BOARD OF AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES IN BELGIUM

Border control: Importance of well-prepared EES implementation strategy

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Managing border flows is already a considerable operational challenge, particularly during busy travel times. With upcoming changes such as the Entry/Exit System (EES), it is critical that the overall pressure on control points is not increased. We advocate for a sustainable, well-coordinated approach to safeguard both efficiency and security.

Given that the applicable regulations allow countries to apply EES in multiple phases, we encourage Belgium to adopt a gradual introduction in four clear stages. Special attention should be paid to avoid launching new procedures during peak congestion periods (such as early mornings), when resources are already under strain. Any implementation should take into account real staffing capacity and the anticipated volume of passengers.

Close follow-up and cross-sector collaboration will be key to success. During the initial rollout — particularly in the first three months — we recommend weekly progress reviews with participation from all affected sectors, including the airline community. Each new phase should only be introduced once previous challenges have been identified and resolved.

In cases where unexpected delays cause wait times at the border to exceed 30 minutes, the activation of EES-related checks should be temporarily suspended, as foreseen in EU provisions. A rapid decision-making mechanism is needed to assess such situations in real time and communicate clearly with all parties involved.

We would also like to stress the importance of the following preparatory actions:

- **Border control staff must be comprehensively trained and prepared** before any new system becomes operational.
- All physical **infrastructure** — including e-gates, kiosks, and redesigned flows — **must be fully functional** and tested well in advance.
- Live operational **testing** should be carried out, ideally **during off-peak periods**, to validate both performance and passenger experience.
- **Extra personnel** should be made available on-site to guide travellers through any new procedures or self-service technologies.
- Belgium should take part in the EU-wide **pre-registration app** initiative to help smooth the process for passengers.
- The pre-registration **app must be stable and accessible from the start**, particularly given its importance during the early phases.
- A detailed **national timeline for EES deployment** should be **shared with stakeholders** and regularly updated as implementation progresses.
- All relevant **communication** — including technical details, timeframes and procedural changes — should be provided to carriers **well in advance**.
- **For operational crew**, existing travel documents such as passports, **crew IDs or general declarations** must continue to be **accepted** to avoid unnecessary complications at the border.

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