



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New study shows airports & air connectivity power 5% of European GDP — also supporting quality education, gender equality, R&D and well-being

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Joining up the newly released study into the socio-economic impact of airports and air connectivity with the Letta and Draghi reports, ACI EUROPE calls for aviation to be part of the forthcoming European Commission Clean Industrial Deal to enable its decarbonisation while safeguarding its far-reaching economic and social benefits.

Brussels, 17 October 2024: On the occasion of its 'Airport Economics Symposium' taking place today in Brussels and featuring addresses from Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute and former Prime Minister of Italy, Magda Kopczyńska, European Commission's DG MOVE Director General, and MEP Jens Gieseke, ACI EUROPE released a new study on "*The Economic and Social Impact of European Airports & Air Connectivity*"¹.

The study, conducted by SEO Amsterdam Economics, independently documents the contribution of the airport industry to the European economy. It also, for the first time, quantifies its positive relationship with a diverse range of societal benefits enshrined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

AIRPORTS AS UNIQUE ECONOMIC ENGINES & JOB MACHINES

The SEO Amsterdam Economics study reveals that:

- Europe's airports and the air connectivity they enable generate **14 million jobs and €851 billion in GDP (5% of entire European GDP) each year**².
- Every **10% increase in direct air connectivity** yields a **0.5% increase in GDP per capita** and **1.6% increase in jobs**.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE commented: "*The extensive analysis and data released today clearly show that what sets airports and the aviation ecosystem apart from most other sectors is their ability to facilitate and support wider economic activities. This results in increased trade and productivity, along with greater investments, tourism activity and increased employment rates overall. This specific ability clearly boosts overall national and European economic performance — and only means one thing: that airports and air connectivity are irreplaceable drivers of competitiveness for Europe*".

Delivering the keynote speech at the event, **Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute and former Prime Minister of Italy** said: *"Air connectivity is one of the fundamental pillars of European integration and cohesion, and indeed the future of our EU Single Market depends very much on the resilience and effective decarbonisation of our transport systems. By highlighting the far-reaching economic and social benefits linked to our European airport network, the study released today by ACI EUROPE confirms this — and also makes it crystal clear that we need to ensure both EU and national policies effectively support and enable aviation's green growth trajectory"*.

GOING BEYOND ECONOMIC IMPACT

For the first time, this study not only quantifies aviation's economic impact — but also the many ways in which air connectivity drives extensive social benefits. By measuring air connectivity's association with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals³, SEO Amsterdam Economics has produced quantifiable evidence that every **10% increase in direct air connectivity** is correlated with:

- a **14% drop in poverty rates**;
- a **9% boost in access to education**;
- an **8.5% increase in investment in Research & Development**;
- notable gains in **gender equality (+19%)** and **life satisfaction (+1.2%)**.

THE GREAT PARADOX & TIME FOR A NEW EU AVIATION DEAL

Joining the findings of the SEO Amsterdam Economics Study with the clear recommendations made by the Letta and Draghi reports, **Jankovec** said: *"Ultimately, the SEO Amsterdam Economics study quantifies the extent to which airports and air connectivity are essential to our European way of life and prosperity. As such, there should be no doubt about their position as key strategic assets for the EU — in regard to both its competitiveness and the need to leave no one behind in the green transition. But then, reality hits... and that reality can be best described as 'the great paradox'. Over the past years, aviation has been faced with largely unsupportive and disjointed policies at EU and national levels, in particular when it comes to decarbonisation — the mother of all our challenges — and infrastructure bottlenecks"*.

He added: *"That needs to change. The Letta and Draghi reports warn about the urgent need for the EU to address its structural lack of competitiveness so as to preserve its social model and deliver on its green ambitions. That requires ensuring the aviation sector gets the right policy and financial support to decarbonise in ways that allow to safeguard its extensive economic and social benefits. For that, we need a new Aviation Deal for Europe — and that must start with including aviation within the Clean Industrial Deal that President von der Leyen is set to table early next year"*.

¹ Download the synopsis of the key data, facts and analysis from the SEO Amsterdam Economics Study here: [ACI EUROPE Synopsis – Benefits of Airports and Air Connectivity](#)

² Total impact, comprised of direct, indirect, induced and catalytic impacts of Europe's airports and air connectivity.

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

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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 over 500 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Airports and air connectivity support 14 million jobs, generating €851 billion in European economic activity (5% of GDP). In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.