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## ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

### ECONOMIC COMMISSION

#### Agenda Item 36: Economics of Airports and Air Navigation Services — Policy

#### MONITORING AND MEASURING AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY

(Presented by the Airports Council International)

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reports on the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Service Quality (ASQ), a leading airport passenger service and benchmarking programme. Service quality is an indicator of value creation and has become an important factor of competitive advantage in the airport business. ASQ administers passenger surveys at the same time as the respondent is living the experience and uses a proactive quality system that detects anomalies in data collection. ASQ offers benchmarking capabilities to an airport as a way of discovering what is the best performance being achieved in comparison to other airports and industry averages, allowing airports to identify gaps in an airport process to align them with passenger expectations and to enhance the overall customer experience. The ACI ASQ programme relies on a robust methodology and internationally comparable tools for monitoring airport service quality.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective — <i>Economic Development of Air Transport</i> .
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<i>Financial implications:</i>	
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<i>References:</i>	<i>ACI World, ACI Policy Handbook-10th Edition</i>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Working Paper 92 under Agenda Item 32, *Economic Development of Air Transport*, presented at the 40th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2019 focused on the application of the ICAO high-level, non-binding, non-prescriptive core principles on consumer protection and the evolution of the passenger experience when using air transport. The Assembly took note of pro-active industry-led initiatives in the field. Notably, ACI's Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme was recognized as a means to monitor and oversee service quality provided by airport operators to their customers (para 32.26 of Doc 10139 refers). The Assembly was invited to take further actions to facilitate an exchange of views and good practices regarding the application of the ICAO core principles on consumer protection and of a monitoring system.

1.2 In the last decade, with the increasing competitive environment, airports worldwide have come a long way since the years of providing only airport infrastructure and services to complex and diversified businesses. Airports transformed into entities catering equally to users, namely airlines and concessionaires, and end-users, namely passengers and freight forwarders.

1.3 The rapid changes in the airport business model, from an industry that was entirely owned and operated by the government towards corporatized and in many instances privatized firms, resulted in re-architecting of the passenger experience, requiring greater managerial efforts, significant investment in infrastructure and services, and a deeper understanding of passengers in terms of demographics, behaviours, attitudes, and needs. As such, airports became increasingly consumer-focused, with significant attention directed towards passenger satisfaction and passenger experience.

1.4 The question of passenger service quality and passenger experience at airports was taken beyond the traditional aspects of efficiency and facilitation and extended towards creating an environment conducive to sustainable growth, vibrant competition, and diversified revenue generation. Rather than formal and prescriptive regulation, competition, the key driver of the global aviation ecosystem, became the driving force for the continuous improvements in customer satisfaction and customer experience at airports.

1.5 Building on the Assembly's recognition of ACI's ASQ programme, ACI would like to demonstrate the relevance of the ASQ programme and its contribution to safeguarding passenger rights.

## 2. MONITORING SERVICE QUALITY AND PASSENGER SATISFACTION AT AIRPORTS

2.1 Service quality is an indicator of value creation and has become an important factor of competitive advantage in the airport business. In an increasingly competitive market, ACI considers that the quality of the service provided to the passengers should not be intrusively regulated by aviation oversight authorities with penalty systems but rather a recommended tool that is carefully monitored. According to ACI Policy Handbook<sup>1</sup>, ACI's ASQ initiative is fit for the oversight of service quality provided to passengers and consumers as it allows to closely monitor service quality levels at airports.

2.2 ASQ is a leading airport passenger service and benchmarking programme. Since 2006, ASQ has measured passengers' satisfaction while travelling through airports. The ASQ programme provides the research tools and management information to better understand passengers' views and

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<sup>1</sup> ACI World (2020). ACI Policy Handbook-10<sup>th</sup> Edition, retrieved from: <https://store.aci.aero/product/aci-policy-handbook-10th-edition-2020/>

expectations with respect to airports' products and services. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, an ongoing understanding of passenger expectations on a periodic basis over time has also been fundamental in supporting airport processes and decision making.

2.3 To complement the current ASQ Programmes that are assessing airport service quality, ACI has developed the ACI Airport Customer Experience Accreditation, a multilevel certification designed to appraise the level of maturity of an airport regarding its customer experience and service quality management processes. While the ASQ Programmes evaluate the outcome of customer experience and service quality management, the Customer Accreditation rates the relevant inputs.

### **3. METHODOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

3.1 ASQ administers the surveys at the same time as the respondent is living the experience. This “day of service” survey is the only way to have a true assessment of the quality of one’s experience moving through all the touch points of their journey. Without the day of service research, biases are likely to influence scores in numerous ways. Completing web-based questionnaires hours, days or weeks after the experience means guests may not be evaluating a specific experience at the airport, but rather several experiences based on numerous visits failing to account for any changes in airport services, facilities, or infrastructure over time.

3.2 Moreover, when questionnaires are completed using a customer panel, there is no certainty about the person completing the questionnaire; is it really a recent flight passenger? Lastly, a methodical stratified random selection model is the only way to ensure there is no bias among the respondents and to avoid over-reliance on weighting. For ASQ surveys (ASQ Departures, ASQ Commercial & ASQ Arrivals), passengers are randomly selected at the boarding or arrival gates of pre-selected flights. Flights are selected based on destination or origination, and carrier, to obtain a representative sample of all departures or arrivals. The survey covers all operating hours, each day of a week, and every month of a quarter. This methodology assures that resulting samples are representative of the true distribution of traffic, allowing the extrapolation of results to all passengers. Departures, Commercial and Arrivals surveys are based on the same robust and scientific methodology to allow comparisons between some of the key measures and obtain a full view of the journey.

3.3 ASQ uses a proactive quality system that detects anomalies in data collection. The system uses multi-level evaluations, either remote or on-site, in line with ISO 19011: Guidelines for auditing management systems.

### **4. BENCHMARKING AIRPORT SERVICE QUALITY**

4.1 Benchmarking is a way of discovering what is the best performance being achieved in comparison to other airports and industry averages. This information can then be used to identify gaps in an airport processes to align them with passenger expectations and to enhance the overall customer experience. Airport benchmarking is used to measure performance using either a specific indicator (ASQ score—overall satisfaction) or a set of several indicators, applying a consistent methodology to compare identical Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

4.2 Caution should always be taken in benchmarking an airport against others. It is crucial to set up standards of comparison based on similar profiles of airports and markets served in full consideration of the micro and macro factors that may render comparability limitations for different indicators. It is also

mandatory that the fieldwork has been conducted under the same conditions. Airport members part of the ASQ programme receive in-depth training and the quality system in place ensure comparability and integrity of results overtime.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Considering the omnipresent competitive forces in the industry, airport service quality and its continued monitoring and measurement continues to grow in importance. The ACI ASQ programme provides a robust methodology and internationally comparable tool for monitoring airport service quality and allowing airport operators to benchmark themselves. Member States, which monitor service quality are encouraged to do so on the basis of fair, reasonable criteria which support the airport's business model and operating environment.

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