

## Analysis of the Transport Performances of Airport Košice

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### Abstract

Airports can be in general considered as institutions, which have significant social and economic importance, not only for the city in which they are located, but also for surrounding regions. Airport Košice is in economic terms a source of income and has also an indirect impact on creation of working positions. The airport also plays an important role in the development of active foreign tourism which generates new sources of revenue in many sectors of tourism. Article discusses the factors that have caused a reduction in the number of passengers, especially due to the departure of low cost company SkyEurope Airlines, a. s. and also in the same period due to the impact of the global financial and economic recession, which was reflected in operating and economic results of Airport Košice.

**Keywords:** Košice; Airport; Passengers; Air transport; Lines; Crisis; Low cost companies

### Introduction

Airport Košice is the second largest airport with scheduled air transportation in Slovakia and also the largest airport in the catchment area of Eastern Slovakia. It is located 6 km south of the centre of Košice in town district Košice - Barca with the accessibility by car and public transportation. Due to the status of international airport it also carries the name of Kosice International Airport and since 2008 it is a part of the Schengen area. Airport Košice was built on the premises behind the town district Barca back in 1950. The airport operator is currently a trading company Letisko Košice - Airport Košice, a. s. established in 2004, while its 100-percent owner was Slovak Republic represented by the Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications.

Based on the successfully completed privatization of the company, KSC HOLDING, a. s. became in 2006 its 66-percent owner - A consortium of foreign shareholders - Flughafen Wien with a share of 80.95% and Raiffeisen Zentralbank AG with a share of 19.05%. A minor proportion of the remaining 34% remained in the ownership of the Slovak Republic. Use of the Airport Košice is currently focused on the national civil transport, international passenger and freight transport and for training of students of military aviation university. In addition to regular and charter flights there are also represented commercial flights in general aviation, mainly due to major foreign companies and their branches in the catchment area of the airport.

Airport Košice has two tripping areas. Apron APN 1 is intended for furnishing regular and charter lines. Apron APN 2 is intended mainly for general aviation. On both tripping areas it is available 12 aircraft stands. The surface is made only of asphalt. For the handling of passengers it is designed terminal T2 which is connected with the terminal T1.

Together they represent a one floor, air-conditioned, disabled accessible hall with a two floor central part. The total area of the terminal is 4 456 square meters of which more than 3 500 square meters is for the traveling public. Part of the terminal it is connection to the existing solution for road transport [1].

### Analysis of operating mode of Airport Košice

Since privatization of Airport Košice in 2006 it has undergone over the past five years turbulent times, particularly in view of the development in passenger numbers between years that had the greatest impact on the actual operation of the airport. The

first years of the review period, 2006-2008, was characterized by a significant increase in the number of passengers, where the previous year increased from 2006 by almost 29% in 2007. A year later, between 2007 and 2008, the increase amounted to 33% to a record 590,919 passengers for the year approximating the anticipated maximum capacity of transported 700 000 passengers per year. The year 2008 can be considered as one of the best years ever for Airport Košice. On scheduled flights the services of Airport Košice benefited more than 483,743 passengers. The driving force behind was global growth in international traffic, while in the Airport Košice this was reflected by a significant increase in traffic on the routes between Košice and Prague, London, Košice, Dublin and Manchester. Of the overall 590,919 it was transported by international flights 395,582 and national 195,337 passengers. The end of the year 2008 was already marked by the global financial and economic crisis [1].

At the end of the year the largest carrier SkyEurope Airlines ended its flights to Dublin and Prague in October 2008 and subsequently reduced schedule of flights to and from Bratislava (Table 1).

The year 2009 experienced on the contrary a record number of reducing the number of transported passengers. The value of the number of passengers fell through and get to the level of the year 2006 and decreased by approximately 40% from 2008 to 2009. An extraordinary decline in that period is mainly due to the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, which has particularly undermined the development of European and national economies and had an extremely negative impact on the entire aviation industry.

The other major factor was the collapse of the low cost Slovak company SkyEurope Airlines whose air transport performances accounted for the largest share of total transported passengers of Airport Košice at around 70%. The airport management considered

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Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Total</b>	343 818	443 448	590 919	352 460	267 060	265 726	235 827	236 839	336 799

**Table 1:** Number of transported passengers - year / thousand - Airport Košice.

the development of the global situation in the field of transport and by the second half of 2008 they take austerity measures. In relation to aviation activities Airport Košice operator introduced the incentive scheme for current and potential air carriers focusing on motivation in expanding the existing frequencies and opening new destinations. It exists today in the form of reduction of 25% of airport and landing fees for the extension of the existing frequency and 50% reduction of airport and landing fees at the opening of the new destination. Despite the unfavourable world economic situation and after the collapse of SkyEurope Airlines some airlines strengthened the occupancy rate of its flights through the Airport Košice. More passengers were transported for example on a scheduled flight to Prague by Czech Airlines and since the spring of 2009 the company Danube Wings has strengthened the operation of the line Košice - Bratislava. The connection to Vienna by Austrian Airlines has also maintained its strategic character, because like in the case of Prague, it is an important transfer connection to all other global destinations [1].

The year 2010 recorded the passenger numbers fall by a further 24%, while the number of passengers reached 267,060, which is comparable to the traffic volume in 2005 at 269,885 passengers per year.

Of the total number transported passengers from 17 to 23% were passengers on non-scheduled, charter flights. This ratio has dramatically changed in 2010, when charter flights of Airport Košice benefited from a total of 267,060 passengers almost 35%. Almost twofold increase of passengers to Turkey had the greatest share on mentioned increase.

The most common destinations for charter flights mainly include coastal countries that are overwhelmingly the target destination for passengers from Slovakia within the passive foreign tourism: Turkey (around 27% of all departures in 2010), Egypt (20%), Greece (18.9%), Tunisia (13.7%) and Bulgaria (12.5%). Other target countries include Israel, Spain and Croatia [1].

### Status of the Airport Košice in Slovakia

Given the distance and the size of the airport it can be said that the position of Airport Košice in Slovakia is very significant. In terms of the capacity number of landing and departing aircraft and the number of passengers handled at the level of 700 thousand per year, it is also the second largest airport in Slovakia, allowing the landing of a wide range of aircraft, available for many airlines both in passenger and freight traffic (Table 2). Statistics on the number of transported passengers in comparison with the relevant nearby airports confirms the important position of Airport Košice on the map of Eastern Slovakia. Despite the very significant drop of passengers between the years 2008 and 2010 due to economic deterioration, the real transport performances are still at the level of at least 38% of the total capacity of the airport each year.

Changes in the number of transported passengers recorded Airport Košice in 2014 when the city of Kosice has become in 2013 the European Capital of Culture.

During this year variety of cultural events and festivities with pan-European significance took place in the city. It was an opportunity for the city to attract visitors and also investors. This had a positive impact not only on the increase in the number of visitors in the town itself, but also in the use of air transport. Comparing the figures of 2012 and

2013, when the number of transported passengers amounted to nearly 240,000, the year 2014 brought a considerable increase up to about 100,000 transported passengers. It must be noted, however, that despite the fact that the number has increased, it has still not climb to number 500,000 as it was in 2008 [1] (Table 3).

In the context of existing competitive airports in the neighbouring regions Airport Košice is the largest and best equipped airport within 200 km. The closest major competitor for the northern areas is the Polish Airports Rzeszow. However, in the south at a distance of about 260 km there is located by the standards of Eastern European region unmatched Airport Budapest.

On the basis of the gathered information it can be considered the infrastructure as well as access of airport as very good. Significant strengths of Airport Košice are in its modern infrastructure and the security level associated with a gateway to the Schengen area. The part of this area is another highly positive aspect which is attributable to the Airport Košice.

Since the privatization of Airport Kosice it has undergone successive development activities that step by step even today develop technical infrastructure of the airport and increase passenger comfort. Always new development investments in a variety of cost and scale belong among the regularly scheduled activities of the airport operator.

The intentions of the airport are within the area of infrastructure development in line with the expectations of key actors, who in their development documents support improving of the attractiveness and accessibility of Airport Košice - intentions to build an integrated public and regional transport including the link to the airport. The city of Košice, governing Region and Košice airport operator have a common denominator especially in the area of infrastructure development and increasing transport accessibility of Airport Košice [1].

### Importance of Airport Košice in tourism

It can be said that the airport infrastructure, also with a view to sufficient spare maximum capacities is evaluated at more than a good level. Likewise, from the perspective of the needs of tourism the relevant actors of the region agree on the importance of opening air links to new destinations [2]. These would on one side ensure increase of profitability, higher turnover and the potential for further infrastructure development for Airport Košice. On the other side, they would get closer the potential tourists to the region of Košice by easily accessible air connection [3].

In this area low cost airlines are primarily of great importance to tourism, which have the potential to attract a critical mass of tourists in case of sufficiently attractive location and especially the fast and affordable form of transportation. Low cost companies had a significant

	Airport of M. R. Štefánik in Bratislava	Airport Košice	Airport Poprad
<b>2006</b>	1 937 642	343 818	41 501
<b>2007</b>	2 024 142	443 448	60 176
<b>2008</b>	2 218 545	590 919	58 154
<b>2009</b>	1 710 018	352 460	51 658
<b>2010</b>	1 665 704	267 060	27 693
<b>2011</b>	1 580 642	265 726	24 755
<b>2012</b>	1 362 739	235 827	30 873
<b>2013</b>	1 344 332	236 839	24 815
<b>2014</b>	1 372 824	336 799	31 694

**Table 2:** Number of transported passengers at the most important airports in Slovakia. Source: Own processing, 2015.

	Airport Budapešť	Airport Kraków-Balice	Airport of M. R. Štefánik	Airport Rzeszow - Jasionka	Airport Košice
2006	8 266 677	2 367 257	1 937 642	NA	343 818
2007	8 597 137	3 068 199	2 024 142	279 996	443 448
2008	8 443 053	2 923 961	2 218 545	323 838	590 919
2009	8 095 367	2 680 322	1 710 018	383 184	352 460
2010	8 190 089	2 863 996	1 665 704	454 203	267 060
2011	3 014 060	3 014 060	1 580 642	491 325	265 726
2012	3 439 758	3 439 758	1 362 739	564 992	235 827
2013	3 647 616	3 647 616	1 344 332	589 920	236 839
2014	3 817 792	3 817 792	1 372 824	601 070	336 799

**Table 3:** Comparison of the number of passengers of selected airports in nearby regions.

Source: Own processing, 2015.

contribution to the increased inflow of tourists in the period from 2002 to 2007 in Bratislava. With the arrival of the now bankrupt airline SkyEurope Airlines the city Bratislava highlighted itself on a map of Europe. Subsequently, due to its greater attractiveness and available price many tourists showed interest, which has reflected for example by increasing of the number of overnight stays in the region of Bratislava from 1.2 million to 1.7 million per year.

Among the various incentive schemes from the European experience it can be selected a few examples of the development of air transport and transport links that lead to an increase in arrival tourism. In the past the most common forms were direct financial support for low cost companies. They reported on the one hand significantly increased interest of passengers on given destinations, but also a negative effect on the destination and drop of tourists on the other hand, in case of cancellation of direct financial support from the state, regional governments or local authorities [4].

Currently, many airports also focus on identifying new routes and opportunities that are presented to airlines with important information. Such activities should be included:

- Analysis of the catchment area of Airport Košice,
- Market analysis and potential demand for the destination,
- Development of the number of passengers,
- Preparation of a joint presentation of the airport, city and region [2].

The individual strategic steps for the visibility of the airport is therefore to be incorporated into a global report on the state of tourism, on the service provided as well as certainty should be a cooperation among all stakeholders working in this field [5-7].

## Conclusion

Airport Košice has an important position in Slovakia thanks to the fact that it is the second largest airport in the country. This strategic position of the airport creates all the preconditions to become an international transport hub, either for business or for tourism. The airport underwent many difficult period since its creation. From 2006 to 2008 the airport has performed spectacularly, which is of course reflected in the number of transported passengers. Whilst at the end of the year 2008 there was a significant decline. It was caused by the global financial and economic crisis but the most significant was the collapse of low cost company SkyEurope Airlines. For the Airport Košice it meant a significant reduction in the number of passengers. Despite introducing various measures that should reconcile this unfavourable situation the airport is recovering slowly from this event because even the year 2014 did not exceed the number of passengers transported over half million passengers. With their introduction, however, it was prevented an even greater downturn that could otherwise occur and it was created a space for innovation and growth in the number of transported passengers and at the same time the economy of Airport Košice.

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