PRESS RELEASE
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ACI World names the world's most innovative airports of 2026



AI-managed baggage, smarter pushback monitoring, multi-drone operations, and an open-air departure garden show how innovation is delivering for passengers.

Barcelona, Spain, 24 November 2026 – Airports Council International (ACI) World today announced the winners of the 2026 Airport Innovation Awards in partnership with ADB SAFEGATE. Four airports and one industry leader were recognised for ideas that are not prototypes or pilots, but already in service and delivering results for passengers and staff.

Now in their sixth edition, the awards recognise projects implemented between January 2025 and May 2026, judged on proven results. This year's winners were announced at Airports Innovate, the leading global event on airport innovation.

The 2026 winners

- **Best innovation in airport passenger-related processes:**
  *AI-managed inbound baggage handling at **Shanghai Pudong International Airport, China**.*
- **Best innovation in airport operations and installations management:**
  *Docking guidance integrated with electronic flight strips to monitor departures and aircraft pushbacks at **Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport, China**.*
- **Best innovation: Airport on the rise (5 million passengers or fewer annually):**
  Joint winners, after equal scores from the jury:
  - *Multi-drone operations at **Huesca-Pirineos Airport (Aena), Spain**.*

- *Open-air departure garden at **Burgas Airport, Bulgaria**.*

- **Best airport innovation leader (individual):**
  ***Sangyong Lee**, Vice President, New Business Division, Incheon International Airport Corporation, Republic of Korea.*

Learn more

Justin Erbacci, Director General of ACI World, said: "Congratulations to all the winners of the 2026 ACI World Airport Innovation Awards. Our industry does not lack ideas. What it needs are ideas that make it beyond the pilot and into everyday operations, and every one of this year's winners has done exactly that. With traffic set to double by 2047, we will not meet the future with concrete and steel alone. We will meet it with ideas like these."

Regardt Willer, CMO and VP of Business Development at ADB SAFEGATE, said: "Innovation is not measured by how advanced a technology is, but by the difference it makes. This year's winners are proving that new thinking can solve real operational challenges, improve the passenger experience, and make better use of existing infrastructure. These are the advances that will define the next generation of airports. ADB SAFEGATE is proud to partner with ACI World in celebrating the people who are making that progress possible."

How the winners were chosen
Entry was open to all ACI airport members. An independent panel of industry experts, none currently employed by an airport or industry supplier, scored each entry against category criteria.

The call for entries for the next edition will be announced in early 2027.

About ACI
Airports Council International (ACI), the trade association of the world's airports, is a federated organisation comprising ACI World, ACI Africa, ACI Asia-Pacific and Middle East, ACI EUROPE, ACI Latin America and the Caribbean and ACI North America. In representing the best interests of airports during key phases of policy development, ACI makes a significant contribution toward ensuring a global air transport system that is safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally sustainable. As of January 2026, ACI serves 811 members, operating over 2,200 airports in more than 160 countries worldwide.

About ADB SAFEGATE
ADB SAFEGATE provides integrated solutions to airports, airlines, and ANSPs. We are proud to be leading the way with innovative and smart Airside 4.0® solutions that turn airports into smart airports, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the passenger experience. Our solutions include airfield lighting, power and control systems, weather monitoring, ATC tower software, docking and apron management, and aftermarket services. With over 1,700 employees and over 3,000 airports in over 175 countries, from the busiest and largest to the fastest-growing

airports, ADB SAFEGATE is dedicated to making airside operations safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly.

About the ACI World Airport Innovation Awards

The ACI World Airport Innovation Awards, in partnership with ADB SAFEGATE, recognise projects and leadership that improve the passenger experience, raise operational efficiency, and optimise airport processes for passengers, employees, and aviation stakeholders – celebrating the increasingly vital role innovation plays in advancing the global airport community.

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