



Aviation challenge kicks off at Athens International Airport with SESAR JU

For immediate release

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Athens, 02 December 2019: A unique 3-day aviation challenge organised jointly by the SESAR Joint Undertaking (JU) and ACI EUROPE kicks off today at Athens International Airport, in the framework of the SESAR Innovation Days¹. Themed as *the Digital Sky Challenge*², the event brings the young tech community together with key European aviation organisations to stimulate and create innovative digital solutions for aviation.

Hosted by Athens International Airport in an airside facility, 52 young software programmers, data scientists and designers from 11 European countries are grouped into 12 teams. Working around the clock for 48 hours, they are competing for 3 different challenges (Passenger Experience, Environment and Safety) focused on streamlining the passenger journey, improving the environmental performance of Europe's airspace and enhancing safety. More specifically, they are seeking to improve the reliability and provision of flight information, analysing the impact of extreme weather events on aircraft CO₂ emissions & noise, as well as determining how air traffic patterns can influence safety.

With an extensive dataset at their disposal, the 12 teams are mentored by experts³ from supporting organisations including Airbus, Air France, Avinor, CANSO, EASA, EUROCONTROL, Frankfurt Airport, Frequentis, Groupe ADP, Honeywell, IATA, Lufthansa, MetSafe and SITA. Other partners are also involved⁴.

The best digital concepts/prototypes developed will be selected by a jury⁵ based on their level of innovation, business value, design and overall quality – with the winners announced at the an award ceremony that will take place on 4 December at the Stavros Niarchos Centre in Athens.

Florian Guillermet, Executive Director of SESAR JU concluded: *"Digital Sky Challenge reflects the spirit and values that drive the SESAR Joint Undertaking partnership. It shows that through co-creation and collaboration we can spark new ideas*

and accelerate innovation in aviation. I would like to thank co-organisers ACI EUROPE and Athens International Airport, as well as the aviation partners, teams and jury members for making this a reality."

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said: *"The fact that ACI EUROPE is co-organising the Digital Sky Challenge is in itself indicative of how innovation has become embedded in airports' corporate culture. This is about sustainability and competitiveness – and this means breaking operational silos, forging new partnerships and putting the passenger & the environment at the centre of all our processes."*

He added: *"This event marks another step in our close cooperation with the SESAR JU and I would like warmly thank all participating organisations and of course Athens International Airport for making this possible."*

Dr. Yiannis Paraschis, CEO of Athens International Airport said: *"At Athens International Airport we are very proud to be the first to host such an event at an airport site in Europe. A "Digital Sky Challenge" event where key aviation organisations are teaming up, demonstrating how our industry is at the forefront of innovation, creating safe and environmentally sustainable travel solutions to the ultimate benefit of our passengers. Together with our partners, ACI EUROPE and SESAR JU, we wholeheartedly support this unique initiative, which will deliver fresh and innovative propositions by some of Europe's brightest young minds! As we eagerly wait for this unique 48-hour digital sprint, we send a very warm welcome to all our guests and partners, programmers, scientists and their mentors, as they ready up to take off to Athens and reinvent aviation!"*

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Notes to Editors:

¹ Learn more about the SESAR Innovation Days [here](#).

² Find out more about the Digital Sky Challenge [here](#) & follow the event on Twitter on [@ACI EUROPE](#), [@SESAR JU](#) & [@ATH airport](#) or use the Twitter hashtag **#DigitalSkyChallenge**.

³ **Adam Taha**, Project Manager Group ATM Development SESAR (Lufthansa Group); **Antonio Fernández**, Data Scientist Innaxis Research Institute; **Benjamin Cramet**, Network Manager Lab Manager EUROCONTROL; **Darío Martínez**, Data Scientist Innaxis Research Institute; **Giuseppe Pillirone**, ATM Project Manager Air France; **Jarosław Niewiński**, Head of Innovations at PANSO (CANSO); **Karl-Heinz Keller**, Business Development Senior Manager - Airport Operations SITA; **Maria Mavrogeni**, Digital Marketing Specialist Athens International Airport; **Marouan Chida**, Head of Digital Transformation & Innovation SESAR JU; **Mary Rose Everan**, Lead Platform Solution Developer SITA; **Maxime Warnier**, Chief Technical Officer MetSafe; **Nektarios Psycharis** (PhD), Team Leader Business Analysis & Project Management - IT&T Business Unit Athens International Airport; **Robin Deransy**, Line Manager of the Environment Assessment and Modelling Team EUROCONTROL; **Stavros Stromatas** (Dr), Environmental Scientist EUROCONTROL; **Stylios Sochoritis**, Business and Passengers Marketing Coordinator Athens International Airport; **Samuel Cristobal**, Science & Technology Director Innaxis Research Institute.

⁴ BeMyApp, Founda.tion, Innaxis Research Institute, Météorage, Météo-France and OpenSky Network.

⁵ **Giancarlo Buono**, Regional Director Safety and Flight Operation for the European region IATA; **Léopold Viroles**, Data4Safety Lead Analyst EASA; **Maria Mavrogeni**, Digital Marketing Specialist Athens International Airport; **Miriam Le Fevre**, Programme Manager COOPANS/SESAR JU; **Nicolas Warinsko**, General Manager of SESAR Deployment Manager; **Philippe Merlo**, Director European Civil-Military Aviation EUROCONTROL.

About SESAR JU

As the technological pillar of the Single European Sky initiative, SESAR aims to modernise and harmonise air traffic management in Europe. The SESAR Joint Undertaking (SESAR JU) was established in 2007 as a public-private partnership to support this endeavour. It does so by pooling the knowledge and resources of the entire ATM community in order to define, research, develop and validate innovative technological and operational solutions. The SESAR JU is also responsible for the execution of the European ATM Master Plan which defines the EU priorities for R&D and implementation. Founded by the European Union and Eurocontrol, the SESAR JU has 19 members, who together with their partners and affiliate associations will represent over 100 companies working in Europe and beyond. The SESAR JU also works closely with staff associations, regulators, airport operators, airspace users and the scientific community.

Learn more about SESAR:

www.sesar.eu
www.sesarju.eu

About ACI EUROPE

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 46 European countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe: **2.3 billion passengers, 21.2 million tonnes of freight** and **25.7 million aircraft movements** in 2018. 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.

Learn more about ACI EUROPE:

www.aci-europe.org

About Athens International Airport

Since March 2001, Athens International Airport has welcomed more than 305 million passengers and over 3.5 million flights, creating significant benefits for tourism, the national economy, and Athens as a destination. In terms of traffic, 2018 was a historic best performance year for the airport, with 24.14 million passengers and growth continuing dynamically for a sixth consecutive year in 2019. Having earned multiple significant international distinctions and awards through its eighteen years of operations, AIA continues, during 2019, its investment programme of aesthetic, functional and operational enhancements at its premises. Today, with more than 300 companies and 13,000 employees, the Athens airport community constitutes one of the biggest employment engines in Greece.

Learn more about Athens International Airport:

www.aia.gr

For more information, please contact:

Triona Keaveney, Senior Communications & Media Relations Officer, SESAR JU

Email: triona.keaveney@sesarju.eu / press@sesarju.eu

Tel. +32 2 507 80 12

Inês Rebelo

Corporate Communications & Special Projects Manager, ACI EUROPE

Email: ines.rebelo@aci-europe.org

Tel. +32 2 552 09 73

Marina Papageorgiou, Head, Press Office, Athens International Airport

Email: papageorgioum@aia.gr

Tel. +30 210 35 36 360