

Civil Aviation

Overview

Growth in the Bulgarian civil aviation market is influenced by the ICAO, IATA, IASA, EASA, Eurocontrol, ECAC, Open Sky, Common European Sky and Functional Airspace Block agreements and requirements for sustainable development, quality improvements, safety and security upgrades and compliance to international standards.

Bulgaria has five international airports, Aviation Administration (CAA), Air Traffic Services Authority (ATSA), 20 major licensed air operators and services companies licensed to provide ground-handling activities.

Airports with international status are: Sofia, Varna, Bourgas, Plovdiv and Gorna Oryahovitza. Overall tendency is to prepare all of them for privatization by means of concessions. Bourgas and Varna have undergone this process and are now under concession by Fraport Twin Star Airport Management.

Since the end of May 2012, Sofia Airport EAD is certified according to ISO requirements receiving both ISO 9001:2008 (Quality management) and ISO 14001:2004 (Environmental management) certificates.

Future infrastructure plans of Sofia Airport include the construction of new taxiways, aiming at aircraft movement optimization and reducing taxiing time after landing and before take-off, the extension of apron area, the delivery and installation of two additional passenger boarding bridges, some interior re-organization, such as Terminal 2 passenger gallery extension and building new bus exits, increasing the space for commercial purposes.

There are two active domestic airports - Primorsko (at the Black sea coast) and Lesnovo (close to Sofia). They are owned by the private company "Albena" JSC and are managed by its subsidiary company Intersky JSC. Both airports offer charter flights mainly during the tourist season.

At the end of 2012, Air Traffic Services Authority (ATSA) commissioned the new air traffic control tower and are looking at upgrading its navigation equipment in view of the new Functional Airspace Block Agreement (FAB) development plans.

The Bulgarian aviation market is supplied almost entirely by imports.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

Projections include completion of the construction of brand new passenger terminals at both Varna and Bourgas airports to accommodate 2.7 million passengers at Bourgas and another 1.8 million at Varna airport; rehabilitation of the Varna airport runway; completion of the adjacent taxiways, construction of new ATC and new cargo building, extension of the water supply and treatment system.

In 2011 Plovdiv airport has undergone upgrade and modernization and reached passenger capacity of approximately 100,000 passengers. Projections are this number to increase, due to the airport policy to attract low cost carriers and serve as "optional receiving airport" to Sofia airport in cases of bad weather.

The overall number of passengers at airport Sofia in 2012 was approximately 3.2 million.

The overall cargo traffic amounted to 6,306 tons and 1,624 tons of mail.

At present Sofia airport has spare capacity in terms of existing terminal buildings and runway, but as demand grows there will be a need to increase that capacity. Terminal (passenger and cargo) capacity is likely to run out before the runway capacity.

Last quarter of 2012, Sofia airport announced a \$3.5 million tender for upgrade of its checked and carry-on baggage scanners and another one is expected to be initiated for the old terminal, which is home to the low-cost air carriers.

Gorna Oryahovitza airport is expecting its concessionaire, while Rousse airport might be transferred for further decision on its ownership status to the regional government. One seasonal airport, located at the Black Sea coast-Balchik, has been linked to Sofia for a joint concession contract.

Intersky recently announced its plans to invest approximately \$1.7 to 2 million in each of its two domestic airports Lesnovo (close to Sofia) and Primorsko (at the Black sea coast) in terms of extension of the existing runway at airport Primorsko to allow for larger aircrafts of 5.7 tones to land. Airport Lesnovo is trying to find a reasonable solution to the adjacent urban infrastructure before continuing with its extension design plans and upgrade.

As a rule BulATSA is upgrading its ATC equipment on a regular basis, depending on the depreciation timing of the operational equipment and recently in view of the progress of the FAB multi-country development plan.

Opportunities

Demand is estimated to be highest for airport baggage handling screening equipment, ground handling equipment and services, air traffic control equipment and related services, for services related to concessioning of airport activities, to cargo handling outsourcing and management, runway systems improvement, and safety and security equipment.

Web Resources

Ministry of Transport and Communications --www.mtc.government.bg

Civil Aviation Administration – www.caa.bg

Airport Sofia – www.sofia-airport.bg;

Bulgarian Aviation directory – www.aviation.bg

Air Traffic Services Authority (BulATSA) – www.atsa.bg