



Europe's airports put the needs of passengers with non-visible disabilities centre stage with inaugural guidance

ACI EUROPE

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Brussels, 24 January 2024: ACI EUROPE, the trade association representing Europe's airports, today launched the first ever guidance globally for airports assisting passengers with non-visible disabilities.

The latest data from Eurostat estimates that 1 in 4 adults in the EU is living with some form of disability, and approximately 80% of these conditions are non-visible¹. Passengers with non-visible or less visible disabilities have historically been included within the broader category of passengers requiring airport assistance, and as such have been included in airport assistance services. The development of this dedicated guidance reflects the rapidly evolving context in which accessibility and inclusivity have gained a new momentum. This calls for the needs and expectations of passengers to be met with utmost consideration - including more awareness for the non-visible conditions. Airports are taking proactive steps to address these needs.

The guidance builds on a longstanding track record of European airports in caring for the most vulnerable passengers and visitors, and further expands the body of knowledge on passenger experience² generated by ACI EUROPE's dedicated expert network: the organisation's *Facilitation & Customer Services Committee*.

"Assisting Passengers with Non-Visible Disabilities" is a unique tool supporting airports in gaining deeper understanding of the potential range of non-visible disabilities and the associated barriers to travel. Furthermore, it helps navigate the processing of sensitive information from passengers regarding their needs and expectations in order to provide them with the best care throughout their journey. By becoming more disability-aware and adapting their services, airports can ensure that these passengers have the same rights to free movement, freedom of choice and non-discrimination, which are the guiding principles of the European Union law³.

Olivier Jankovec, ACI EUROPE Director General said: *"Travel is a fundamental right for all, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that airports across Europe remain accessible to everyone. This document serves as a guiding light for airport managing bodies and their stakeholders, offering practical guidance on how to assist passengers with non-visible disabilities in an empathetic and respectful manner. Together, we can make air travel more inclusive, ensuring that every passenger's journey is marked by dignity, respect, and equal access to the wonders of our world."*

ACI EUROPE has consistently championed the cause of accessible and inclusive travel, working in collaboration with various stakeholders, including the European Disability Forum (EDF)⁴, the umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities in Europe. ACI EUROPE's Memorandum of Understanding with EDF stipulates the organisation's commitment to these principles, notably through the establishment of the annual Accessible Airport Award, granted jointly with the Forum and recognising airports across Europe with the most advanced accessibility practices. Furthermore, the collaborative efforts with the European Institutions and their Member States underscore European airports' dedication to advancing the rights of all travellers, regardless of their abilities.

The just released guidance document includes an extensive pool of case studies from ACI EUROPE members and partner organisations, constituting a practical manual of ready-made solutions. The contributions were made by Aena, Athens International Airport, Dublin Airport, London Gatwick Airport, ENAC, and Manchester Airport.

"Assisting Passengers with Non-Visible Disabilities" is available for download at this [link](#).

¹ [Eurostat: Self -perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems](#)

² Publications: [ACI EUROPE Guidelines for Passenger Services at European Airports - 2nd EDITION](#) and [ACI EUROPE Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports](#)

³ [Regulation EC 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air](#)

⁴ [Memorandum of Understanding between ACI EUROPE and the European Disability Forum](#)

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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. Air transport supports 13.5 million jobs, generating €886 billion in European economic activity (4.4% 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.