



# Managing Scarce Airport Capacity: Airport Slots & Worldwide Slot Guidelines (WSG)

## The Issue

At an increasing number of airports worldwide, infrastructure development has failed to keep up with growth. Such airports are unable to supply the runway, terminal and other infrastructure capacity that the industry needs to grow, as well as the airspace to support the operation. Without a process that carefully manages the available capacity, gridlock could result.

To avoid this situation, the industry<sup>1</sup> has developed a set of global guidelines for the management and allocation of airport slots to ensure the most efficient use is made of congested airport infrastructure. A slot represents the approval that an airline needs to access the full range of airport infrastructure necessary for an aircraft to arrive at or depart from an airport on a specific date and time.

Today there are more than 200 fully slot-coordinated airports around the world. It is critical that these established guidelines continue to be implemented correctly at such airports and that regulators do not deviate from them by developing local rules that can have huge unintended and negative consequences for airlines, their customers and the environment.

## IATA's Position

The airport slot process is the backbone to the industry, with nearly half of all passengers (43%) now travelling through a slot coordinated airport, it is ever more important that the process to acquire, retain and optimize slots remains consistent globally through adherence to the Worldwide Slot Guidelines (WSG).

The WSG provides the global air transport industry with a single set of guidelines for airport slot management and allocation. Thanks to continual update and revision, these guidelines represent globally accepted best practice for governments and airport regulators that need to optimize scarce airport capacity. They ensure that slots at capacity-constrained airports around the world are allocated to airlines using consistent policies, principles and processes. Flights operate between two airports; it's vital the two ends work consistently and in harmony.

The WSG is a robust and proven process, applied by airlines, airports and governments. However, it must be applied consistently and in entirety for the benefits to be fully realized at congested airports. It is built on four cornerstones:

### **1. Certainty of access**

Airlines are investing over US\$1.3 trillion in new cleaner and quieter aircraft. Given such huge capital investments, it is important that airlines are certain that when these aircraft are delivered, they will be able to operate them on routes between origin and destination airports as planned. Likewise, new-entrant airlines need to have certainty that they can systematically build a commercial flight schedule that reflects customer demand. The WSG facilitates this certainty.

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<sup>1</sup> The industry – Governments, airlines and airport

## **2. Flexibility to mix and match slots to meet operational challenges and changing market needs**

The WSG gives airlines the flexibility in their discussions with airport coordinators to adjust schedules to react to operational disruptions and match their schedules to demand throughout the year.

## **3. Sustainability of costs**

The cost of facilitating the coordination process must be sustainable and not make the operation financially unviable. The cost must only cover charges for the slot coordination process and not include discriminatory charges such as for the initial or primary allocation of slots.

## **4. Transparency of allocation**

Slots must be allocated to airlines and other aircraft operators in a neutral, transparent and non-discriminatory way. The WSG state that those responsible for the coordination of slots should be functionally and financially independent of any single interested party.

The decision to implement slot management at a given airport should only be determined by the responsible regulatory authority following a thorough demand and capacity analysis and consultation with airlines and other stakeholders. Such analysis should be undertaken regularly and proficiently to underpin the declaration of available capacity for slot allocation each season. The WSG cannot deliver more capacity, only make best use of what's declared to be allocated.

Finally, slot allocation must be viewed as a solution to the fundamental problem of a lack of capacity until the longer-term solution of expanding airport capacity is implemented.

For more information on the WSG and slots, visit <http://www.iata.org/slots>