



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Airports and airlines issue urgent call to end knee-jerk operating restrictions – urging Governments and the European Commission to enforce Noise Balanced Approach

Athens, 19 June 2025: European airports and airlines, represented by leading industry associations, Airports Council International (ACI EUROPE), Airlines for Europe (A4E) and European Regions Airline Association (ERA) have today launched the ***Athens Declaration & Call for Action*** to effectively enforce the Noise Balanced Approach as a mandatory process to address aircraft noise.

Launched on the occasion of the 35th ACI EUROPE Annual Congress & General Assembly in Athens, the Declaration urges immediate and decisive action to ensure full and consistent application of the Balanced Approach procedure when addressing noise issues at airports, as mandated by the globally recognised **ICAO Balanced Approach framework** and the **EU Regulation 598/2014**.

The Declaration follows a number of cases across Europe where national governments moved to impose operating restrictions at airports without adhering to the legal procedures and standards set out in these frameworks. These ad hoc decisions threaten the air connectivity that European citizens depend on, undermine the integrity of the Single EU Aviation Market — and ultimately jeopardise Europe’s global aviation competitiveness.

Accordingly, the Declaration calls on the European Commission, EU Member States, and governments across Europe to:

- Fully enforce EU Regulation 598/2014 at all stages of the Balanced Approach procedure.
- Issue clear guidance and monitor compliance to avoid fragmented and politically driven decisions.
- Prioritise evidence-based processes and adopt land-use planning that prevents residential encroachment into airport noise zones.
- Recognise that sustainability, noise management, and connectivity must be addressed together — not in isolation.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said: "Airports have been addressing aircraft noise proactively for decades, as part of their sustainability strategies. This includes encouraging the use of quieter aircraft through incentive schemes and performance-based navigation procedures while also funding extensive sound insulation programmes. But the fact that some Governments have started not to respect global standards and European law as regards noise management is an extremely serious concern — as it also appears to reflect an unjustified focus on aviation noise when compared to noise emissions coming from other transport modes. Ultimately, what is at stake is not just our sector, but Europe's competitiveness and global position."

Ourania Georgoutsakou, Managing Director, Airlines for Europe said: "The balanced approach ensures all possible measures to reduce airport noise are evaluated fairly and transparently. The increase in national and local authorities unilaterally reducing capacity at airports undermines this and is contrary to EU legislation. A4E will continue to advocate for noise mitigation efforts that are fair, effective and proportionate."

Montserrat Barriga, Director General, European Regions Airline Association said: "Regional airlines are lifelines for Europe's smaller communities, providing essential connectivity that drives local economies and social cohesion. These sudden and uncoordinated operating restrictions, imposed without proper adherence to the Balanced Approach, disproportionately harm regional carriers and the communities they serve. We call on European institutions and governments to uphold the legal processes already in place, and to ensure that noise management decisions are balanced, evidence-based and made with the full recognition of the critical role regional aviation plays in Europe's transport ecosystem."

Download the full **Athens Declaration** [here](#).

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ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International, the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Air transport supports 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. Based in Brussels, we lead and serve the European airport industry and maintain strong links with other ACI regions throughout the world.

Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association. Based in Brussels, A4E works with policymakers to ensure aviation policy continues to connect Europeans with the world in a safe, competitive and sustainable manner. With a modern fleet of over 3,700 aircraft, A4E airlines carried over 771 million passengers in 2024 and served nearly 2,800 destinations across Europe and the wider world. Each year, A4E members transport more than 54 million tonnes of vital goods and equipment either by freighters or passenger aircraft.

Founded in 1980, **European Regions Airline Association (ERA)** is a non-profit trade association representing 50+ airlines plus around 150 other companies involved in European air transport, and is the only association that bring together the entire spectrum of companies involved in European aviation. The association supports and defends the airline industry in providing safe, efficient and sustainable air connectivity to all regions of Europe. By lobbying European regulatory bodies on policy matters, ERA promotes and protects social responsibility, environmental sustainability and the development of regional economies and local communities.