

Proposed aviation State aid guidelines will require significant revision

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Brussels, 11 May 2026: Reacting to the public consultation launched today on the future EU State aid regime for aviation, ACI EUROPE warned that the draft rules published by the European Commission raise a number of preliminary significant concerns that will need to be addressed. In particular:

- The European Commission acknowledges the financial challenges faced by airports with less than 1 million passengers per annum and considers that they should be eligible to receive operating aid. This aligns with evidence from the past 15 years supported by the Commission's own research that these airports cannot sustainably cover their operating costs.

However, the proposed 5-year limitation on operating aid, along with additional conditionalities for airports between 500,000 and 1 million passengers would significantly restrict access to vital support – and could ultimately undermine the objective of addressing a clear structural market failure.

- At the same time, possibilities for investment aid to airports are being curtailed – with the proposed rules limiting it to airports with no more than 3 million passengers per annum (down from the current 5 million threshold) and under extended conditionalities.

This, while Europe's airports are facing renewed investment needs under a structurally changed economic environment involving both downward revenue pressures and upward cost pressures – as evidenced by recent BCG research¹.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said: *"There are clearly worrying inconsistencies between ascertained economic and market realities – which the current oil crisis is just further exposing – stated policy objectives, and the proposed new State aid framework for airports. Addressing these shortcomings will be essential, as the final guidelines will largely determine the future connectivity of Europe's regions and smaller communities – and by extension their attractiveness, economic resilience and long-term development. We very much look forward to engaging with Commission Executive Vice President Ribera and her team on what is a crucial issue for competitiveness and cohesion."*

¹ [ACI EUROPE Synopsis: Decoupling Financial Viability from Volume Growth – Charting the Way Forward for Europe's Airports](#)

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