24th Florence Air Forum

The Future EU Airport Package: Access, Resilience and Investment

27 November 2026

Sala Europa - Villa Schifanoia, Via Boccaccio 121 - Florence

Scientific organisers:

Steven Truxal | Transport Area of FSR, EUI; Director and Professor, Leiden University
Elodie Petrozziello | Research Associate of the Transport Area of FSR, EUI

Introduction

The EU airport framework is entering a new phase. Following the liberalisation of European air transport, EU rules on airport slots, ground handling and airport charges have played an important role in supporting market access, competition, non-discrimination and the efficient use of airport infrastructure. These instruments were designed at different moments and take different legal forms, but together they shape how airport capacity is allocated, delivered, priced and governed across the European aviation system. Slots determine who can access scarce airport capacity and when. Ground handling determines whether that capacity can be delivered reliably in practice. Airport charges determine how the infrastructure underpinning that capacity is priced, financed and supervised.

In the meantime, the aviation market has changed. European airports and airlines now operate in an environment marked by renewed traffic growth, capacity constraints, airline consolidation, pressure on regional connectivity, operational disruption, labour and service-quality challenges, decarbonisation requirements and intensified competition with major hubs outside the EU.

Building on the European Commission's fitness check of the airport *acquis*, covering the Slot Regulation, the Groundhandling Directive and the Airport Charges Directive, the 24th Florence Aviation Forum offers an opportunity to discuss how the framework can better support a competitive, resilient and investment-capable European airport system.

Moving beyond a 'siloed' discussion of three separate legal acts, the debate focuses on how the future airport package can create a coherent governance framework for scarce airport capacity. This means asking how access rights, operational performance, infrastructure funding, service quality, sustainability incentives and supervision interact in practice. It also means avoiding predictable institutional positions, for example, treating slots as an airline issue, charges as an airport issue, and ground handling as an operational 'extra', and instead examining how the three instruments together affect the functioning of the airport system.

Co-funded by the European Union

Against this backdrop, the Forum will structure discussion around three cross-cutting sessions and their underlying questions:

- ***Capacity as a system: allocation, delivery and accountability –*** *When airport capacity is scarce, how should the regulatory framework ensure that allocated capacity is not only protected by historic rights, but also used efficiently, delivered reliably and supported by adequate infrastructure? What obligations should be attached to scarce airport capacity – for airlines, airports, handlers and coordinators – in relation to transparency, timely slot returns, operational performance and disruption management? How can the framework better accommodate new entry, regional connectivity, innovation and sustainability without undermining the legal certainty needed by existing users and investors?*
- ***From liberalisation to resilience: competition, quality and service delivery:*** *Has the airport framework placed too much emphasis on market opening without sufficiently defining the conditions for resilient service delivery, including staffing, training, service quality, access to centralised infrastructure and crisis preparedness? How should competition between airlines, handlers and airports be reconciled with shared responsibility for passengers and operations? What information, performance indicators or supervisory tools are needed to identify whether problems arise from capacity allocation, ground handling failures, airport infrastructure, airline scheduling or public authority constraints?*
- ***Incentives and governance for the next airport system –*** *How can airport charges, slot rules and ground handling obligations be aligned so that they reward efficient use of capacity, timely investment, operational resilience and lower emissions rather than simply shifting costs between airports and airlines? What role should independent supervision, data sharing and transparency play in preventing airport market-power pricing and airline hoarding or inefficient use of scarce capacity? Would a more integrated airport package (potentially a single regulation with dedicated chapters) improve coherence across access, operations and investment, or would it risk reducing the flexibility needed for different airport models and national circumstances?*

At FSR, we actively work to achieve gender-balanced representation at all of our events. As a platform that connects diverse voices and perspectives in the sector, we firmly value inclusive and gender-balanced panel debates and training courses.

Draft Programme

27 November

9:00-9:30 **Setting the scene**

Steven Truxal | Transport Area FSR, EUI
Eddy Liegeois | DG MOVE, European Commission

9:30-11:00 SESSION A
Capacity as a system: allocation, delivery and accountability

Discussion Questions: *When airport capacity is scarce, how should the regulatory framework ensure that allocated capacity is not only protected by historic rights, but also used efficiently, delivered reliably and supported by adequate infrastructure? What obligations should be attached to scarce airport capacity – for airlines, airports, handlers and coordinators – in relation to transparency, timely slot returns, operational performance and disruption management? How can the framework better accommodate new entry, regional connectivity, innovation and sustainability without undermining the legal certainty needed by existing users and investors?*

René Maysokolua | European Airport Coordinators Association
Irene Gracia Lacarra | AENA
Christiaan Behrens | SEO Amsterdam Economics
Ramon Calot | European Regions Airline Association

Roundtable discussion

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30 – 13:00 SESSION B
From liberalisation to resilience: competition, quality and service delivery

Discussion Questions: *Has the airport framework placed too much emphasis on market opening without sufficiently defining the conditions for resilient service delivery, including staffing, training, service quality, access to centralised infrastructure and crisis preparedness? How should competition between airlines, handlers and airports be reconciled with shared responsibility for passengers and operations? What information, performance indicators or supervisory tools are needed to identify whether problems arise from capacity allocation, ground handling failures, airport infrastructure, airline scheduling or public authority constraints?*

Alex Weidmann | Swissport
Stefanie Erdemann | DHL
Sannie Bombeeck | Amsterdam Airport Schiphol
Dorottya Durucsko | Wizz Air

Roundtable discussion

13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch Break*

14:00 - 15:30 SESSION C
Incentives and governance for the next airport system

Discussion Questions: *How can airport charges, slot rules and ground handling obligations be*

aligned so that they reward efficient use of capacity, timely investment, operational resilience and lower emissions rather than simply shifting costs between airports and airlines? What role should independent supervision, data sharing and transparency play in preventing airport market-power pricing and airline hoarding or inefficient use of scarce capacity? Would a more integrated airport package (potentially a single regulation with dedicated chapters) improve coherence across access, operations and investment, or would it risk reducing the flexibility needed for different airport models and national circumstances?

Waleed Youssef | Airport Services Association
Robert Przybylski | Port Polska
Maria Borg | IAG
Lucas Montenegro | TIS

Roundtable discussion

15:30 - 15:50 **Synthesis and Concluding Remarks**

Juan Montero | European University Institute, Transport Area FSR
Steven Truxal | Transport Area FSR, EUI
Eddy Liegeois | DG MOVE, European Commission