RIGA AIRPORT HANDLED 2.35 MILLION PASSENGERS IN 2021

News / Airports / Routes

Operational data on Airport performance show that the number of passengers handled at Riga Airport in 2021 exceeded 2.35 million, which is an increase of 17% as compared to 2020; in comparison to 2019, the number of passengers dropped by 70%.

Passenger carriage shows a gradual stabilization

London, Tallinn, Frankfurt, Kiev and Amsterdam were the most popular destinations from Riga in 2021. Last year, the national airline *airBaltic* carried the largest share or 57 percent of passengers at Riga Airport. One-fifth or 21% of passengers were carried to and from Riga by the Irish low-cost airline *Ryanair*, which strengthened its presence at Riga Airport last autumn by significantly expanding the range of destinations and launching them with Riga-based aircraft.

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Riga is still a popular transit point for travellers – in 2021, 529.4 thousand or 22 percent of passengers used Riga Airport to travel to further destinations. In turn, the share of non-scheduled or charter flights at Riga Airport in 2021 accounted for 7 percent of all passenger traffic. For comparison, in 2019, their share was 4%.

“The introduction of the EU's digitally interoperable Covid-19 or the 'green' certificate last summer made it possible to at least partially restore epidemiologically safe travel opportunities and bring them into line across Europe. For Riga Airport, this meant a larger number of passengers served – since August, the Airport has served approximately half of the number of passengers handled in the respective month in 2019,” says Laila Odi?a, Chairperson of the Board of Riga Airport.

Growth in the air cargo segment

Last year, the air cargo segment experienced stable growth, and it is characterized by several significant events at Riga Airport. Cargo traffic to and through Riga Airport was not only increased by existing carriers, but thanks to the rapid growth of e-commerce due to the pandemic, a new air cargo connection has been established between Riga and Hong Kong, which is operated twice a week by the international shipping company Venipak.

Last year, an agreement was reached with the national airline *airBaltic* to establish a new cargo centre, whereas DHL completed the establishment of its regional hub at the Airport.

“These facts confirm that the ongoing work to develop and strengthen the Airport's cargo segment – *RIX Cargo City* – is a step in the right direction and customers appreciate the potential of Riga Airport as a regional aviation hub, including in the air cargo sector,” says Laila Odi?a.

The total volume of air cargo handled at Riga Airport last year reached 27.9 thousand tonnes, which is one-fifth more than in 2020. The result of 2019 with 27.3 thousand tonnes of air cargo handled was also exceeded by two percent. Due to the restrictions to limit the spread of the pandemic, the volume of cargo carried by passenger aircraft has halved, while the volume of cargo carried by cargo flights has increased by 70% as compared to 2019.

Investing in future development

The year 2021 will go down in the history of the Airport with a number of events that are less visible to the general public, but which are important for the Airport's work processes, infrastructure development, flight safety and the sustainability of the Airport's operations.

In September 2021, a new rapid exit taxi-way was opened at the aerodrome, which allows to shorten the length of the aircraft movement on the runway and in the taxiing area. This will reduce the fuel and time consumed during ground manoeuvres at the Airport, thus reducing emissions of pollutants such as CO2, hydrocarbons and particulate matter.

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Riga Airport has also been using the A-CDM procedure as the first and currently the only airport in the Baltics since April, which ensures the timely exchange of accurate information between the airport operators, aircraft operators, groundhandlers, air traffic controllers and other parties involved from the time of flight planning until the time the aircraft lands on the runway. This allows for more accurate scheduling of aircraft take-off and shorter passenger waiting times, reducing the resource and fuel consumption costs associated with pre-departure waiting times and aircraft preparation for flight. It also helps reduce environmental pollution and noise. This procedure also received official Eurocontrol certification in the autumn.

In 2021, Riga Airport served 39 062 aircraft, which is 10% more than a year before; however, as compared to 2019, this indicator dropped by 55%. The number of serviced passenger flights – 28 691 passenger flights – has decreased by 65 percent as compared to 2019, while the number of cargo flights has increased by 59 percent. Last year, there was also an increase in the number of serviced business aviation, technical, military and other types of flights. As compared to 2020, the number of these flights has increased by one tenth, but as compared to 2019 – by almost 90 percent.

“In terms of passenger numbers, the volume of cargo and other performance indicators of the company in 2021, Riga Airport has shown better results than in the first year of the pandemic. We have been working with a profit for several months last year. However, since the pandemic continues and the global epidemiological situation is deteriorating at the beginning of this year due to new variants of the virus, it is very difficult to predict further developments. This means that the company must constantly adapt to the situation, quickly reviewing and organizing its daily work processes, financial and staff resources, and long-term analysis of recovery forecasts and the necessary development of Airport services and infrastructure,” says Laila Odi?a.

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