

ACI EUROPE

Boulevard du Régent,
37-40 (5th floor)

1000 Brussels,
Belgium

www.aci-europe.org

ACI EUROPE addresses key aviation challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo, 10 September 2026: ACI EUROPE yesterday called for decisive policy action to safeguard the continued and sustainable development of air connectivity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the country progresses towards deeper integration within the European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) and the wider Pan-European aviation market.

During his visit to Sarajevo, ACI EUROPE Director General Olivier Jankovec held meetings with representatives of different levels of government and institutions, including Edin Forto, Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Nasiha Pozder, Federal Minister of Environment and Tourism; Nerin Dizdar, Federal Minister of Displaced Persons and Refugees in his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Tomislav Stapić, deputy Federal Minister of Transport and Communications; Zlatko Mijatović, Minister of Economy of Sarajevo Canton; and Samir Avdić, Mayor of Sarajevo. Discussions also involved representatives of key institutions responsible for the development and regulation of civil aviation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Davorin Primorac from BHANSA and Slađana Grozdanić from BHDCA.

Across these meetings and discussions, Jankovec highlighted the remarkable performance of Sarajevo International Airport – the country's major gateway. Passenger traffic at the airport now stands 28.6% above its pre-pandemic (2019) level, while air connectivity has increased by an impressive 40% over the same period. **This has contributed to Bosnia and Herzegovina recording the third-best connectivity performance among non-EU+ countries.**

Jankovec stressed the significant economic and social benefits resulting from these developments. **Research shows that every 10% increase in air connectivity is associated with a 0.5% increase in GDP per capita and a 1.6% increase in employment.** Together, Sarajevo International Airport and the other airports in Bosnia and Herzegovina contribute around €300 million to the country's GDP.

Beyond these immediate economic benefits, **Jankovec** pointed to the strategic importance of aviation for Bosnia and Herzegovina's European future: *"Strengthening Sarajevo Airport's competitive position and enabling its continued development will be instrumental in bringing the country closer to the EU, facilitating the movement of people, trade and investment, and supporting its wider economic and social integration into the European Single Market."*

During the meetings, particular attention was given to the strategic importance of Sarajevo Airport for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the need for a more competitive and predictable regulatory environment, the reduction of regulatory and fiscal barriers affecting airport competitiveness, and stronger institutional coordination in support of the airport's long-term development.

Discussions also addressed the implementation of **One Stop Security** and the importance of progressing towards EU recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's aviation security system; the need to support the airport's future operational development and resilience, including the planned upgrading of its operational category; and the importance of involving the relevant state aviation institutions in the preparation and implementation of Sarajevo International Airport's new Master Plan.

At the federal and cantonal levels, discussions focused on ensuring institutional support for Sarajevo Airport's strategic infrastructure projects, including the relocation of fuel storage facilities, reconstruction and extension of the runway, additional terminal, hangar and parking capacity, improved landside traffic organisation and, importantly, the protection of land and development corridors necessary for the airport's long-term expansion.

Sustainability, decarbonisation and access to European financing instruments for renewable energy and energy-efficiency projects were also highlighted as integral elements of Sarajevo Airport's future development.

Dino Selimović, Acting Director of Sarajevo International Airport, welcomed the support of ACI EUROPE and emphasized the airport's strategic role in the country's future development: *"The support of ACI EUROPE and its Director General, Olivier Jankovec, confirms Sarajevo International Airport as one of the most successful growth stories among comparable European airports and a key driver of connectivity and economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We firmly believe that the airport's continued development is a direct investment in the country's future, strengthening its international competitiveness and sustainable economic growth."*

Against this backdrop, ACI EUROPE identified four priority actions needed to safeguard aviation's role as a critical engine of economic development, connectivity and European integration:

1. Abolish the tax levied on each departing passenger

ACI EUROPE reiterated its call for the abolition of the passenger tax, which directly undermines the competitiveness of the country's airports at a time when competition for airline capacity across Europe is intensifying.

Reducing the fiscal burden would strengthen the ability of Bosnia and Herzegovina's airports to attract new airline capacity, support the opening of new routes and generate wider economic benefits through tourism, investment and increased international connectivity.

2. Secure competitive traffic and connectivity incentives to attract and retain airline capacity

With airlines increasingly mobile in the deployment of their aircraft and tightly managing capacity, Sarajevo Airport needs

the ability to compete effectively for new routes and retain existing services in an ultra-competitive European market. Well-designed traffic and connectivity incentives are therefore essential to sustaining the country's air connectivity.

3. Support Sarajevo Airport's long-term development through its new 2028-2048 Master Plan

ACI EUROPE stressed the importance of enabling the airport to invest for future demand and protecting the spatial and infrastructure requirements necessary for its long-term development.

The airport's development priorities include the reconstruction and extension of the runway, additional terminal and supporting infrastructure capacity, relocation of fuel storage facilities, new hangar capacity, parking infrastructure and improved landside access and traffic organisation.

The long-term planning process must also safeguard the land and development corridors required for future expansion and ensure close coordination between Sarajevo Airport and the relevant state, federal, cantonal and local authorities.

Further progress on carbon management is also a prerequisite, building on the airport's current certification under *Airport Carbon Accreditation* and supporting further investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency and decarbonisation.

4. Accelerate the implementation of EU aviation legislation under the ECAA Agreement

Timely and effective implementation of the EU aviation regulatory acquis is essential to providing a stable, predictable and harmonised regulatory environment, supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's further integration into the Pan-European aviation market.

This should be accompanied by stronger institutional coordination and progress on initiatives such as **One Stop Security**, which would facilitate passenger flows, improve the transfer experience and further integrate Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European aviation system.

Jankovec concluded: *"Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved remarkable progress in air connectivity, and Sarajevo Airport has been at the heart of that success. The priority now must be to build on this momentum. Removing fiscal barriers, supporting connectivity, investing in capacity and completing regulatory integration with Europe will allow aviation to deliver even more for the country – economically, socially and strategically."*

The visit also provided an opportunity for engagement with the wider aviation community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At a social event gathering key representatives and leaders of the country's aviation

industry, Jankovec and the Sarajevo Airport delegation exchanged views with representatives of Mostar International Airport and Bihać Airport on the development of air connectivity, common challenges facing airports in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and opportunities for stronger cooperation across the sector.

The visit also marked a further strengthening of cooperation between ACI EUROPE and Sarajevo International Airport. As a reflection of Sarajevo's growing position within the European airport community, **Sarajevo will host ACI EUROPE's Aviation Security Committee in 2027**, bringing together representatives of airports and the wider European aviation industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The event will provide another opportunity to showcase Sarajevo International Airport's development, Sarajevo as a destination, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's growing role within the European aviation network.

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For more information, contact:

Agata Lyznik
Director of Communications, Media & Events
Tel: +32 2 552 09 89
Email: agata.lyznik@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 over 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 95% 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.