



## Eco-Innovation Award 2026

### Airport sustainability in action: environmental excellence and achievement

#### INTRODUCTION

The ACI EUROPE Eco-Innovation Award recognises a European airport for its outstanding environmental excellence and achievements. This distinction, presented in partnership with *Airport Carbon Accreditation*, honours an airport that has demonstrated exemplary environmental performance and an innovative approach to environmental management. The winner is selected by the independent Advisory Board of the *Airport Carbon Accreditation* programme.

In partnership with:



Airports are required to provide details of an innovative project by selecting one of the following five disciplines:

- **Climate Change**
- **Noise Management**
- **Biodiversity and Wildlife Management**
- **Air Quality**
- **Circular Economy**

The project must have been implemented during the past 5 years (i.e. 2020 - 2025)

View previous years' winners of the ACI EUROPE Best Airport Awards: 2025, 2024, 2023.

#### ELIGIBILITY

- All regular members of ACI EUROPE in good standing are eligible and encouraged to apply
- To compete for this award, entrants must be accredited at any level of the *Airport Carbon Accreditation* programme.
- Submissions are free of charge
- Both individual airport operators and multi-airport operators can apply



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### SUBMISSIONS

The submissions will follow a structured "question and answer" format. This approach is designed to make applications easier to prepare while allowing the independent judging panel to compare entries consistently. Entrants must submit their applications through the online platform by answering 10 structured questions within a designated word limit. Supporting documents may also be uploaded for consideration by the judges.

In partnership with:



**YOUR ENTRY SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY CLOSE OF BUSINESS (18:00 CET)  
ON 20 MARCH 2026.**

The winners in each category will be announced at the ACI EUROPE Annual Congress & General Assembly in Prague, Czech Republic on 23 June 2026.

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#### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

##### ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTIVENESS

**Question 1 – What is the qualitative environmental impact and quantitative measurable outcomes of your project (e.g., increased awareness, improved practices, percentage reduction in CO2 emissions, or increase in recycling rates)? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Describe both the qualitative impact and quantitative outcomes of your project by citing key metrics (e.g. CO2 or recycling improvements) and explaining the main behavioural or operational changes they drove.

##### INNOVATION

**Question 2 – What are the qualitative environmental impacts (e.g., increased awareness, improved practices) and quantitative measurable outcomes (e.g., percentage reduction in CO2 emissions, increase in recycling rates) of your project? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Present concise metrics (e.g., "25% CO2 reduction, 40% recycling increase") backed by data sources, then describe qualitative shifts (e.g., "boosted staff awareness driving voluntary practices"), linking both to broader benefits with evidence like surveys.

**Question 3 – Aside from your project's main discipline, what environmental benefits does it provide in other areas (e.g., waste management, water conservation, noise reduction, air quality, or biodiversity)? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Highlight any secondary environmental benefits of your project by briefly stating the impact with supporting metrics or evidence, such as "reduced water use by 15% via efficient landscaping, enhancing biodiversity."



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#### APPLICATION QUESTIONS

##### SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Question 4 – How does your project contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Briefly explain which specific UN Sustainable Development Goals your project supports, describe how its activities contribute to these goals in practice, and mention any evidence or indicators that illustrate this contribution.

##### TRANSFERABILITY

**Question 5 – Can your project be replicated at other airports or industries? If so, how? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: State whether your project is replicable at other airports or industries, and if so, outline the key steps, resources, or adaptations required for successful implementation elsewhere.

##### RECOGNITION

**Question 6 – What level of recognition or appreciation has your project received within your airport, the local community, nationally, or internationally? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Specify any recognition your project has received including details like awards, media coverage, testimonials, or endorsements to demonstrate its impact and acceptance.

##### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

**Question 7 – How were your airport's employees or departments involved in designing and implementing the project? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Describe the involvement of your airport's employees or departments highlighting specific roles, contributions, and collaboration levels (e.g., "Cross-departmental teams from operations and sustainability co-designed the initiative, with 50 staff trained for rollout").



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##### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**Question 8 – What role did external stakeholders play in the design and implementation of your project? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Describe the role of external stakeholders in designing and implementing your project, specifying their contributions, such as expertise, funding, partnerships, or feedback (e.g., "Local NGOs provided biodiversity input during design, while suppliers delivered key materials for rollout").

##### DURABILITY

**Question 9 – What is the expected duration of your project's environmental and sustainability effects? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Specify the expected duration of your project's environmental and sustainability effects, indicating whether they are short-term (e.g., 1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), or long-term (beyond 5 years), and explain the factors ensuring their longevity (e.g., "Ongoing through embedded practices, projected to last 10+ years").

##### VOLUNTARINESS

**Question 10 – Was your project developed voluntarily, or was it driven by regulatory requirements? (300 words)**

Guidance for applicants: Indicate whether your project was developed voluntarily as a proactive sustainability initiative or driven by regulatory requirements, and briefly explain the context or motivations behind it (e.g., "Voluntarily initiated to exceed EU emissions standards, fostering innovation beyond compliance").



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#### EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation area	Criteria	Weight	Score range
<b>Environmental effectiveness</b>	Environmental effect of the project in qualitative (e.g. increased awareness) and/or quantitative terms (e.g. % of CO2 reduction, % recycling).	15%	1-4 Minor qualitative or quantitative effects: 1 Major qualitative effects: 2 Major quantitative effects: 3 Major qualitative and quantitative effects: 4
<b>Innovation</b>	Explicit explanation of and degree to which the project introduces an innovative/unique approach to the airport or the airport industry.	15%	1-4 Project is business as usual: 1 Project includes some minor innovative/unique aspects for the airport: 2 Project includes some significant innovative/unique aspects for the airport: 3 Project is innovative/unique in its totality and sets new benchmarks for the airport industry: 4
<b>Environmental co-benefits</b>	Level of environmental co-benefits in the disciplines not selected as the project's main discipline (e.g. a climate project should identify potential co-benefits regarding waste, water/wastewater, noise, local air quality, or biodiversity/wildlife management).	10%	1-4 First, from the following six disciplines (climate change, waste management, water/wastewater management, noise, local air quality, biodiversity/wildlife management), exclude the discipline under which the project is applying. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If the project leads to environmental co-benefits in up to one out of the five remaining disciplines: 1</li> <li>○ If the project leads to environmental co-benefits in up to two out of the five remaining disciplines: 2</li> <li>○ If the project leads to environmental co-benefits in up to three out of the five remaining disciplines: 3</li> <li>○ If the project leads to environmental co-benefits in four or all five of the five remaining disciplines: 4</li> </ul>
<b>Social Sustainability</b>	Level at which the project contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals ( <a href="http://www.un.org/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-goals">http://www.un.org/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-goals</a> ).	10%	1-4 Project contributes to up to 3 SDGs: 1 Project contributes to 4-5 SDGs: 2 Project contributes to 6-7 SDGs: 3 Project contributes to more than 7 SDGs: 4
<b>Transferability</b>	Replication potential of the project to other airports or industries in the same or other countries.	10%	1-4 Project cannot be emulated: 1; The project can be emulated in airports in the same country: 2 The project can be emulated in airports across the world: 3 The project can be emulated in airports and other industries across the world: 4



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Evaluation area	Criteria	Weight	Score range
<b>Recognition</b>	Level of recognition or appreciation of the project within the specific airport boundaries, the local community, nationally or internationally.	10%	<p>1-4</p> <p>There are four stakeholder groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Airport stakeholders (e.g., companies operating within the airport, airport agencies, passengers, employees);</li> <li>B. Local stakeholders (e.g., local press, municipalities, local non governmental organisations, local action groups);</li> <li>C. National stakeholders (e.g., national press, ministries, national agencies, national non governmental organisations, national action groups);</li> <li>D. International stakeholders (e.g., international press, international institutions, international non-governmental organisations).</li> </ul> <p>The project is recognised/appreciated by one of the above stakeholder groups: 1  The project is recognised/appreciated by any two of the above stakeholder groups: 2  The project is recognised/appreciated by any three of the above stakeholder groups: 3  The project is recognised/appreciated by all of the above stakeholder groups: 4</p>
<b>Employee engagement</b>	Degree of involvement of airport departments/ employees in the project design and implementation.	10%	<p>1-4</p> <p>Employee involvement only by the airport department that is launching the project: 1  Employee involvement by two to three airport departments: 2  Employee involvement by four or more airport departments: 3</p> <p>Note: If for any of the previous three cases there is active engagement in the decision-making, announcement, activity participation, etc. of higher management (e.g., CEO, Board of Directors, Chief Executives) add 1 point.</p> <p>For example if a project is based on employee involvement by two to three airport departments and active engagement of higher management the grade should be 2+1=3.</p>



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Evaluation area	Criteria	Weight	Score range
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	Degree of involvement of key external stakeholders in the project design and implementation.	10%	1-4 Stakeholders are classified in four groups (adjusted from ICAO Circular 351): A. Communities (e.g., local community, broader community, action groups); B. Aviation (e.g., ANSPs, aircraft operators, manufacturers, companies operating at the airport); C. Government (e.g., regulators, agencies); D. Passengers. No key stakeholder engagement: 1 Key stakeholder engagement with any one of the groups above: 2 Key stakeholder engagement with any two of the groups above: 3 Key stakeholder engagement with any three or more of the groups above: 4
<b>Durability</b>	Duration of the project's environmental and sustainability effects.	5%	1-4 There is a one time effect: 1 The effects will last for up to five years: 2 The effects will last between five to ten years: 3 The effects will last for more than ten years: 4
<b>Voluntariness</b>	Degree to which the project is developed as result of voluntary action (as opposed to regulatory requirement).	5%	1-4 The project is based on some form of requirement (e.g., international standard, national legislation, local government rule, etc.): 1 The project is based on some form of requirement (e.g., international standard, national legislation, local government rule, etc.) but also incorporates some minor voluntary components: 2 The project is based on some form of requirement (e.g., international standard, national legislation, local government rule, etc.) but also incorporates some major voluntary components: 3 The project is developed on a purely voluntary basis: 4
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		100%	10-40



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### EVALUATION GUIDANCE

- **Focus on Innovation:** The degree of innovation shown is highly valued.
- **Data-Driven Results:** Submissions must be supported by strong quantitative data to demonstrate measurable progress and outcomes.
- **Systemic Approach:** Entries that demonstrate a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental management, covering a wide range of topics and involving various stakeholders, will score highly.
- **Scalability:** Clear articulation of the project's transferability to other airports is a key factor in assessing its overall value to the industry.