



ACI EUROPE addresses key challenges for Moldovan aviation

ACI EUROPE

Boulevard du Régent 37-40 (5th floor)
1000 Brussels, Belgium
www.aci-europe.org

Chisinau, 10 September 2024: ACI EUROPE today reviewed and addressed the challenges faced by Moldovan aviation in supporting the country's economic development and progress towards its future accession to the EU.

Meeting with Mr Andrei Spinu, Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development of Moldova, Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE pointed to the strategic relevance of aviation for Moldova in the context of both the new geopolitical reality faced by the region, the formal opening of EU accession negotiations last June¹ and the need for the country to achieve macro-economic stability and ensure sustainable growth.

With a propensity to fly (PTF)² at just 0.57 compared to an EU average of 2.27, Moldova is considered as an emerging aviation market with significant potential for dynamic air traffic and air connectivity growth. Such growth is bound to play a crucial role in supporting its economy – as every +10% increase in direct air connectivity automatically yields a +0.5% gain in GDP per capita.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine brought significant challenges for Chisinau International Airport, which had historically primarily relied on these markets. The demise of Air Moldova last year only added to these challenges. Yet, the airport has managed to diversify its route network, attracting new airlines and expanding traffic from incumbent ones.

While this has resulted in Chisinau International Airport's passenger traffic currently exceeding its pre-pandemic levels by +26.6%³, this has also led to increasing congestion and suboptimal quality in terms of passenger experience. This was especially the case over the peak summer months of July and August, which saw passenger volumes increasing by close to +50% over last year. Such growth and future prospects point to the need for airport infrastructure upgrades and capacity developments with a focus on long-term planning – along with the reconsideration of the legal status and governance of the airport.

Said Jankovec: *"There is no doubt Chisinau International Airport has gone through a lot of changes and that its role in supporting Moldova's economy has never been more important. As traffic keeps increasing and the country is getting ever closer to the EU, now is the time to plan for the airport's longer-term development. This should come with a reconsideration of its status as a State Enterprise. Such status comes with many strings and is usually not conducive to the commercial*

flexibility and management agility needed for airports to further develop in a much changed and ever more competitive post-Covid aviation market."

Referring to the way Europe's airports have evolved over the past 30 years from being mere infrastructure providers to fully fledged businesses in their own right, Jankovec underlined how the corporatisation of airports under public ownership and the involvement of private operators - notably with the concession model - has been instrumental in enabling this transformation. This in turn has ensured the sound development of airport infrastructure across the continent, with operational efficiency, improved passenger experience and a focus on both sustainability and connectivity.

Jankovec concluded: *"Moving towards either corporatisation under public ownership or the involvement of private operators with the required expertise is definitely what Moldova should look at for Chisinau International Airport. This is especially relevant considering the need for the country to follow EU aviation policies and implement related Regulations, as this will imply a systemic transformation of its aviation sector."*

¹ On 25 June 2024, the European Union opened accession negotiations with Moldova – just 2 years after being granted candidate status.

² Number of air trips per capita.

³ January-July 2024 vs. the same period in 2019.

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For more information, contact:

Amy Leete
Communications Manager
Tel: +32 493 41 40 65
Email: amy.leete@aci-europe.org

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 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Air transport supports 13.5 million jobs, generating €886 billion in European economic activity (4.4% of GDP). In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.