airports paralysed at the moment, the impact is already worst than 9/11. More than 6.8 million passengers have been affected so far and European airports have lost close to €136 million. Many thousands of passengers are still stuck at airports because of this situation. While safety remains a non-negotiable priority, it is not incompatible with our legitimate request to reconsider the present restrictions."*

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Notes to the Editor:

ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents more than 400 airports in 46 European countries. Member airports handle 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming nearly one and half billion passengers each year.

The **Association of European Airlines (AEA)** brings together 36 European established service and scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 347 million passengers and 6 million tons of cargo each year, operating 2,160 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,400 flights a day. They provide around 385,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €70 billion.