ACI EUROPE reveals Best Airport Award winners for 2021

Institutional stakeholders voted on best airports in Europe, including airport leaders in sustainability, digitalisation and passenger experience

Geneva, 27 October 2020: ACI EUROPE announced the Best Airport Awards winners yesterday during the Conference Dinner of the 31st ACI EUROPE Annual Congress and General Assembly[1], taking place in Geneva, Switzerland, hosted by Génève Aéroport.

The Best Airport Awards recognise excellence and outstanding achievement across the entire portfolio of airport activities. This year's 17th edition of the celebrated accolades was held with a particular focus on the many ways in which airports are not only responding but innovating during the COVID-19 pandemic, while focusing on the airport industry's sustainability goals. Airports in this section are divided into five groups according to 2019 passenger traffic.

In order to recognise airports' efforts in key areas, the Awards portfolio also includes the Eco-Innovation Award, the Accessible Airport Award, the Digital Transformation Award, and the World Business Partner Award.

This year's judging panel comprised representatives from the European Commission, EUROCONTROL, SESAR Joint Undertaking, International Transport Forum and ECAC. Eco-Innovation Award submissions were held to scrutiny by the Advisory Board of *Airport Carbon Accreditation*, and the Accessible Airport winner was identified with the help of the European Disability Forum.

IN THE 'UNDER 5 MILLION PASSENGERS' CATEGORY

This year's Award in the 'under 5 million passenger' category went to Romania's **Cluj Avram Iancu International Airport** for its unswerving focus on safeguarding jobs throughout the COVID-19 crisis, with significant measures taken to repurpose the workforce to adapt to the pandemic conditions. The airport was also praised for its swift recovery of passenger traffic. The airport's efforts to bring in new airlines and new routes with its strong incentives programme have resulted in Cluj now boasting more routes than pre-pandemic.

Toulon-Hyères Airport was highly commended in this category.

IN THE '5-10 MILLION PASSENGERS' CATEGORY

The winner of the '5-10 million passenger' category was **Falcone Borsellino Palermo Airport**. The airport secured the Award for its strong sustainability credentials, with the achievement of Level 2 'Reduction' of *Airport Carbon Accreditation* this year, as well as the introduction of sustainability-oriented projects including an environmentally sustainable car park extension, a natural reserve project, a scheme to reuse wastewater, and electrifying GPUs and vehicles. The judges also highlighted the airport's excellent leadership during the pandemic. Palermo Airport provided free COVID testing facilities to employees and passengers and set up an open dialogue with and support for the airport stakeholders.

Milan Linate Airport was highly commended in this category.

'10-25 MILLION PASSENGERS' CATEGORY

This year's Award in the '10-25 million passenger' category went to **Vnukovo International Airport**. The airport was singled out for its array of initiatives and innovations, in particular its continued investments in digital and contactless technologies, including new security equipment. The judges also praised the airport for implementing many important safety measures to limit the spread of the virus, as well as for its active approach to employee engagement offering rewards for vaccination. A strong traffic recovery and route development in 2021 added to the winning credentials.

Porto Airport was highly commended in this category.

'25-40 MILLION PASSENGERS' CATEGORY

The winner of the '25-40 million passengers' category was **Athens International Airport**. The busiest airport in Greece won the judges over by producing a plan for recovery that focuses on improving customer and passenger experience through the implementation of the Greek concept of *philoxenia* or hospitality. The judges particularly liked the way Athens Airport embraces AI and virtual reality (such as measuring passengers' emotional engagement, offering a virtual assistant and a 3D virtual airport tour) in its bid to bring passenger experience to the next level.

The judging panel also highlighted the airport's continued carbon management prowess, with *Airport Carbon Accreditation* Level 3+ upheld in spite of the ongoing crisis. Furthermore, Athens Airport is not only committed to achieve Net Zero CO_2 emissions by 2025, but also to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the airport's efforts to increase the use of renewable energy at the airport was praised.

Lisbon Airport was highly commended in this category.

'OVER 40 MILLION PASSENGERS' CATEGORY

This year's Award in the 'over 40 million passenger' category went to **iGA Istanbul Grand Airport** in recognition of its leadership position among the continent's hubs. The judges described Istanbul as *"a state-of-the-art airport supporting efficient operations and offering top quality service to the passengers and airport stakeholders"*. Throughout the pandemic the airport made full use of the latest technology (contactless and biometrics, queue management, flow management, etc), to offer the best health safety to its passengers, and was the first airport in the world to secure the ACI Airport Health Accreditation. The airport was also praised for having a hand in Turkey's exceptional traffic development with the country's aviation sector proving the most resilient of all during the pandemic.

Barcelona and Madrid Airports were highly commended for this Award.

ECO-INNOVATION AWARD

The Eco-Innovation Award recognises airports' outstanding environmental initiatives and is presented in association with *Airport Carbon Accreditation*. This year, in the context of the COP26 kicking off in Glasgow a short week from now, the airports bidding to win were required to showcase their exceptional work in the area of addressing climate change.

This year's Eco-Innovation Award went to **Stockholm Arlanda Airport**, the busiest airport operated by Swedavia, world's first airport operator to achieve net zero CO_2 emissions. The judges praised Stockholm Arlanda for being "*a pioneer in the forefront of sustainable development, [who] is leading by example by becoming fossil-free in a short timeframe*". The airport pursues a "*systematic and consistent*" approach to reaching net zero CO_2 emissions, including a significant "*emphasis on employee and stakeholder involvement*".

Examples of the airport's initiatives include: procurement of 100% renewable electricity and district heating, replacing of regular diesel with 100% fossil-free diesel (HVO100), phasing out vehicles and equipment that can't run on fossil-free fuels or replacing them with electrical alternatives, and more efficient lighting (including LEDs, motion detectors, and automatic systems).

ACCESSIBLE AIRPORT AWARD

As part of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by ACI EUROPE and the European Disability Forum (EDF) in 2016, the Accessible Airport Award honours the best airport in Europe in terms of its level of accessibility as well as the range and the quality of the assistance services offered. It is also intended to encourage other airports to continue their work on removing the barriers that people with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (PRM) can still face when travelling by air.

The judging panel for the Accessible Airport Award comprised EDF Executive Committee Members and Mr Andras Mogyoro, Legal Officer at Social Affairs Unit, Passengers Rights & Equal Opportunities at DG MOVE, European Commission.

This year, Europe's most Accessible Airport is **iGA Istanbul Grand Airport**. The judges were impressed with the innovative solutions towards accessibility put in place by Istanbul Airport, such as the Accessible Route operating in conjunction with Loud Steps, which features a single-lane tactile paving surface helping passengers using mobility canes to reach their boarding gates in the Domestic Terminal. The judges also welcomed IGA's efforts to offer the possibility to communicate with airport assistance in sign language, as well as its use in providing information on health safety measures and other information on the airport website.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AWARD

ACI EUROPE has partnered with the SESAR Joint Undertaking to set up the Digital Transformation Award. This Award recognises a European airport that has embraced digitalisation, adopting innovative technologies and procedures to improve the safety, capacity, efficiency and environmental footprint of its airside operations.

This year's winner is **Aeroporti di Roma S.p.A**., the operator of Rome Fiumicino and Ciampino airports. The judges recognised that the focus on innovation and digital solutions has become an inextricable part of the Italian airport operator's DNA. In particular, the judging panel appreciated the airport's investment in the brand new Airport Operations Centre, opened earlier this year and deploying the most advanced technological fittings to improve and streamline airport operations. The airport also garnered acclaim for its plans to set up an Innovation Hub to nurture technological and processual breakthroughs directly at the airport, and for launching a Call for Ideas,

encouraging start-ups around the world to submit their projects for later deployment at the Roman hubs.

WORLD BUSINESS PARTNER AWARD

This award recognises an ACI EUROPE World Business Partner, either individual or company, who has made significant contributions to the airport industry. This work comes through active participation in committees, sharing of best practices and experience, research and special initiatives. After a review of the nominees, the winner is chosen by the ACI EUROPE Board of Directors.

This year's winner is **Tine Haas**, Principal at Dornier Consulting International. The winner has been an active member of ACI EUROPE since April 2018 and has made a valued contribution to the ACI EUROPE Commercial Forum, as well as the Technical and Operational Safety Committee. The Board is very happy to extend this award to such a long-standing and engaged WBP.

ENDS

Note to Editors:

Photographs of the winners can be downloaded here.

[1] Find out more about the event here: https://aci-europe-events.org/.

[2] The *ACI EUROPE Best Airport Awards* are entirely separate from the *ACI World ASQ Awards*, which are based on airports specifically participating in ACI's Airport Service Quality programme.

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ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International, the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 500 airports in 46 European countries. Its members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe: 2.5 billion passengers, 20.7 million tonnes of freight and 25.7 million aircraft movements in 2019. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

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