Airline bankruptcies & risk aversion limit traffic growth in September

For immediate release
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Brussels, 15 November 2019: European airport trade body, ACI EUROPE today released its latest air traffic report for September & Q3 2019, measuring all of commercial aviation flights: full service, regionals, low cost and charter.

On average, the growth in passenger traffic across the European airports stood at +2.2% in September – down from +3.4% in August. The growth in Q3 stood at +2.6% - down from +4.3% in H1. Meanwhile, freight traffic kept declining for the 11th consecutive month at -2.8% (-3% for Q3) and aircraft movements barely increased at +0.8% (+1.1% in Q3).

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE commented: “The passenger traffic growth dynamic keeps softening, and there is no recovery in sight for a depressed freight traffic. While these figures account for worsening macro-economic & trading conditions, they also reflect the fact that 4 European airlines went bust in September. More generally, Europe’s airports see airlines limiting capacity & network development and focusing on protecting their yields. That trend is getting more acute as we have entered the Winter season - with the grounding of 737MAX as well as ATM limitations clearly not helping.”

WEakest EU MARKET IN 6 YEARS

The impact of the bankruptcies of Aigle Azur, XL Airways, Thomas Cook and Adria Airways was mostly felt in the EU market, where passenger traffic grew by +2% - the weakest monthly performance in 6 years. The airports most affected by these airline market exits included Ljubljana (-9.6%), Paris-Orly (-9.4%), Fuerteventura (-9.2%), Glasgow (-7.7%), Las Palmas (-6.1%), Corfu (-4%), Newcastle (-3.7%), Kos (-3.3%), Tenerife South (-3.1%) and Heraklion (-2.7%).

Amongst EU national markets, Latvia (+11.4%) was the only one achieving double-digit growth, while Estonia & Luxembourg (+9.6%), Austria (+9%), Hungary (+8.6%), Poland & Malta (+7.6%), Finland (+6.4%) and Portugal (+6.2%) still significantly outperformed the EU average. At the other end of the spectrum, Slovenia (-9.6%), Bulgaria (-7.9%), Sweden (-2.1%), Slovakia (-1.1%), the UK (-0.7%), Germany (-0.4%) all posted passenger traffic losses - while Greece (+0.3%), Denmark (+0.5%) and Cyprus (+0.6%) barely grew.

Amongst capital & larger EU airports, the best performances came from Milan-Malpensa (+33.5% - partly due to the closure of Milan-Linate for runway refurbishments), London-City (+11.9%), Riga (+11.4%), London-Luton (+10.7%), Vienna (+10.4%), Budapest (+8.6%), Lisbon (+7.3%), Madrid (+7.1%), Prague (+6.7%) and Helsinki (+6.6%).

NON-EU MARKET BETTER

Airports in the non-EU market saw passenger traffic expanding by +3%, in September - driven by Ukraine (+28.8%), Armenia (+18.7%), North Macedonia (+16.5%), Albania & Serbia (+13.7%).

Iceland (-34.2%) continued to be severely affected by the bankruptcy of WOW and other airlines’ capacity adjustments, with the latter also impacting Georgia (-9.9%). Meanwhile, Russia slightly outperformed the non-EU average (+3.4%) – and gains were rather limited in Switzerland (+0.6%), Turkey (+1.8%) and Norway (+2.3%).
Amongst non-EU capital & larger airports, the highest increases in passenger traffic came from Kyiv-Boryspil (+27.6%), Yerevan (+18.7%), Tirana (+13.7%), Belgrade & Skopje (+11.9%) and Minsk (+11.2%).

MAJORS & SMALLER REGIONAL AIRPORTS UNDERPERFORMING

The growth in passenger traffic at the Majors (top 5 European airports) remained weak in September at +1.2% (compared with +1.3% in August). Paris-CDG achieved the best performance (+4.8%), even becoming the busiest European airport during the month with more than 6.81 million passengers. Istanbul (+1.8%), Amsterdam-Schiphol (+1.4%) and Frankfurt (+1.3%) grew at a much lower pace, while London-Heathrow (-3%) was affected by industrial action at British Airways.

Smaller regional airports (less than 5 million passengers/annum) significantly underperformed at -0.7% - reflecting once again the fragility of their markets when trading conditions deteriorate.

Apart notable exceptions including Kharkiv (+66.3%), Targu Mures (+65%), Turku (+46.8%), Friedrichshafen (+43.7%), Kutaisi (+34.7%), Mostar (+25.3%) and Zadar (+25.2%), the best performance amongst regional airports came from larger ones (more than 5 million passengers/annum) such as Krakow (+31.7%), Bologna (+24.6%), Sevilla (+19.6%), Nantes (+13.2%), Bordeaux (+11.6%), Bilbao (+11.4%) and Porto (+10.6%).

FREIGHT DOWNTURN - EU FOCUSED

As in the preceding months, the downturn in freight traffic in September is entirely concentrated on the EU market (-4.4%) with non-EU airports making significant gains (+4.8%).

During Q3, airports welcoming more than 25 million passengers per year (Group 1), airports welcoming between 10 and 25 million passengers (Group 2), airports welcoming between 5 and 10 million passengers (Group 3) and airports welcoming less than 5 million passengers per year (Group 4) reported an average adjustment +2.4%, +4.1%, +2.2% and +0.7%.

The airports that reported the highest increases in passenger traffic during Q3 are as follows:

**GROUP 1:** Vienna (+13.2%), Antalya (+12.5%), Moscow SVO (+9.4%), Lisbon (+7.7%) and Madrid (+7.3%).

**GROUP 2:** Milan MXP (+26.2%), Kyiv KBP (+25.8%), Porto (+11.3%), Moscow-Vnukovo (+8.9%) and London-Luton (+8.4%).

**GROUP 3:** Krakow (+29.8%), Sevilla (+20.2%), Nantes (+16.8%), Bologna and Bordeaux (+13.1%) and Riga (+12.6%).

**GROUP 4:** Targu Mures (+113.5%), Ohrid (+53.8%), Turku (+52.9%), Kharkiv (+42.1%) and Nis (+39.9%).

## ENDS ##

Notes to Editors

Want more access to the latest airport traffic data? ACI EUROPE has developed a dedicated App providing just that. The App gives you all the usual key figures, but also enabling you to make customised comparison tables & graphs that can be downloaded and shared via email or social media. The App is available for iOS, Android and as a WebApp. To find out more, go to www.aci-europe.org/trafficapp
The ACI EUROPE Airport Traffic Report is a dedicated service for journalists available in the password protected 'Airport Traffic Report' section of the 'Media room' on our website www.aci-europe.org. Accredited members of the media may also access additional traffic analysis and comprehensive traffic databases. For your password to access these sections, please contact us by e-mail at: biljana.banjac@aci-europe.org. Your request will be validated and the password will be e-mailed to your work address.

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ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 500 airports in 45 European countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe: 2.3 billion passengers, 21.2 million tonnes of freight and 25.7 million aircraft movements in 2018. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.