ACI EUROPE, the Association of European Airlines (AEA) and the European Regions Airline Association have registered their joint concern over capacity warnings.

This follows yesterday’s release of EUROCONTROL’s latest edition of its Challenges of Growth report, which details constraints it has found in the European air transport system between now and 2035.

ACI EUROPE says: “The new report provides an unequivocal warning that despite slower air traffic growth in the next 20 years, Europe still faces a significant airport capacity crunch, which will damage the continent’s aviation system and connectivity.

“As a result of insufficient airport capacity, 12% of demand for air transport will not be accommodated by 2035 – or 1.9 million flights per year not taking place with 237 million passengers unable to fly.

AIRPORTS UNDER SEVERE PRESSURE

“The main cause for this capacity crunch lies in the fact that airports have been forced to sharply reduce
Partners call for action over capacity

their capacity expansion plans. Revenue pressures, high capital costs, a lack of political support, poor planning processes and decreasing confidence are all colluding to constrain airport development throughout Europe.”

ACI EUROPE and its airline association colleagues points out that back in 2008, airport capacity expansion plans provided for a 40% increase in capacity by 2030 throughout the European network. But it points out that these new plans have seen that provision severely cut, with capacity now expected to increase by just 17% by 2035.

ACI adds: “While this airport capacity crunch will be more acute in Turkey, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Poland and Italy, it will have severe repercussions throughout Europe. In particular, delays and congestion will be skyrocketing throughout the airport network, with average delay per flight rising from current levels of 1 min/flight to 5-6 min/flight.

CAPACITY CRUNCH WILL COST €40BN A YEAR...

“Crucially, all hypothetical mitigation measures such as the deployment of larger aircraft by airlines, new technology and processes under SESAR and the use of uncongested airports will not be sufficient to remedy the situation. There is no escaping the fact that airport ground capacity needs to keep up with airspace capacity expansion, as planned under the Single European Sky.

“The airport capacity crunch is set to cost airlines and airports in excess of €40 billion of lost revenues and €5 billion in congestion costs – per year – by 2035. However, the wider economic impact estimated will be far more dramatic. By 2035, insufficient airport capacity will cost Europe €230 billion in lost GDP.”

Responding to the report’s findings, air transport partners from Europe’s network carriers, regional airlines and airports of all sizes are now urging EU institutions, national governments and regional communities to take a much deeper interest in the issue of airport capacity.