



Press Release: Europe's aviation sector calls for EU to continue investment in the Digital European Sky



Brussels – 24 February 2026 – The three main associations representing European airlines, airports and air navigation services providers (ANSPs) call for ministers from EU Member States meeting today to support continued co-funding of SESAR – the Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research project.

With air traffic growing and European skies forecast to become more crowded, the development and deployment of new air traffic management (ATM) technologies is essential to create more airspace capacity. The full SESAR cycle, which goes from R&D to deployment, plays a crucial role in the digital and technological transformation of ATM systems, infrastructure and services, enhancing the competitiveness of the European aviation industry. **Deployment of SESAR solutions already delivered €7.5bn worth of cumulative benefits by 2025**, and the Draghi report 'The future of European competitiveness' estimates that this figure will reach **€34.2bn by 2035**. EU funding has acted as catalyst for private investments in ATM modernisation and remains essential for harmonised implementation. The dedicated industry support vehicle SDIP, acting as the SESAR Deployment Manager, has been instrumental in reaching these results.

Under the European Commission's proposals for the EU's multiannual framework (MFF) for the years 2028-2034, there would be increased financing for the

Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which, with the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), includes the deployment phase of SESAR projects. The three associations have therefore co-signed an open letter by 45 European transport organisations to call on the General Affairs Council and Finance Ministers to strengthen European funding for transport under CEF. Only with strong and state-of-the-art transport infrastructure will Europe be able to ramp up its resilience and military preparedness, reinforce its industrial competitiveness and safeguard its supply chain sovereignty.

Ourania Georgatsaku, Managing Director of Airlines for Europe (A4E): “Air traffic management demands are constantly evolving – and we need systems that can adapt and keep pace. Sustained funding for SESAR is essential as it contributes to securing a resilient, future-proof air traffic management system. This is no time to scale back commitment and take our foot off the pedal.”

ACI EUROPE Director General Olivier Jankovec said: “SESAR is an unequivocal success story of European public-private partnership, with clear benefits for all air transport stakeholders and the European communities they serve. Sustained investment in research, innovation and deployment is essential to strengthening Europe’s competitiveness. European airports are strongly committed to advancing the Digital European Sky, dedicating significant financial and human resources to its implementation. Continued EU support is critical to maintain momentum and ensure the full delivery of SESAR’s benefits.”

Enrico Parini, CANSO’s Director Europe Affairs, said: “SESAR is key for the competitiveness, strategic autonomy and sustainability of the European aviation industry. We have therefore joined this letter to ask EU governments to maintain sufficient funding for CEF so that deployment of SESAR projects can continue beyond 2027.”

The open letter to the EU Member States, with the full list of signatories, can be found here below:

[Download Open Letter - Transport Coalition](#)

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About CANSO

CANSO – the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation – is the global voice of airspace and is shaping our future skies. Its members support over 90 per cent of the world’s air traffic and include air navigation service providers, airspace users and operators, manufacturers, and aviation industry suppliers. CANSO raises the bar on global ATM performance by connecting the industry to share knowledge, expertise and innovation.

About A4E

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 4 million tonnes of vital goods and equipment either by freighters or passenger aircraft.

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 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 95 per cent of commercial air traffic in Europe. Airports and air connectivity support 14 million jobs, generating €851 billion in European economic activity (5 per cent 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.



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