Build Back Better

Sustainability goals continue despite the sanitary and economic crisis

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OLIVIER JANKOVEC, DIRECTOR GENERAL, ACI EUROPE

Editorial: Post Tenebras Lux

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30th ACI Europe Annual Assembly & Congress

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“The EU Smart Borders package sets the stage for a new wave of technological innovations in the travel industry”
More than 10 years ago, Munich Airport has adopted its first climate strategy. As a result, we have been able to lower CO₂ emissions per passenger by 46 percent since 2005. We have implemented several programs for optimizing our CO₂ footprint in close collaboration with our business partners. Our commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 stands firmer than ever and we strongly believe that the industry will not only evolve better but also greener when global air traffic rebounds.

With anti COVID-19 measures in place and the airport operations recovering in a safe manner it is now time to focus our attention and combined efforts to economic and ecological sustainability measures, such as:

- Introduction of smart and innovative lighting technologies across our campus
- Usage of solar electricity and cooling with intelligent photovoltaic systems
- Utilization of alternative fuels from renewable energy sources
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The COVID-19 crisis has turned our lives upside down, with aviation and travel being by far the most impacted.

Apart from passenger volumes going back where they stood some 50 years ago, the ranking of airports is just another stark illustration of the fact that we continue to live in a parallel world. Last September, Antalya was the busiest airport in Europe with just 2.25 million passengers, followed by Moscow-Sheremetyevo and Moscow-Domodedovo. St Petersburg welcomed more passengers than Paris-CDG, and Athens more than Munich. Airports relying more on domestic traffic have found some (limited) respite, but even that has now come to an end as we brace for a second wave, with local restrictions and lockdown back. There are no winners in this crisis – only losers.

For ACI EUROPE, a crisis of this magnitude is a defining moment. It comes with the opportunity – or rather the imperative – to prove our relevance and provide tangible value for our members. But while we have certainly spared no effort to support airports across Europe navigating the shock of COVID-19, we still have a mountain to climb when it comes to securing the conditions that will finally see airports, and aviation as a whole, recover.

The fresh news of a 90% effective vaccine finally gives us some light at the end of the tunnel – POST TENEBRAS LUX. But the Winter season is essentially lost and the path to recovery will be long and uneven. Given the prevailing uncertainties, testing for travel remains an imperative. We simply need people to be able to fly – not just safely, but also with full confidence about their ability to do so.

Looking ahead, the urgency is not purely about restarting travel in the short term, critical though this is. Aviation will face renewed challenges in the post-COVID-19 era. The earlier the recovery, the better we will be able to address these challenges and adapt. Many are talking about COVID-19 triggering a “great reset” across the economy. This is especially true for aviation.

The initial thoughts that the pandemic would be followed by a V-shaped recovery quickly gave way to predictions of a U-shaped recovery. Soon, some started talking about a W-shaped recovery, due to the risks of a second infection wave – which by all accounts is in the making. But what we are facing actually looks much more like a K-shaped recovery – in which some sectors are doing great (think tech and health) while others will keep struggling and sub-perform.

It is self-evident that aviation will be in the second category. Beyond the handicap of a slow and tedious recovery with lasting supply-side pressures induced by airlines generally flying fewer and smaller aircraft, what lies ahead is structurally lower demand for air transport. This will result from the combination of several factors.

With inequality increasing as a by-product of COVID-19, many people will have to cut discretionary consumption. Travel and leisure activities will logically be impacted. More generally, the pandemic is throwing our lifestyles and development model into question. It is magnifying and accelerating a societal shift towards sustainability that was already in the making. Sloyness and happy localism are becoming the new cool. Taking the fast lane and jetting around Europe less so. While millennials are addicted to flying, generation Z is much less prone to ignoring its carbon footprint. These are our future clients.

Looking at demand from corporates, COVID-19 proved that video conferencing works and that executives do not necessarily need to be top-tier frequent fliers. Combined with the imperative to both cut costs and demonstrate climate credentials, this explains why McKinsey sees business travel shrinking by 20% by 2024.

Without even factoring in the very tangible – many would actually say inevitable – risk of more punitive policies and regulations impacting all fossil fuel intensive sectors, it is clear that the entire aviation eco-system will need to adapt to a new normal.

Business models will need to change. Just looking at airports, the fact that our own business model has both relied upon and been driven by the assurance of continued dynamic growth in air traffic is a case in point.

But all aviation industry stakeholders will need to evolve, with the way they work and relate to each other also being disrupted as a result. Some may still hope to cling to legacy behaviours and the safeguard of Government bailouts. But legacy behaviours might well prove lethal in this new normal – given that it will also feature a world of ever skyrocketing public debt.

Anticipating and embracing societal changes and economic transformation will be the most important agenda for aviation, both as we recover from COVID-19 and beyond. But succeeding on our own will be challenging. Disruption will also be needed from policy makers, so that they provide the enabling regulatory framework. That should mean finally burying the ultimate legacy: the Chicago convention – and even more important, the legacy thinking that still permeates too many regulatory approaches.
**Zürich Airport**

On 5 November 2020, Zürich Airport opened its brand-new lifestyle and business district, The Circle. The complex houses shops and restaurants, headquarters of international companies and premises for medical services for a “complete urban centre” with global connections via the airport. The Circle complex includes a unique selection of retail shops (including a new Dufry duty-paid concept), restaurants, a Convention Centre with capacity for up to 2,500 guests, and accommodation offered by two Hyatt hotels. Other services such as coworking spaces, a gym and a crèche will round out the wide range from 2021. The Circle and adjacent park are directly linked to the airport terminals and the range of services at the complex complements the existing offering at Zurich Airport.

**Dublin Airport**

Dublin Airport is planning a major facelift for Terminal 1 under plans that have been lodged with Fingal County Council. As per the plans, the core façade and the roof of the terminal are to be replaced with a new modern, energy-efficient structure. The planned works to the façade follow a major upgrade to both the Departures and Arrivals areas of Terminal 1 in recent years. New floors and lighting were installed, and both areas were reconfigured to introduce more natural light to the building. The upgrade project has been part of the long-term plans for Dublin Airport for several years. But as yet, no specific date has been set for these upgrade works to take place. The planned changes to Terminal 1 will generate a significant improvement in its energy efficiency, as it will move the upgraded elements of building from their current BER rating of F to B3.

**Stockholm Skavsta Airport**

Stockholm Skavsta Airport will commission a solar energy plant in the summer of 2021. Once operational, this will be the first large solar plant at a Swedish airport. Operated by VINCI Airports since 2018, Stockholm Skavsta is thus entering the first stage of its environmental transition in line with the group’s global ambition pursued since 2015 to develop sustainable airport infrastructures, in particular by acting to reduce their carbon footprint, protect natural environments and resources and recover waste. The solar energy plant will provide CO2 neutral power to the airport operations, but there will also be an opportunity to resell the surplus green energy in partnership with the local municipality.

**Torino Airport**

This October, Torino Airport opened the COVID-19 Test Point at its premises, available on a voluntary basis to all passengers arriving or departing from Turin. The testing initiative is the first in Italy to combine serological test and, in case of positive outcome, molecular swab. Its aim is to contain the risk of spreading the virus through air travel and allow travellers to reach their family, friends and business contacts in maximum safety. The structure, created in collaboration with local health authority ASL Città di Torino and the private company Air Medical, provides passengers travelling to and from Torino Airport with a reliable serological test result within 10 minutes’ time. The Test Point is located in Check-In Hall D at the Departures Level of Torino Airport.
Hermes Airports

Hermes Airports has proceeded with the installation of the Tagomat® and Bagomat kiosks at Larnaka and Pafos airports. The Cypriot airport operator further upgrades the passenger experience with this new equipment, which is completely in line with the current travel standards and simplifies the self-tagging and baggage drop off process. Thanks to this new initiative, passengers travelling from Larnaka and Pafos airports have the option to print their luggage tags on their own by using one of the Tagomat® kiosks, or one of the new self check-in kiosks in less than 10 seconds. Passengers can then proceed to the self tagging baggage drop off counter to drop off their luggage and continue their journey hassle-free.

Edinburgh Airport

Edinburgh Airport has donated more than 200 security trays to airports in Africa to help staff train for security inspections. The airport has replaced the trays with new antimicrobial ones. The trays were taken out of use at Edinburgh Airport earlier in 2020 and will be reused in airports throughout the African continent, rather than being destroyed, as the airport continues to improve its sustainability approach. Many of the airports in Africa currently use improvised trays, which can be unhygienic and take longer to process. The donation will greatly impact on the operation of these airports and will help the process of security screening run more efficiently. The trays are in the process of being cleaned and distributed to Africa by The Westminster Group PLC, a firm that the airport partnered with after using the Circular Edinburgh programme, which encourages companies to reuse and redistribute items where possible.

Riga Airport

Riga Airport has signed a memorandum of cooperation with Latvian national airline airBaltic, the Latvian Ministry of the Interior, and non-governmental organisations, to actively cooperate in the prevention of human trafficking. The development of the aviation sector memorandum was initiated by Riga Airport, which has already been involved in various activities to prevent this global crime. The purpose of the memorandum is to promote the prevention of trafficking of human beings and to strengthen cooperation between aviation companies, state institutions and non-governmental organisations in identifying and referring victims for the provision of support, assistance and protection. Within the framework of the memorandum of cooperation, industry players, responsible state institutions and the non-governmental sector undertake to cooperate on a voluntary basis, outlining the boundaries, scope and basic principles of cooperation. The memorandum was signed on 19 October, the day after European Anti-Trafficking Day on 18 October.

Nice Côte d’Azur Airport

Nice Côte d’Azur Airport was labelled “Airport-CDM” by EUROCONTROL on 11 September 2020, and will be integrated into the Network Manager on 30 September 2020 as the other 28 major European airports that form part of the project. The Airport Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM) concept developed by EUROCONTROL is supported by collaborative processes, shared data in real-time and common tools. With CDM, operational actors with different cultures and different needs share important milestones, improve situational awareness, using a common language to take coordinated decisions rapidly, equitably and transparently. CDM@NCE will bring operational benefits in nominal situations, as well as peak traffic and adverse conditions: the resilience of operations at Nice Airport and on the whole European network will be improved, particularly when strong wind, storms and rain can happen. This ambitious project was co-financed at European level.
n times when the airport industry is facing bad news almost on a daily basis – new record numbers of COVID-19 infections, new travel restrictions, new lay-offs – positive developments are rare, but all the more valuable and noteworthy. Since the start of the pandemic, airports worldwide have been reaffirming their commitments to climate action and their intention to Build Back Better.

28 airports globally have joined Airport Carbon Accreditation since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on 11 March. At the ACI EUROPE Annual Congress and General Assembly on 17 November, Airport Carbon Accreditation introduced the first major, structural change to the programme since its inception back in 2009: two new accreditation Levels – Level 4 Transformation and Level 4+ Transition – were launched. And the cherry on the cake is, two airports have already reached accreditation at Level 4+: Dallas Fort Worth International Airport in the United States and Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport in India. What could be a better evidence of airports’ continued leadership in decarbonisation?

With the introduction of these new Levels, Airport Carbon Accreditation is making a step-change in several regards. First of all, it represents a shift in the ambition level of the programme. Emissions reductions and continuous improvement have been at the core of Airport Carbon Accreditation since its launch, but Levels 1 to 3+ do allow for flexibility in the magnitude of reductions to be achieved. By contrast, Levels 4 and 4+ require airports to align their carbon management strategies and plans with the ambition of the Paris Agreement, according to which global warming should be limited to below 2°C and ideally 1.5°C. These objectives have been translated into several emissions reduction scenarios by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Airports will have to define their reduction targets and associated emissions pathways in alignment with these scenarios. Furthermore, airports will have the possibility to include into their reduction target emissions sources which are not directly controlled by the airport operator (Scope 3 emissions as per Greenhouse Gas Protocol), provided they can demonstrate that they have significant influence over the sources concerned. This approach will assist airports in identifying and pursuing the most effective emissions reduction opportunities, recognising that they might be outside the airport’s operational control. The emissions that airports will have to disclose in their carbon footprints will also be broadened, so as to encompass all the significant operational...
sources on- and off-site. And finally, the requirements relating to stakeholder engagement will be tightened, with effective partnerships, oriented towards delivering emissions reductions, coming to the fore.

Levels 4 and 4+ thus bring Airport Carbon Accreditation in line with the latest scientific and policy developments of the last years. They also reflect enhanced public expectations, according to which the airport operator has to show that it does not only address its own emissions, but uses its influence to drive emissions reductions from third parties operating on its site. The adaptability of the programme to accommodate such developments does, however, not entail a complete overhaul of Airport Carbon Accreditation. The initial Levels 1 to 3+ remain in place as is, offering stability to participating airports, and confirming that the key principles and design elements of the programme are still relevant and future-proof.

The introduction of Levels 4 and 4+ also marks another major milestone for Airport Carbon Accreditation, and in my view, it’s maybe even the most significant one: with the new Levels, the programme has finally become truly global. Of course, airports outside Europe started becoming certified back in 2011, when Airport Carbon Accreditation was extended to ACI Asia-Pacific, followed by ACI Africa, ACI North America and ACI Latin America and the Caribbean. As of end 2014, there have been accredited airports in all world regions. But these airports were joining a programme that had been built by European airports, for European airports. The Levels 4 and 4+, however, have been defined by a Task Force of airports from various regions. They are the result of hours and hours of meetings, informal discussions and sometimes heated conversations that were taking place for over two years. Finding a compromise between the views and needs of all these airports, operating with different business models, in different climates and policy contexts, was challenging – but in the end, successful.

Last but not least, this major development on the technical side of Airport Carbon Accreditation goes hand in hand with a renewed, fresh branding of the programme. Its new visual identity is beautiful, clear and future-proof. Because more is to come! In fact, Levels 4/4+ are not the only change Airport Carbon Accreditation is going to implement. It will continue to evolve, as it has done over the last decade. And we all know that ultimately, decarbonisation needs to lead us to Net Zero CO2 emissions.

In closing, I would like to wholeheartedly thank all those who made Levels 4 and 4+ a reality: the members of the Airport Carbon Accreditation Task Force, under the leadership of Emanuel Fleuti from Zurich Airport, whose exceptional expertise and professionalism were critical to navigate the difficult waters towards the launch of the new Levels; the programme Administrator WSP; all ACI Regional offices and ACI World; and the Airport Carbon Accreditation Advisory Board. Airport Carbon Accreditation has been, is and will always be the result of relentless teamwork.
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- 162 in Europe
- 45 in Latin America & Caribbean
- 16 in Africa
- 58 in Asia-Pacific

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The COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications are posing a major challenge for the air transport industry’s survival. It is especially significant in Spain, with tourism accounting for more than 12% of national GDP and four in every five international visitors to the country arriving by air.

“This has made us realise, to an even greater extent, the importance of thinking ahead as a way to address the major threat of climate change, and we had it clear in our minds that the industry’s recovery plan had to factor in the ongoing climate and ecological crisis we are facing,” begins Amparo Brea, Innovation, Sustainability and Client Experience Director, Aena. “So, in terms of sustainability, and in spite of the current situation, our environmental performance is still a key priority in our management approach. As such, our strategic strands are built on the principle of green reconstruction, so we can accomplish our decarbonisation and environmental protection commitments by working in partnership with our stakeholders.”

Aena has signed up to the ‘Manifesto for Sustainable Recovery’ – a domestic initiative rooted in the EU’s Green Recovery Alliance which is supported by businesses, NGOs, scientists, academics, and the wider public. “It urges the government to find a way out of the coronavirus economic crisis which lays the foundations for transformation into a more sustainable and robust economy based on innovation and decarbonisation,” says Brea. “This is because we think that competitiveness and the environment go hand-in-hand, since without environmental sustainability there can be no economic or social sustainability.”

Technologically innovative projects to achieve carbon-neutrality

The current crisis is giving a major boost in terms of innovation and digitalisation in response to many of the needs that have emerged over recent months. Indeed, Brea explains that these developments are allowing Aena to plan new, more technologically innovative projects, which will contribute to achieving its carbon-neutrality commitments more swiftly. Several of Aena’s airports are accredited under ACI’s Airport Carbon Accreditation, including five (Madrid-Barajas, Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Málaga, Lanzarote) at Level 2 Reduction.

“We are going to increase the number of airports included in the programme, so that all of them reach carbon neutral Level 3+ by 2028,” Brea explains. “We have also committed to making all of our airports carbon neutral by that year in a global network programme, as an intermediate step towards achieving net zero by 2040.”

Key measures implemented as part of Aena’s climate change strategy currently include:

- More technology-based actions to increase energy efficiency in lighting and air conditioning (presence detectors, replacing conventional lighting with LEDs, upgrading air-conditioning systems, automatic lighting adjustment, etc)
- Buying 100% renewable energy with a guarantee of origin in all airports in the network, starting in 2020.
• A network of electric charging stations in car parks for passengers and employees, and replacing the Aena fleet with green vehicles.

Additionally, Aena launched one of its most ambitious projects to date: its Photovoltaic Plan. “We are now working on this scheme, which will enable us to achieve 100% self-supply of electricity from renewable sources at our airports by 2026,” says Brea.

The €350 million investment will produce 950 GWh per year of renewable energy, equivalent to the usage of 280,000 households. “The project is to be implemented through photovoltaic facilities in 14 of the company’s airports which have ample solar availability. It is unique in the industry in terms of the distribution system for the renewable energy fed into the grid of the 46 airports, and also the area of our facilities, which will cover more than 740 hectares.”

**Noise Insulation Plan and wildlife management**

Aena is stepping up the noise mitigation measures taken at a local level, in order to achieve sustainable relationships with local communities. Its Noise Insulation Plan at airports stands out here, involving a €330.6 million investment in measures to mitigate the noise footprint between 2000 and 2019. “This means that more than 24,395 properties have already been soundproofed during this period and Aena has undertaken all the steps needed to fund these projects,” Brea explains.

Noise Monitoring Systems enhance noise control and management, while Madrid-Barajas and Barcelona-El Prat airports are the first in the world to publish noise data accredited by ENAC in conformity with the ISO 20906 standard. “These data are dumped in the airports’ Interactive Noise Maps and provide us with active and transparent communication with the most noise-sensitive communities around the airports,” Brea adds. “We also strive to foster dialogue with government authorities and environmental organisations by helping to draw up plans and strategies to minimise noise.”

Meanwhile, 24 of Aena’s airports share space with protected natural areas, with specific preservation measures undertaken to ensure operations are compatible with conserving natural heritage. “These measures include wildlife management, especially for birds, which is a key factor as it enables us to make protecting natural heritage compatible with maintaining security, safety and quality standards in aeronautical operations,” says Brea. “In this respect we regularly conduct studies on the wildlife around our airports, and their habitats, in partnership with local and regional organisations, and together with the Spanish Aviation Safety and Security Agency.”

**Ambitious circular economy principles**

Promoting sustainable transport options and intermodality is another key focus area for Aena, with the potential to significantly reduce energy usage and emissions generated.

Aena works with other tiers of government and relevant institutions to maintain a competitive transport system by seeking to integrate its infrastructure with other modes of transport, improving access, connections with the rail network, and town planning in airport environments.

“The most outstanding example is Barcelona-El Prat Airport, which has a specific Mobility Plan in place that includes measures such as setting up a working group with the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, drawing up an Action Plan to encourage sustainable mobility among our employees, connecting the airport with the town of El Prat de Llobregat by means of a bike lane, and installing ‘bicobox’, which is a network of cycle lockers,” Brea explains.

In line with circular economy principles at its main airports, Aena is analysing prospective construction plans for airport waste recovery plants to meet some of the demand for fuel. This includes producing sustainable aviation fuel, biomethane, pyrolysis oil, and even compost for reuse in landscaped areas.

“This is a very ambitious project, but we think airports have to play a role in the supply chain in order to scale up production of this type of alternative fuel, including the option of using airport waste, and closing their lifecycle in a way that is both circular and efficient,” Brea comments.

Indeed, as our interview draws to a close, it is clear that Aena is pursuing a comprehensive and collaborative approach to environmental sustainability. “Airports only account for a small part of total emissions in the aviation industry. This means we need to work closely with aircraft manufacturers, airlines, air traffic service providers, fuel producers, handling firms, and other partners and stakeholders, as a coordinated action group to put in place projects taking an integrated approach to the challenge of decarbonising the industry.”
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The Aviation Round Table Report on the Recovery of European Aviation is an unprecedented initiative, bringing together all European aviation stakeholders (airports, airlines, air navigation service providers, etc.) and beyond (unions, NGOs, etc.). The drafting group met over a period of four months and calls on the EU and its Member States to develop and implement a comprehensive recovery strategy for the aviation sector, which is based on a European Aviation Relief Programme and an EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation.

The Report was formally handed over to Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice President of the European Commission (Competition) and Adina Vălean, EU Transport Commissioner, on 16 November 2020, along with joint communications from all associations involved, supported by the European Commission.

"The discussions were always constructive and fuelled by a desire to reach agreement," explains Morgan Foulkes, Deputy Director General, ACI EUROPE. "All stakeholders realised that the only way to have a real impact with decision-makers was to speak with one voice. Considering the wide range of stakeholders involved, the Report inevitably represents a compromise between the, at times, competing interests of the various stakeholders represented. For example, ACI EUROPE had to accept a somewhat less ambitious call for further aviation liberalisation and market access with third countries. But, crucially, the Report does include a new and ambitious message on environmental sustainability and in particular decarbonisation – for which ACI EUROPE was the lead drafter."

**European Aviation Relief Programme**

The Report emphasises that a European Aviation Relief Programme should provide comprehensive support measures for the aviation sector until air traffic recovers, which is not expected before 2024 or 2025.

"The temporary State aid rules adopted at the start of the pandemic have allowed Member States to support their economies, but only until mid-2021," says Foulkes. "These temporary rules must be extended and complemented by aviation-specific measures. For example, airports must be compensated for damages resulting from travel restrictions and investments in health and sanitary measures. Airlines would need to be supported when bringing back connectivity to airports that may have been lost during the pandemic."
Europe faces the possible collapse of a significant part of its air transport system unless governments step in to provide support, and this is precisely what the *European Aviation Round Table* calls for. ACI EUROPE estimates that 193 airports may face insolvency in the coming months if passenger traffic does not pick-up by year-end. Those facing insolvency are mainly regional airports, which serve and are an integral part of the economic fabric of local communities. “These airports facilitate 277,000 jobs and €12.4 billion of European GDP,” Foulkes explains. “The potential ripple-effect on local employment and economies is clear. We need to stabilise the aviation sector and prevent the huge loss of employment and connectivity that would result from a collapse of airports. The present crisis has eroded air connectivity – the social and economic lifeline for many communities – like never before. Financial support from governments will be crucial to averting geographic inequality and damaged social cohesion.”

**EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation**

Europe’s airports, and the wider aviation sector, are committed to a sustainable recovery and this is reflected in the *EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation*. “We are really pleased that all the organisations supporting the *Aviation Round Table Report* endorsed new climate objectives for European aviation, in particular Net Zero carbon emissions for all flights within and departing the EU,” says Foulkes. “This is a major achievement through which our sector has aligned its climate ambition with the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. This was far from being secured when work started on the Report and ACI EUROPE played a crucial role in securing a positive outcome.”

Of course, to be credible, these new objectives need to include concrete action plans and commitments, hence the idea of an *EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation* that ACI EUROPE tabled during the Round Table process. “Through this Pact, industry and EU institutions should commit to work jointly towards the sector’s sustainability goals,” Foulkes comments. “The Pact will include actions for the aviation sector, but also the supporting policy/regulatory framework and financial mechanisms to allow the industry to deliver. It is worth noting that while climate change will be at the core of the Pact, it will not be the only matter addressed – sustainability is much broader, including other environmental topics such as noise, air quality and biodiversity, as well as social issues, in particular related to employment in the sector.”

**Strategy for a Sustainable and Smart Mobility**

ACI EUROPE encourages its members to share the Report with their authorities, with a view to implementing its main recommendations in their respective countries. “As the Report enjoys the backing of a vast majority of aviation stakeholders, we expect the European Commission to rely on it extensively to support future legislation,” says Foulkes. “This should be the case in the coming weeks with the European Commission’s upcoming vision for transport also known as *Strategy for a Sustainable and Smart Mobility*. This new vision was announced as part of the European Green Deal and is scheduled for release on 9 December 2020. It will supersede the 2011 Transport White Paper. Foulkes adds that ACI EUROPE responded to the consultation on the future strategy on behalf of European airports this summer.”

“In closing, other colleagues at ACI EUROPE also spent long hours reviewing the various drafts and providing their constructive input. Marina Bylinsky, our Head of Sustainability, and Bastiaan de Bruijne, our General Counsel, in particular made a significant contribution to the report and this article. Thank you!”
AviAlliance is a private airport investor and operator that contributes its expertise in the fields of aviation, non-aviation, master planning and financing. The portfolio includes shares in the airports of Athens, Budapest, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and San Juan.

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ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports: practical step-by-step guidance to restarting operations

ACI EUROPE published its Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports in July 2020, offering practical step-by-step guidance to airports as they restart operations. Federico Bonaudi, Head of Facilitation, Parliamentary Affairs & Regional Airports, ACI EUROPE, elaborates on what airports need to consider. Interview by Ross Falconer

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on every aspect of our lives and the global economy – and airports are no exception. It is, therefore, natural that the protection of public health, including that of passengers and staff, is of paramount importance to restore air connectivity and safe travel.

Since the early days of this crisis, European airports have worked closely with their stakeholders and the European and national regulators to implement a range of new health and safety protection measures to restart air travel.

ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports, published in July 2020, are the final output of this intense process of stakeholder relations. They are built upon the EASA/ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol to elaborate on what airports need to consider and do to implement them.

“Their main objective is to provide airport managing bodies with the tools necessary to ensure that airport premises are clean and safe places for passengers and staff,” explains Federico Bonaudi, Head of Facilitation, Parliamentary Affairs & Regional Airports, ACI EUROPE. “This is done through practical step-by-step guidance to airports as they restart operations based on a ‘new normal’, reviewing all possible actions, methodologies, technologies and implications.”

At the same time, ACI EUROPE’s role in promoting best practices in airport management remains unchanged. “The ultimate objective of the Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports is to keep driving the airport business towards the key concepts of consumer-centricity and sustainability,” says Bonaudi. “The passenger is, and will continue to be, at the heart of the airport business.”

‘3P Approach’: Premises, Processes and People

The main areas of advice provided in the Guidelines are structured around three main components of the passenger experience – the so-called ‘3P Approach’: Premises, Processes and People (staff).

In order to ensure that airport premises are safe, ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports recommend the installation of protective screens at touchpoints between passengers and staff. Photo: London City Airport
GUIDELINES FOR A HEALTHY PASSENGER EXPERIENCE AT AIRPORTS

The “health-concerned passenger”

It is clear that there is a new pattern in passenger behaviour that is likely to persist once the COVID-19 pandemic comes to an end. In this respect, the Guidelines identify the concept of the “health-concerned passenger”.

“The health-concerned passenger pays special attention to the measures taken to limit the risk of transmission, increase their consumption consciousness at airports (cost, sustainability, reduced human contact) and to continue to embrace technology and touchless solutions,” Bonaudi explains. “At the same time, the health-concerned passenger expects Airport Managing Bodies not only to respond to their needs and expectations, and redefine their relationship with them and the other stakeholders, but also to innovate as much as possible to put in place smart and cost-effective solutions.”

The processes outlined in the Guidelines entail a set of extremely diverse procedures that constitute the core of passenger-related airport activities throughout the end-to-end passenger journey. “For instance, health screening may be a useful tool to control disease spread and minimise the impact on air travel,” says Bonaudi. “It needs to be part of a multi-layered approach, agreed at European level, based on an effective risk-assessment. Testing travellers will of course be a valid option.”

When it comes to the so-called traditional processes, these include pre-travel, access, check-in, boarding pass check, security, border control, customs control, boarding, connections and baggage services. “The use of biometrics, contact tracing apps, artificial intelligence, digital twins, web-mobile applications, wearable devices, contactless touch panels, passenger counting monitoring, and smart restroom technologies, are just some good examples of innovative solutions to transform the passenger journey and address the concerns of the health-related passenger,” Bonaudi explains.

Advocating an EU testing protocol for travel

ACI EUROPE continues to advocate strongly for the implementation of an EU testing protocol for travel as the way forward for the aviation industry. “The uncoordinated and non-harmonised travel restrictions put in place by some European States, in particular quarantines, are akin to the effects of border closures,” says Bonaudi. “They are depriving European citizens of their right to free movement within the EU/Schengen area and are negatively impacting the functioning of the internal market. Above all, they are at odds with the advice of both the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization, who consider travel restrictions to be ineffective in most situations while causing significant societal and economic disruption. Regrettably, testing cross-border travellers is currently not part of an effective response to the pandemic by the European States.”

ACI EUROPE believes that quarantines must be replaced by testing based on an EU Testing Protocol for Travel (EU-TPT) which is consistently applicable for passengers travelling from high risk areas. “Testing cross-border travellers should be based on common criteria, agreed on necessary pre-conditions and mutual recognition,” Bonaudi comments. “In order to be integrated into the travel process, testing must be performed at speed, particularly when testing is to take place at the airport. It must be at a sufficient scale and accurate, with high sensitivity and specificity. It must also be supported by a system of mutual recognition across the EU/EEA/Switzerland and by the UK regulators.”

10 key conclusions

The Guidelines provide a series of recommendations that can be adapted, taking into account the specificities of each airport and the national, regional or local requirements. That being said, Bonaudi explains that the key conclusions can be summarised in 10 main points:

• Health concerns will define the experience, confidence, and behaviour of passengers.
• Engage with your passengers and determine their specific needs and expectations at your airport.
• Comply with national, regional and local health legislation.
• Premises: Physical distancing will be required for some time once activities restart.
• Premises: Additional risk mitigation measures are also needed.
• Processes: Existing processes need to be adapted to comply with new requirements.
• Processes: Additional processes may be required at national level.
• Processes: Innovative technologies will be useful to support new actions.
• People (staff) need to be protected.
• Efficient communication of the measures put in place.

The Guidelines have received an excellent response from ACI EUROPE’s members, and their compliance with the EASA-ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol has also been acknowledged by the European and national regulators. Bonaudi adds that, to date, over 100 of Europe’s airports and airport operators have signed and committed to the EASA Aviation Industry Charter for COVID-19 to give feedback on their practical experiences in implementing the protocol. “ACI EUROPE’s members are committed to the protection of the health of passengers and staff, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work and ongoing support.”
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he 30th ACI EUROPE Annual Assembly & Congress takes as its main theme “Post Tenebras Lux – Light after Darkness” and was streamed live from the Skyhall of Brussels Airport on 17 November. It was an event packed with deep-dive interviews, panel discussions and keynotes from C-Suite leaders and guest speakers.

In his State of the Industry address, Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE, pointed out:

- A new normal for airport trading conditions and operations, from increasing competition and ultra-low-cost airline dominance through to lower traffic growth and a reset towards sustainability, passenger health safety, digitalisation and social inclusion.
- The drive to ‘build back better’ has increased the industry’s determination to take the lead in building a more sustainable future. To underline this point, Jankovec announced the publication of a revised and even more ambitious ACI EUROPE Sustainability Strategy for Airports, which provides guidance to an industry determined to step up its efforts in embracing sustainability in all of its three components in the post-COVID era.

In his Keynote speech, Jost Lammers, President ACI EUROPE and CEO and President Munich Airport, acknowledged that emerging news of an effective vaccine gives reason for hope. However, the aviation sector cannot simply wait out the inevitable time challenges of safety confirmation and herd immunity. “We need another, immediate and interim solution to go through the winter and probably most of next summer. The solution lies in replacing quarantines for air travellers with testing. This is about doing better and saving livelihoods.”

Lammers called for a balanced approach to financial support for the aviation eco-system, highlighting ACI EUROPE’s proposals for a Recovery Framework for Aviation. He also highlighted the correlation between the need to financially support aviation through the COVID-19 crisis, and the need for aviation to decarbonise. The alignment of the aviation industry behind the proposal for an EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation underpins this core pillar of future recovery.

The first panel debate focused on Survival Airport Economics. It was moderated by David Feldman, Managing Partner, Exambela Consulting, with panellists including Arnaud Feist, CEO Brussels Airport Company; Niall MacCarthy, Managing Director, Cork Airport; Julian Diaz, CEO Dufry; John Holland-Kaye, CEO Heathrow Airport; Eleni Kaloyirou, CEO Hermes Airlines; and Armando Brunini, CEO SEA Milan Airports.

The second panel discussion explored the future ways to rebuild connectivity with the change to the web of hubs and regional airports and basic and full airline services. Moderated by Andrew Charlton, Managing Director, Aviation Advocacy, the all-stakeholder panel featured Nicolas Notebaert, CEO VINCI Concessions & President VINCI Airports; Eamonn Brennan, Director General, EUROCONTROL; Patrick Ky, Executive Director, EASA; Václav Rehoř, Chairman of the Board, Václav Havel Airport Prague; and Céline Fornaro, Managing Director, Head of European Industrials Equity Research, UBS.

The third panel discussion was about Building Back Better. Moderated by Matt Gorman, Director of Sustainability, Heathrow Airport, the panellists were Clara De La Torre, Deputy Director, DG CLIMA, European Commission, Jonathon Counsell, Group Head of Sustainability, International Airlines Group (IAG); Florian Guillermet, Executive Director, SESAR Joint Undertaking; Dick Benschop, CEO Royal Schiphol Group; Christel Vandenhouwen, Head of Sustainability, Brussels Airport; and William Todts, President, Transport & Environment.

There were also one-on-one interview sessions with:

- Henrik Hololei, Director General, Directorate General Mobility & Transport (DG MOVE), European Commission
- Debora MacKenzie, Science journalist and author of COVID-19 The pandemic that never should have happened, and how to stop the next one
- József Varadi, CEO Wizz Air
- Dalton Philips, CEO daa

The event was also the occasion to announce some key developments in the Airport Carbon Accreditation programme, particularly the introduction of two new accreditation levels – Level 4 Transition and Level 4+ Transition – and the announcement that Dallas Fort Worth International Airport in the United States and Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport in India are the first two airports that have become accredited at Level 4+ Transition.

The following award winners were announced:

**16TH ACI EUROPE BEST AIRPORT AWARDS**

- **Torino Airport (under 5 million passengers category)**
- **Malta International Airport (5-10 million passengers category)**
- **Hamburg Airport (10-25 million passengers category)**
- **Lisbon Airport (25-40 million passengers category)**
- **Aeroporti di Roma S.p.a (over 40 million passengers category)**
- **Budapest Airport (Eco-Innovation Award)**
- **Copenhagen Airport (Accessible Airport Award)**
- **Istanbul Airport (Digital Transformation Award)**
- **Malta International Airport (IIR Excellence Award)**
- **To70 B.V. (World Business Partners Recognition Award)**
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We return Carrying a message of peace and optimism
As we work to assure high standards of health and safety for the passengers believing in this commitment to keep everyone safe.

Fly Confidently
Before starting at Brussels Airport in January 2020, Ihsane Chioua Lekhli worked as a journalist for Belgian public broadcaster VRT for 10 years. She began as an editor for a consumer news show, working on several election broadcasts during that time. Chioua Lekhli then co-hosted a Sunday morning political debate show for four years. "It was always a little marathon in the weekend to get the show prepared, but it was a unique experience to be able to interview so many politicians and other interesting guests, as our panels were varied," she explains.

In the last two years, Chioua Lekhli was focused on the daily news, mainly presenting reports and live coverage on politics, although she did a few reports on Brussels Airport at the time. "Election days were always a highlight for me as a journalist. Those were long working days following politicians across the country and ending at the party gatherings to get the first reactions to the results. It was a privilege to be on the front row at such days and at other important events."

The next stage of her career saw Chioua Lekhli join Brussels Airport as Spokesperson & Media Relations Manager in January this year. She eloquently describes airports as vibrant places, where the entire world comes together, and connections are made.

"I love to travel myself and always loved travelling through Brussels Airport. Having the opportunity to get to know what happens behind the scenes, gain more insight into the airport activities, and be the one to communicate the stories of the airport, immediately appealed to me. The diversity of topics you deal with at an airport truly makes it a unique environment, from passenger figures and new airlines to security topics, from sustainability to cargo development, and so on."

Chioua Lekhli’s experience as a journalist has, naturally, proven invaluable for the role of Spokesperson. "The insight into how journalists work and think has been very useful, as well as the network I have among journalists," she says. "As a journalist, presenting information in a clear way is of utmost importance and those skills are necessary in communication as well. The flexibility and fast way of working you have as a journalist comes in quite handy as a spokesperson as well, because in both roles you know where your workday starts, but you never know how it will end."

"In times of crisis collaborations are even more important"

It has been an unusual year in which to begin a new role in the aviation industry. Only two months after Chioua Lekhli started at Brussels Airport, Belgium went into lockdown for the first time and the impact on the airport was enormous. "But I truly enjoy working in the communication team, my colleagues have been very helpful from the start and I immediately felt part of the team," she says. "My first priority was to get to know the company as well as possible. But, soon after, the main focus was crisis communication and keeping the public and press informed."

The 30th ACI EUROPE Annual Assembly & Congress, themed ‘Post Tenebras Lux – Light After Darkness’, takes place as a unique one-day event on 17 November 2020, streaming live from the Skyhall at Brussels Airport. Master of Ceremonies will be Ihsane Chioua Lekhli, Spokesperson & Media Relations Manager, Brussels Airport, who shared some insights with Ross Falconer ahead of the event.
Ihsane Chioua Lekhli curriculum vitae

Ihsane Chioua Lekhli (35) joined Brussels Airport as Spokesperson & Media Relations Manager in January 2020, having worked as a journalist for Belgian public broadcaster VRT for 10 years.

She began as an editor for a consumer news show, working on several election broadcasts during that time. Chioua Lekhli then co-hosted a Sunday morning political debate show for four years. In the last two years, she was focused on the daily news, mainly presenting reports and live coverage on politics, while also doing a few reports on Brussels Airport at the time.

informe of all measures in place and of the important role the airport played even during lockdown, as it stayed open for essential travel, for repatriations and for cargo flights.”

The biggest challenge was, and still is, the unpredictability of the situation and how fast it can change. “The airport has implemented every available measure to ensure the safety of passengers and staff, and that meant various communications had to be prepared at short notice, some together with our airport partners, while all working at home,” Chioua Lekhli explains.

“It was challenging but we made it work, and in times of crisis these collaborations are even more important.”

The combination of health and safety measures implemented by Brussels Airport has been awarded ACI Airport Health Accreditation. There are hundreds of information boards, stickers and posters to remind passengers that they must wear a face mask, keep a safe distance, and wash their hands. Hand sanitiser dispensers are available throughout the terminal, and there are mobile hand washing units in the departure hall.

“We also advocate contact-free processes for payments, check-in and boarding of passengers,” Chioua Lekhli comments. “We have installed additional queueing barriers and plexiglass screens, while before passengers enter the terminal their temperature is measured with thermal cameras. To reinforce our cleaning and disinfection actions, we also use UV sanitising technology to disinfect trolleys and floors.”

As part of its comprehensive sanitary measures, Brussels Airport recently took the initiative to open a COVID-19 Test Centre. Testing is an essential element to allow the aviation industry, and the economy in general, to gradually get out of the current crisis without compromising the health and safety of the public. “The Test Centre was received very well as passengers returning from a red zone were, up until a few weeks ago, obliged to get tested and had the opportunity to do that immediately at the airport,” says Chioua Lekhli.

“As more and more countries require a negative test certificate, we see a lot of departing passengers make use of the Test Centre as well. Staff can also get tested, so for airline crew, for example, this is also a valuable option.”

ACI EUROPE Annual Assembly & Congress: “Resetting the airport business”

Chioua Lekhli is looking forward to her first ACI EUROPE Annual Assembly & Congress. “I am honoured to be the Master of Ceremonies of this digital edition, which will be broadcast from our wonderful Skyhall. We are in the middle of an unprecedented global health crisis and we all may have different and creative approaches to address it, so I look forward to hearing the exchange of viewpoints, the debate in the working sessions, and to hear the different experiences of all partners involved. I am also looking forward to the discussion on sustainability, because even while tackling this health crisis, we cannot lose sight of the other challenges ahead. I expect to gain some new insights and will do my utmost to guide everyone watching as smoothly through the programme as possible.”

Looking ahead, from a communication perspective, it will be important to maintain and strengthen the trust of passengers that they can travel safely, keeping them informed about the measures in place at Brussels Airport.

Chioua Lekhli explains that, by next summer, Brussels Airport will be the testing ground for an innovative new test being developed by Belgian experts, which identifies particles in exhaled breath to quickly assess whether or not someone has COVID-19. Meanwhile, the cargo department will play an important role in the transportation of vaccines. A new 50,000sqm warehouse complex, with temperature-controlled areas, is near completion and will be a major project to communicate about. “These are all things that give hope for the future. Even though we are still facing difficult times, there are positive projects and solutions ahead.”
Airports call for urgent State aid through the adoption of an EU Recovery Framework for Aviation

On 4 November 2020, ACI EUROPE called on the European Commission to urgently adopt an ‘EU Recovery Framework for Aviation’ and for governments to provide the requisite funding to support airports – and the recovery of air traffic. The proposal builds upon fruitful cooperation with the European Commission services, acknowledging aviation has been particularly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and airports are facing business continuity risks. Report by Bastiaan de Bruijne

Immediately after air traffic came to an abrupt and almost complete halt in March 2020, the European Commission acknowledged urgent action was necessary to minimise layoffs and damage in the sectors hardest hit – like aviation. The aviation sector would especially benefit from compensation for damages resulting from the travel restrictions imposed by governments. The European Commission adopted on 19 March 2020 a Temporary Framework, setting out conditions for further government support to all sectors. The Commission services have also provided regulatory measures specifically for aviation, including ‘emergency Public Service Obligations’ to support routes no longer operated as a result of the pandemic.

Governments have used the flexibility under State aid rules to provide more than €31.8 billion aid to airlines. But aid to airports has so far remained limited – reaching €840 million. ACI EUROPE has warned that close to 200 smaller airports may face insolvency if traffic does not recover soon. Europe is thus facing the potential collapse of a significant part of its air transport system. Hubs and other primary airports are seeing their debts increasing to unsustainable levels.

The Temporary Framework and regulatory measures would have expired by 31 December 2020. But all forecasts (ACI EUROPE, EUROCONTROL, IATA) point out that a return to 2019 levels of air traffic is not expected before 2024 or even 2025. This means the aviation sector requires State aid measures with a longer time horizon.

While the European Commission has extended its Temporary Framework enabling EU States to support the companies affected by the pandemic until June 2021, this is insufficient to address the devastating and lasting impact on aviation and airports in particular. According to ACI EUROPE, the Temporary Framework should be extended to the end of 2021 and supplemented by a Recovery Framework for Aviation including the following key measures:

- Compensation for damages due to COVID-19 should remain available for airports as long as travel restrictions by governments are preventing the recovery of air traffic.
- A common framework allowing States to establish Air Connectivity Restart Schemes. These targeted and time limited schemes would allow support for the resumption of air routes suspended due to the pandemic until 2023 through a degressive per passenger contribution – on a non-discriminatory basis.
- Emergency Public Service Obligations to remain in place until the end of 2021.
- Immediate and longer-term adjustments to the 2014 Aviation State aid guidelines to extend the possibility for airports to receive both operating and investment aid – with a particular focus on the financing of climate action and sustainability projects.

The Position Paper was submitted by ACI EUROPE President, Jost Lammers, to the European Commissioners for Competition and Aviation. The paper is available at: https://www.aci-europe.org/component/attachments/attachment.html?id=1202&task=download

Bastiaan de Bruijne is ACI EUROPE’s General Counsel.
OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT BY 2030

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES
- Halve the amount of water we use
- Eliminate the use of all pesticides in our airports

RECOVERING WASTE
Send zero waste to landfill by recycling more and recovering waste

HALVING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT
- Reduce energy consumption by:
  - Replacing conventional light bulbs with LED lighting
  - Replacing heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems with more efficient alternatives
  - Optimising heating and air conditioning temperatures
- Deploy photovoltaic panels to produce our own carbon-free electricity
- Roll out a fleet of clean vehicles
The threat of airport closure means Europe faces the prospect of the collapse of a significant part of its air transport system – unless governments step up to provide the required support. So far, few have done so.

Heading into the last month of 2020, European airports are facing their 9th month of depressed passenger traffic volumes. This means that airports, who are sized for ‘100’ but will only serve ‘30’ traffic units this year on average – with lows in the ‘20s’ – will have revenues that are nowhere close to covering costs. Staff hours have been reduced, but people still need to be paid. Lights can be turned off, but electric utilities still send bills. Debt can be renegotiated, but interest still needs to be paid to the bank.

Europe’s 750 airports¹ are making these difficult calculations. Whether you served 80 million passengers in 2019, like London-Heathrow Airport, or only 4 thousand passengers like Salerno Costa d’Amalfi Airport, the runway is still a strip of concrete that is thousands of metres long (yes, the big airports have multiple runways), and the cost must be depreciated over time and collected in user fees.

Ultimately, we can estimate that somewhere around 200 airports in Europe face a high risk of insolvency as early as 3 months away. This is based on a statistical analysis of airport financial data, focusing on a sample of airports that in 2019 welcomed fewer than 5 million passengers and that are not parts of networks, considering cash on hand, current assets and liabilities, debt, and annual net results. The airports facing insolvency are mainly regional airports which serve – and are integral to – local communities. The potential ripple-effect upon local employment and economies is clear. Financial support from governments will be crucial in averting rising geographic inequality and damaged social cohesion.

Some airports, especially those that have the high traffic volumes to benefit from economies of scale, started 2020 with strong balance sheets. Facing the enormity of the loss of revenue these airports still had to cut costs to the bone to keep adequate cash flow. So far this year, we’ve seen airports reporting operating cost reductions of 12% to 30%, and that includes the increases needed to implement higher levels of cleanliness in terminals.

Liquidity for our large airport peers can be assured by borrowing more money, but that comes with a cost. This sudden increase in total debt – an additional €16 billion for the top 20 European airports – is enormous, and even more worryingly net debt levels have also risen to stretched levels given the forecasted cash flows and risk profile for (much needed) future market access.

Finally, the ability of airports to maintain the same revenue levels in the future is uncertain. Let’s be honest: airports are fighting to keep their market shares. They are offering large incentives to airlines and rebates per passenger carried by the airline.

70% of airports are offering new incentives specifically implemented since the COVID-19 restrictions hit air travel, according to a survey of ACI EUROPE’s members this summer. This means that while airport charges may nominally remain flat, or even in some cases increase a few percentage points, as set out in regulatory contracts, the airport’s actual aeronautical revenues are likely to be significantly lower than the level of cost coverage for much longer.

Airports serving fewer than 5 million passengers a year already have challenges financing investment, and those serving fewer than 1 million passengers a year are more likely than not to struggle covering just their operating costs. These airports simply do not have the space on their balance sheet to cut charges.

It may strike a jarring note to talk about cash flow when so many are suffering the health effects of the COVID-19 virus, but there is a stark financial reality being faced by a significant part of the European air connectivity infrastructure. Somewhere around 200 European airports face insolvency in the coming months if passenger traffic does not start to recover by the year-end. Without these airports, family travel will suffer, tourism to regions will be hindered, and business recovery will be slow.

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Michael Stanton-Geddes is Head of Economics and Competition at ACI EUROPE.

¹ 750 airports serving commercial passengers; there are many more if aerodromes and non-commercial airports are counted.
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The revised SES 2+ proposal, published in late September 2020, is a welcome and much-needed step for Europe’s airports and airspace network. As key nodes in the network, airports have a clear interest in an efficient, resilient and sustainable Air Traffic Management system.

ACI EUROPE therefore supports the direction taken by the European Commission in its updated proposal, after years of deadlock and slow advances in defragmenting Europe’s airspace.

The proposal seeks to increase the efficiency of European ATM through measures aimed at cross-border technical cooperation, greater integration of the airspace network and strengthening of the Network Manager, and possibilities for airports to procure some air navigation services from alternative providers. ACI EUROPE sees this as a positive step for Europe’s airspace.

Finally making progress with the Single European Sky will increase the reliability, quality, resilience and performance of the airspace network. Furthermore, reducing unnecessary indirect routings of aircraft and enabling more environmentally-friendly navigation methods will be a key element in aviation’s commitment to addressing the Climate Emergency.

There are numerous elements of the revised proposal which are therefore of particular interest for airports. These include:

- The proposal that airports would be able to procure Air Traffic Services (ATS) for aerodrome control under market conditions
- Airports would be able to procure Terminal ATS, subject to authorisation by national governments, and should governments allow this procurement, providers would not be able to prevent competition
- EASA would house an independent economic regulator of ANSPs (rather than having separate national supervisory authorities)
- Unbundling of data services: ANSPs can procure data services, including from providers in other Member States, with the potential for the airport to be a data provider
- The Network Manager is strengthened, in order to optimise airspace design, air traffic flow, and capacity management
- ANSPs must deliver the capacity which is announced in the Network Operations Plan, and all stakeholders act jointly in the interests of the network
- Flexible and scalable Air Navigation Services will mean better flight efficiency and lower emissions through Continuous Descent Operations and more direct routings
- The revised proposal brings an end to the policy of mandatory Functional Airspace Blocks (FAB), instead moving towards a central steering of regional ANSP collaboration, in order to bring the efficiencies of cross-border collaboration in a more effective manner.

The European Commission has reviewed the Single European Sky (SES) regulatory framework with the objective of modernising Europe’s airspace to make it more efficient, resilient and sustainable. ACI EUROPE supports the revised legislative SES package and proposes some adjustments to fully ensure a fair and effective role for airports. Report by Aidan Flanagan and Luc Laveyne
These proposals make good sense for Europe’s airports, as they will mark a major step in ensuring a common approach to European airspace management based on efficiencies and collaboration. The European airspace network has shown itself, in recent years, to be unable to deliver adequate capacity due to its fragmented nature. These proposals, coming on the heels of successive summer capacity crises, are positive steps forward in addressing this problem.

Furthermore, the specific elements for airports, namely the ability to procure aerodrome and terminal ANS, would be a major advance in enabling airports to be integrated into the ATM network and related decision-making, and providing airspace management at and around airports which is based on the capacity and objectives of the airport. This reflects a long-standing view of ACI EUROPE that airports should be able to develop contractual relations with ANSPs for management of their airspace. This is an essential element in strengthening Airport Operations Centres (APOCs) as a complement of the Network Manager Operations Centre, and will contribute significantly to delivering on-time performance to passengers, based on a recognition that airport capacity on the ground and the capacity in the airspace are interdependent.

Crucially, this will allow airports to fully integrate sustainability goals into the contractual agreements with ANSPs. Procurement of aerodrome ATS will create valuable opportunities to focus service delivery on driving down on-ground emissions and developing faster and more efficient taxi procedures and technological solutions. It will further enhance the ability to pursue a holistic approach to capacity management, with the efficient management of traffic on approach interlinked with procedures for the smart management of ground operations, based on mutually agreed performance requirements between the airport and ANSP. This has the cumulative effect of increasing the efficiency of the flight from door-to-door, and with that its sustainability and on-time performance for passengers.

There are some elements of the proposal which, while overall very positive, need some clarification to prevent unforeseen consequences. The provisions in Article 27 on the Network Manager require close attention, as regards the place of airports in the Network. The article states that “The action taken by the Network Manager shall take account of the need to fully integrate the airports in the network.” Airport–Network integration is a key priority of ACI EUROPE in building a modern airspace network based on an equal partnership, collaborative information sharing and a holistic view of capacity.

However, there is little further detail on what is meant by this requirement, and the Network Manager Cooperative Decision Making processes must guarantee that the airport operator remains in control of airport capacity in the future. Airports should agree to deliver what is promised in the Network Operations Plan and the Network Manager would only “decide on individual measures” if what has been promised is not delivered. The current text therefore needs slight adjustment to guarantee this. The text as currently drafted also needs some technical adjustment to avoid creating a hierarchical relationship between the Network Manager and airports.

As such, the revised SES 2+ proposal is a positive step for airports and the airspace network, which ACI EUROPE strongly welcomes. With our proposed improvements taken into account, this Regulation will give a much-needed push to efforts to modernise Europe’s airspace network, and we look forward to working with the Parliament and Member States in achieving this.

Aidan Flanagan is Safety, Capacity, ATM & Single European Sky Manager at ACI EUROPE.

Luc Laveyne is Senior Adviser, ACI EUROPE, and Managing Director, ACI EUROPE’s SESAR Related Deployment Airport Grouping (SDAG).
What does a safer, smarter and more sustainable airport look like with SESAR innovation?

ACI EUROPE and SESAR Joint Undertaking have teamed up to create an interactive airport gaming tool to promote how SESAR technology can improve different aspects of airport operations in terms of safety, environment, capacity, resilience and efficiency.

Feel the experience, play the game!
Available at: www.aci-europe.org/esar-solutions-for-airports
Taking firm steps towards Air Traffic Management modernisation in times of COVID-19

Despite the dramatic impacts of COVID-19 on aviation, Europe’s Air Traffic Management (ATM) modernisation is ongoing with a high degree of commitment from all aviation stakeholders, including airport operators. The European Commission has made the Airport Operations Plan (AOP) mandatory in 30 major European airports and has extended the mandatory deployment of SESAR ATM technologies and procedures to 10 additional airports in Europe, within the scope of the Common Project 1 (CP1) Commission Implementing Regulation. Report by Barbora Smolikova

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the global economy in every possible way and has had a devastating impact on the aviation industry in particular. A second wave of COVID-19 infections is hitting Europe and governments are imposing new partial lockdowns, making travel, again, nearly impossible. This poses the fundamental question of whether airport operators will be able to restore their investment capabilities, both in terms of money and human resources, to comply with the mandatory investments stipulated in the European Commission Regulation, specifically the Pilot Common Project implementation, which aims to modernise the Single European Sky.

In this complex context, ACI EUROPE’s SESAR Related Deployment Airport Grouping (SDAG) has been working closely with airport operators to provide the necessary support. The aim is to preserve what has already been invested – since 2014 nearly 85% of deployment implementation has been either completed or was in progress before the COVID-19 pandemic. SDAG is also making sure that airport operators are compliant with mandatory European Commission Implementing Regulation and therefore continue to bring an added value to their end-customers, the passengers. The first analysis conducted by SDAG reveals that 33% of the Pilot Common Project (PCP) implementation activities undertaken by airports are impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The average delay reported by airport operators is currently estimated at around 23 months.

In addition to aviation’s vital need for financial support, SDAG has also been working closely with the airport operators and the European Commission to create a stable legal basis (Implementing Regulation (IR) 716/2014), which can set a realistic SESAR Deployment Recovery Plan taking into account the COVID-19 impact.

Airports have been engaged in the deployment of mature SESAR tools, procedures and technology since its very beginning. They will continue to do so
through the upcoming Common Project 1 (CP1) Commission Implementing Regulation (successor of current Pilot Common Project), which will be put in place in the upcoming few months - hopefully before the end of 2020 or early 2021. The CP1 will continue the investments foreseen in the PCP, including further digitalisation of operations. By making the Airport Operations Plan (AOP) mandatory in some 30 major European airports and by synchronising this AOP with the Network Operations Plan (NOP), the European Commission gives full recognition to ACI EUROPE’s Ground Coordinator concept. In CP1, this is complemented with a further and enlarged roll out of the System Wide Information Management concept (SWIM), which consists of standards, infrastructure and governance enabling seamless ATM-related information access and exchange between all providers of ATM services.

The CP1 will widen its geographical scope by including the following 10 airports:

- Athens
- Hamburg
- Helsinki Vantaa
- Lisbon
- Lyon
- Malaga Costa del Sol
- Milan Linate
- Prague
- Stuttgart
- Warsaw Chopin

SDAG is already engaged with these airports, organising a dedicated information session on AOP for new “entrants” back in August to provide them with full information on deployment, funding opportunities and respective responsibilities. It is important that more airports invest in the full AOP to be executed through Airport Operating Centres (AOPCs). SDAG warmly welcomes the encouraging first reactions from our latest 10 airports.

Vaclav Rehor, Ph.D. CEO Prague Airport

“The Airport Operations Plan is a follow-up step of the A-CDM implementation and it has become an essential element of our strategy towards a data-driven decision-making, demand-capacity balancing, digitalisation and even closer cooperation, thanks to the information sharing not just in a day of operation, but up to 180 days in advance. AOP and APOC are the future pillars we already work on, regardless of whether it will be mandatory or voluntary. The benefits for the airport partners are obvious: a single source of truth available to all involved, better and timely decisions and common performance monitoring.”

Alexandros Aravanis, Chief Operations Officer, Athens International Airport

“Since its establishment (in 2001), Athens International Airport (AIA) has been a highly performing node of the air transport system. For the full integration of airport processes in Air Traffic Management (ATM) and a collaborative concept of operations, AIA has established a concrete plan for operational transformation under the frame of the CEF 2017 co-funded Action, which will allow for coping with future demand, emerging business needs, enhanced performance requirements, with a positive impact on the European ATM network performance. Aiming at deriving maximum benefits from the new Common Project (CP1), it is expected that, as of 2023, AIA will be able to commence the deployment of a fully-fledged new generation Airport Services Operations Centre, aligned with the “Extended AOP” for advanced performance-based management by using state-of-the-art technology, resulting in consolidated, efficient and climate friendly operations.”

Alessandro Fidato, Chief Operating Officer, Milan Linate Airport

“Future Airport and Network operations will be based on collaborative decision-making processes by sharing the right information. SEA strongly believes that the development of an AOP at Malpensa and Linate airports is key to facilitate cooperation among stakeholders in view of an improved overall quality of service, thanks to the enhancement of the information sharing level and, consequently, improved accuracy level of the Airport Operational Database (AODB) / Airport Collaborative Decision-Making (ACDM). The possibility of introducing predictive functions in the AOP applications will be of paramount importance in case of disruption, contingency and emergency. It will reduce recovery time and ease the task of all actors as the introduction of Post-operations Analysis App will help understand the airport performance against the performance plan and identify the root causes of deviations.”

It should be stressed that the deployment of mandatory ATM technologies could continue to be facilitated by public funding to ensure appropriate speed of investments and implementation. Airport operators have proven to be committed to deployment under those conditions. The EU should continue to make available the financial means that the industry needs for the right sequence, harmonisation and synchronisation of deployment. SDAG hopes to see a new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) call under the new Multiannual Financial Framework and Connecting Europe Facility before the end of 2021. Even though it is still difficult to quantify the COVID-19 impacts and to associate the relevant mitigation measures to implement, SDAG will keep cooperating closely with both operational stakeholders and the European Commission to be able to identify the most appropriate measures to maintain continuity in investments in ATM modernisation, which, more than ever, is perceived as a very important step towards achieving the Single European Sky goals: putting in place the performance-based regulatory framework, improving technology, increasing safety, optimising airport infrastructure and giving more focus to the human factor.

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You can visit the SDAG webpage: https://www.aci-europe.org/aci-europe-airport-grouping.html

Luc Laveyne is Managing Director, ACI EUROPE’s SESAR Related Deployment Airport Grouping (SDAG).

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The passenger experience begins at airport parking

Maarten Wings from Bosch Security Systems shares a troubling experience with airport parking – and how technology can make it better.

At 5:00am one winter morning, I set out for an airport. The way there always had traffic, and parking was always so stressful. This airport was my only option to reach meetings in two countries, so I drove off early, beginning my passenger experience for the day.

At the airport, the lanes suddenly converged under parking and arrival signs that contradicted themselves. Confused, I veered off to the wrong parking garage. I had worked with smart intersection projects before, where video data helped analyse and improve traffic. But here was only confusion.

Pulling into the garage, I saw real-time signage indicating free parking spaces. Hundreds were displayed, but the first few levels were all full. To my surprise, the third level onwards was blocked for construction, so I doubled back to find another garage. But I wasn’t the only one. Cars were circling the ground level in a panic, speeding and driving the wrong way. The airport was apparently unaware of this dangerous situation even though smart cameras could have easily alerted the control room.

I reached the exit barrier, but my ticket had timed out. I called on the intercom for help. No answer. Running short on time, I got out of my car and found an airport worker who opened the barrier. I knew that video analytics could automatically detect a car stopping traffic at a barrier. Instead, I found myself getting out of my car and looking for help. Driving off, I could only hope to catch my flight.

Back outside, I had to make a long loop around the airport to find the other garage. I immediately drove in looking for free spots. With each level, I lost more time. I started to speed up and accidentally scraped the side of my car against a pillar. As I finally parked, fully at my wits end, the flight was already boarding. I ran through the terminal to find my gate. Luckily, I did catch my plane, but I always remember how my passenger experience was ruined before I even reached the terminal. Parking technology could have prevented most of what went wrong that day. Our industry needs to shift from seeing cameras as a source of footage for after-the-fact analysis to a real-time data feed for improving the customer journey.

Learn more at: https://www.boschsecurity.com/xc/en/industries/airports/
The ACI Airport Health Accreditation programme is unique in that it provides airports with an assessment of how aligned their health measures are with the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Recommendations, along with industry best practices. Topics include cleaning and disinfection, physical distancing (where feasible and practical), staff protection, physical layout, passenger communications, and passenger facilities.

"In fact, there are 121 things in the checklist that must be checked by the airport," says Luis Felipe de Oliveira, Director General, ACI World.

All passenger areas and processes are considered, including terminal access, check-in areas, security screening, boarding gates, lounges, retail, food and beverage areas, gate equipment such as boarding bridges, escalators and elevators, border control areas and facilities (in collaboration with authorities), baggage claim areas, and arrivals exit.

"Upon submission of the completed questionnaire and all supporting materials, a virtual evaluation is conducted online by ACI to determine that health measures are being applied in alignment with ICAO CART guidelines, as well as EASA, and ACI recovery guidance, including ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports," de Oliveira explains. "To help our member airports, we conducted several webinars in the regions to help airports understand the accreditation process."

To date, more than 400 airports have applied for the accreditation, and 100 have already received it. "I am very impressed by how the industry has swiftly adapted to the new realities to introduce new measures based on globally-consistent protocols,” de Oliveira continues. "The positive response we have received demonstrates that the industry is focused on the health and welfare of travellers, staff, and the public, and the crucial work that must be done to increase passenger confidence."

The industry recovery from the effects of COVID-19 will rely on reassuring the travelling public that airports are prioritising health and safety and providing safe and hygienic facilities. "This accreditation programme meets that need, and airports have told us that this is a crucial tool that will enable them to restore public confidence in air travel," says de Oliveira. "Airports are vital cogs in the aviation ecosystem and are important engines of economic growth, wealth creation, and employment. The airport community is key in supporting jobs and economic recovery and, as airports restart and then prepare to sustain continuing operations following the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are focused on the health and welfare of travellers, staff, and the public. This accreditation programme is just one way we can continue to support the airport industry, and at the same time demonstrate efforts to regulators.”
Istanbul Airport was the first to achieve ACI Airport Health Accreditation

In August 2020, ACI World and ACI EUROPE announced that Istanbul Airport was the first to receive Airport Health Accreditation.

Kadri Samsunlu, Chief Executive Officer, iGA Airport Operation: "We continue our efforts to offer our passengers ‘safe travel at maximum hygiene’ in the new normal. The certificate awarded by Airports Council International is really important to make sure that the aviation industry is in the finest possible position to support a strong recovery in the near future. Aviation is a very resilient industry and we need to take measures to endure through the impact of COVID-19 by implementing strict health and safety standards. The Airport Health Accreditation certificate should definitely be considered by all airport operators as proof to demonstrate greater readiness to build passenger confidence and trust. To have successfully passed the audits of a body as powerful as ACI and to have qualified for Airport Health Accreditation means a lot to us. We will never ever compromise on the hygiene standards we have achieved at Istanbul Airport."

Olivier Jankovec, Director General, ACI EUROPE: "Recovery from this unprecedented crisis has called for the swift and thorough implementation across the entire aviation system of the global standards developed jointly by competent authorities. ACI has worked hand in hand with ICAO, EASA and ECDC to help deliver a blueprint for safe airport operations amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This blueprint, which has served as the basis for ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports, is now complemented by a new Airport Health Accreditation programme. It is with great pride we note that the first airport to become accredited is European – reflecting the eager adoption of the new focus on the health-concerned passenger among airports across our region. Congratulations are in order for the Istanbul Airport team!"

Rome Fiumicino and Ciampino: first EU airports to receive ACI Airport Health Accreditation

Recognising Aeroporti di Roma’s commitment to the health and well-being of travellers and staff, in August 2020 Fiumicino and Ciampino airports became the first in the EU to receive ACI Airport Health Accreditation.

Aeroporti di Roma has launched a considerable intervention plan to ensure safety and comfort for passengers and staff, including sanitisation of the entire airport perimeters, restructuring of areas inside the airports to ensure social distancing, and installation of over 300 gel dispensers and approximately 100 thermal scanners within Fiumicino and Ciampino airports.

Meanwhile, dedicated areas have been established at both airports to administer COVID-19 tests for passengers.

Marco Troncone, CEO Aeroporti di Roma: “We are extremely proud of this new result because it confirms our commitment in an essential sector, the health sector, which is a priority for us. Since the very beginning of the COVID crisis, as an airport management company we have implemented a series of measures to provide passengers and employees with the highest health and hygiene standards within a very short period of time, continuously seeking cutting-edge solutions that combine safety with comfort and it is with this spirit that we will continue to operate in the months to come.”
ACI AIRPORT HEALTH ACCREDITATION

Alexander Flassak, Finance Director & Head of Real Estate Development, lux-Airport; René Steinhaus, CEO lux-Airport; and Tom Goris, Director Operations, lux-Airport.

Luxembourg Airport first in Central Europe certified under ACI Airport Health Accreditation

In September 2020, Luxembourg Airport (lux-Airport) became the first in Central Europe to receive ACI Airport Health Accreditation. The airport has prioritised protecting the health and welfare of its passengers and staff. Protective measures include social distancing guidance, automated hand sanitizers, and a COVID-19 test station. Meanwhile, the air conditioning is exchanged with fresh air every 30 minutes.

René Steinhaus, CEO lux-Airport: “The accreditation to the ACI Health programme is very important to us, especially since ACI is providing the standard for airports and developing with them the best practice. I want to express my thanks and gratitude to ACI EUROPE and ACI World for the excellent cooperation in the COVID-19 crisis. Together, we helped passengers to be reassured about air travel.”

Brussels Airport receives ACI Airport Health Accreditation

Brussels Airport makes every effort to ensure that its facilities are hygienic and safe to welcome passengers. The combination of various health and safety measures has earned Brussels Airport ACI Airport Health Accreditation.

Arnaud Feist, CEO Brussels Airport Company: "This accreditation is a recognition of all the COVID measures that have been implemented at Brussels Airport since June. It is both gratifying and encouraging to see that the efforts made by our staff and partners are recognised internationally."

A COVID-19 Test Centre opened at Brussels Airport in September 2020. Passengers now have the opportunity to get a COVID-19 test on site at the airport, while the Test Centre is also open to those who are not travelling but need to have a test taken within the scope of contact tracing.

"We took the initiative to put up a test centre at the airport to further strengthen our sanitary measures against COVID-19 and thus contribute to protecting public health,” says Feist. "The test results will be rapidly communicated to the passengers. Testing is an essential element to allow the aviation industry, and the economy in general, to gradually get out of the current crisis without compromising the health and safety of the public."

London Luton Airport first in UK to receive ACI Airport Health Accreditation

London Luton Airport has received certification under the ACI Airport Health Accreditation programme. It was the first UK airport to be awarded the accreditation, which demonstrates its ongoing commitment to the safety of staff and passengers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance it places on restoring public confidence in air travel.

Alberto Martin, CEO London Luton Airport: “Airports are vital to the UK’s economic recovery, and as we welcome back more passengers we are taking every measure possible to ensure that everyone in the airport is as safe as possible. This accreditation provides peace of mind to our staff and the passengers who choose to fly with us. I’d like to extend my thanks to everyone at the airport whose efforts have helped us to achieve this industry-leading standard.”
Standing by airports to support a safe and smooth recovery from COVID-19

Airports were quick to put in place the necessary sanitary measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spread and to regain consumer confidence. To help airports better prepare their recovery, EUROCONTROL, with the support of ACI EUROPE and other industry partners, commissioned an impact assessment study on the implementation of the COVID-19 safety measures on airport performance. Report by Eugene Leeman.

In May this year – rather early in the COVID-19 crisis – in its Off-The-Ground Recovery Plan, ACI EUROPE raised the idea of looking into the impact of COVID-19 on airport performance by means of simulation modelling. EUROCONTROL supported it from the start and was able to allocate funding and resources fairly quickly. As a result, EUROCONTROL published a comprehensive study on 10 September, commissioned from the Airport Research Center (ARC), to help airports prepare for their recovery.

With key inputs from ARC, ACI EUROPE and four airports/airport groups (Paris CDG, London Heathrow, Stuttgart and Swedavia), as well as with the support of IATA, the study used detailed simulations to model the potential effect of COVID-19 measures on airport performance, in particular on terminal operations, including passenger journey time, terminal throughput and boarding gate processing capacity.

With the possibility that some airports could face capacity issues during August, conclusions needed to be ready with a tight turnaround. This meant a high workload for the team involved.

The project team, steered by Bruno Desart (Manager Airport Planning and Performance, EUROCONTROL) and Uta Kohse (Managing Partner, ARC), quickly set to work. During a two-month period, multiple workshops with stakeholders were held and inputs were collected, evaluated and used by ARC.

By the end of July, the main conclusions could be drawn. The results were first shared in a webinar jointly organised by EUROCONTROL and ARC on 6 August, under the theme “COVID-19 Impact on Airport Operations and Capacity Webinar”. Despite taking place during the peak summer season, the webinar attracted 270 participants from all over the world, which was indicative of the high relevance of the study for the industry.

The main conclusions of the study are:

• Airports need to focus on key limiting components – security control/immigration in terms of throughput challenges, and boarding gates and baggage reclaim in terms of space constraints.
• Airports already congested before the COVID-19 crisis can expect to reach their maximum saturation capacity at just 60-75% of their peak 2019 traffic.
• To avoid further delays and conflicting requests to passengers, greater harmonisation in terms of COVID-19 measures supporting passenger safety and re-building trust is essential across EU Member States.

(* The percentages are based on the recommendation of 1.5m physical distance and do not apply for other distances.

The simulation results (*) show that, for the same passenger numbers in a pre-COVID-19 queue:

• 50% more space is required at check-in
• 100% more space at security control
• 35-50% more space at boarding gates
• Up to 10 minutes additional time to the departing passenger journey
• 100% more space at immigration
• 30-50% more space for baggage reclaim
• 5-20 minutes additional time to the arriving passenger journey
• Additional measures are needed if health checks are required for arrivals/transfers

The full report can be downloaded here: https://www.eurocontrol.int/news/covid19-impact-airport-performance-study-published

Eugene Leeman is ACI EUROPE’s Liaison Officer to EUROCONTROL.
On 20 May 2020, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), acting on the mandate from the European Commission in the context of its Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity, issued the COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol. The Protocol provides guidelines to assist the national competent authorities and the aviation industry in ensuring the safety of flights in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended to facilitate coordination and coherence across the EU on matters of aviation health safety.

Less than a week afterwards, on 26 May 2020, EASA launched a programme to monitor the implementation of the Protocol. The programme established a collaboration platform between EASA and the airlines and airports who publicly pledge to adhere to the Protocol by signing the EASA COVID-19 Aviation Industry Charter. The Charter signatories commit to monitor the effectiveness of the recommendations implemented. They also agree to coordinate with the national competent authorities and with EASA and ECDC if certain recommendations cannot be implemented, in order to develop alternative mitigating actions. In addition, on a weekly basis the Charter signatories provide a set of data which monitors:

- How passengers adhere to the guidelines and measures
- How airports and airlines react to passengers with suspected COVID-19 infections
- The rates of infected airline crew members and airport front-line personnel, and
- The waiting times at different points in airports to identify where physical distancing might not be maintained.

The programme currently comprises more than 100 airports and more than 50 airlines providing services across Europe and globally – capturing more than 45% of the European air traffic. It is a unique initiative designed to test the recommended measures in real life, to foster cross-border harmonisation and to gain an understanding of the actual situation on the ground and in the air. The programme owes its success to airports and airlines who overwhelmingly accepted EASA’s offer to work together – as well as to our partner associations. By providing valuable input and ensuring coordination on best practices among its members, ACI EUROPE in particular continues to render its strong support to the programme and to the implementation of the Protocol. Examples of complementary initiatives include ACI EUROPE’s Guidelines for a Healthy Passenger Experience at Airports as well as the ACI Airport Health Accreditation Programme, which facilitates the implementation of the measures recommended in the Protocol in a harmonised way.

By working closely together across the aviation community, we have already made a difference. The traffic analysed under the programme for the period July-September 2020 shows that the risks of COVID-19 transmission in-flight are effectively mitigated and are very limited where the health safety measures are implemented. On average, out of 2.5 million passengers carried weekly by the reporting airlines, 8 passengers showed COVID-19 symptoms during flight (this is 0.3 passengers per 100,000 passengers carried). This low number should be read together with the effects of the measures implemented on the ground: the monitored weekly airport traffic of around 6 million passengers shows that health screening measures at airports filter on departure on average 580 passengers.
passengers per 100,000 served). We have also seen weeks in which more than 100 passengers were denied boarding due to COVID-19 compatible symptoms and more than 300 passengers were denied boarding or were reported due to non-adherence to the measures. As this is only a fraction of the total monitored traffic, it indicates that people who have symptoms in general do not travel and a vast majority of people who fly are adhering to the measures. Throughout the same period, the infection rates among airline and airport staff were very low and the dramatic increase in infection rates seen in the general public in the autumn has not been observed among airline crews and airport staff.

The aviation industry has indisputably lived up to the challenge. And, while all European efforts are currently dedicated to managing the resurgence in COVID-19 cases, aviation remains in focus. In its recent communication\(^1\) on additional measures to reinforce the EU’s response to the crisis, the European Commission has set out next steps in key areas – and facilitating safe travel is one of them.

For air travel, it is important to underline that all the envisaged actions will build on the adherence to the measures recommended so far. Currently, the 14-day incidence of COVID-19 cases in the Member States is at record levels. It is therefore of utmost importance not to lower our guard and to focus on enhancing the harmonisation and the effective implementation of the Protocol.

The programme has already delivered significant benefits and it will evolve as the Protocol evolves, drawing its relevance from the size of its community and the quality of its output. At EASA, we remain committed to it and to our joint work with aviation industry and our partner regulators to facilitate the return to normal operations after this unprecedented crisis.

For further information, visit https://www.easa.europa.eu/aviation-industry-charter-covid-19

Ana Dedijer is Project Manager at EASA – EASA Programme to Monitor the Implementation of the EASA-ECDC COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol.


The importance of high security culture – and how to get there

An interview with Anna Svedberg, Head of Security, Stockholm Arlanda and Bromma airports, Swedavia.

By Ross Falconer

Airports are, in comparison with many other places in society, clearly connected to people’s perception of high security. Many airports have already identified the value of a robust security culture. A strong security culture refers to a set of values, shared by everyone in an organisation, which determine how people are expected to think about and approach security.

“We can all agree on that,” begins Anna Svedberg, Head of Security, Stockholm Arlanda and Bromma airports, Swedavia. “The challenge is to get there, and to get everyone onboard, dedicated, willing and positive to be part of the daily work where a security mindset needs to be embedded in everything we do.”

The mission to address security culture has been a priority at Swedavia for a long time. The company, which owns, operates and develops 10 airports in Sweden, recently launched a new campaign on security awareness. “Security and safety for passengers, employees and customers are always the highest priority,” Svedberg explains.

She highlights three key objectives in order to successfully launch a security awareness strategy:

• Create full involvement and participation from as many relevant stakeholders at the airport as possible.
• Get full endorsement from the highest level in the company – then you are good to launch.
• Develop a concept that is easy to use, that is possible to adapt to different situations, and that is easily accessible – whether you have three minutes or an hour. You should be able to adapt by scaling up or down the amount of support material you need.

“When you have checked off these three boxes, the security culture at your airport has a very strong starting position,” says Svedberg. “The task of the security department should now be to promote it, help everyone to keep it going, and make it part of everyone’s daily work.”

“Security awareness training results in a higher security culture”

In general, Swedavia sees that the number of reports coming into its Security Operational Centre increases after implementing security awareness training. “Most of the observations can easily be explained by perfectly normal causes,” says Svedberg. “However, a few have been proven to be of certain interest to us and occasionally other calls have been of interest for the Police. In short – security awareness training results in a higher security culture at our airports.”

Examples include more reports regarding abandoned luggage. In almost all cases, the items were not abandoned at all. Yet, the reports speak clearly of a higher awareness and willingness to report observations among staff, allowing Swedavia and the Police to respond even faster to evaluate a potentially dangerous situation. “All this contributes to a higher level of security and less operational disturbances for our airports,” Svedberg notes.

Within the framework of its partnership with IATA regarding potentially disruptive passengers, Swedavia’s work with security awareness has also proven to be of good use when detecting anomalies in the pattern of normal behaviour in an airport.

“We have learned that security awareness training also sharpens our senses regarding important observations in environments other than our terminals,” Svedberg explains. “For instance, a colleague reported a suspected theft of airport officer jackets in a locker room. She called it in because she was worried they might end up in the wrong hands. Good thinking! It turned out the jackets had been moved and were found later the same day.”

Meanwhile, the security awareness concept has been adapted to a commercial context, as there had been some problems with thefts in shopping areas. “Together with other measures, the thefts
have decreased significantly," Svedberg comments. "I'm very grateful when colleagues identify new areas for this concept. It makes us develop and diversify it further."

Large ongoing construction projects are taking place at both Stockholm Arlanda and Göteborg Landvetter airports. In this context, a high security culture and awareness is important to implement among staff working temporarily at the airport. "They might have a longer learning curve in order to grasp the full meaning and importance of the different regulations in an airport," says Svedberg. "To ensure a high security culture, you start by targeting the project management. You will then have your security ambassadors ‘recruited’ and they will ensure that security awareness training is conducted throughout the whole project. Furthermore, if you include the security awareness concept in the requirements for badge application in the contracts set up with the construction entrepreneurs and suggest it as a recurring agenda item at meetings, it will work brilliantly as part of enforcing a strong security culture. Finally, members of our security team also pay visits onsite from time to time."

"Compliance with security regulation, improving passenger experience, increasing security awareness"

Operational security work can never rest, regardless of the situation. An advantage with having a structural and well-established security plan in place from the beginning is that everyone is thoroughly acquainted with the standards and the routines. "This can also be translated into the context of security culture," Svedberg explains. "And it can be done with a relatively small effort, since the current resources might be reduced due to the COVID-19 crisis. This means that no matter how busy our airports are, we need to continue this work, however in a tighter context."

She adds that security departments are able to use this period to lay a solid foundation for an even more robust security culture. "When times change and we’re all up and running again, the security culture will appear to be just another important part to maintain and to transfer to new colleagues coming in."

In addition to managing security awareness in daily operations, a strong security culture should also have a mindset that strives toward continuously improving and innovating how security at the airport could be even better in the future. Here it is important to encourage new ideas and creativity among employees and other stakeholders.

"The security and innovation teams are continuously working together to explore new ideas and capture opportunities enabled by new technologies," says Svedberg. "The objectives of such ideas are to maintain a high level of compliance with the security regulation, to improve the passenger experience, and to increase security awareness."

Recent examples include tests regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) image recognition for decision support, development of camera surveillance, and development of an app that can facilitate reporting when an observation is made.

"With a solid security culture, we not only achieve a higher level of security for our passengers, employees and customers, we also send a very clear signal to persons that might have bad intentions. At our airports, we work proactively against any security threats. And remember: if you see it, say it – and report it."

Anna Svedberg, Head of Security, Stockholm Arlanda and Bromma airports, Swedavia: "With a solid security culture, we not only achieve a higher level of security for our passengers, employees and customers, we also send a very clear signal to persons that might have bad intentions. At our airports, we work proactively against any security threats. And remember: if you see it, say it – and report it." Photo: Jonas Borg/Swedavia

Large ongoing construction projects are taking place at both Stockholm Arlanda and Göteborg Landvetter airports. In this context, a high security culture and awareness is important to implement among staff working temporarily at the airport.
he continuous interconnectedness of the modern world and the use of technology and digital tools that help to foster and promote our lifestyle provide us with comfort, safety and security, but also become a source of vulnerability. In other words – the more technology we use to improve security, the more vulnerabilities we are exposed to, thus decreasing security. How do we deal with this dilemma? The answer is simple but yet complicated – it is cybersecurity. Cyber-attacks and threats have transnational components and can affect civil aviation’s infrastructure and ecosystem. Dependency and reliance on technology in civil aviation call for a united approach in tackling cyber threats. Cybersecurity is not about this very moment, but it is mostly about understanding how to prepare for what’s next. The key for cyber resilience in this complex and vastly connected world is to collaborate across the public, private and academic sectors where each brings its own strengths.

In July 2020, ACI EUROPE and its members, together with the TSA, Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA), some European regulators and a number of international airports, produced a document titled “Open Architecture for Airport Security Systems” with a significant focus on cybersecurity. This document aims to foster opportunities for increased innovation and access to a broader range of suppliers and systems to meet operational requirements.

In this context, Open Architecture is, at its core, an open infrastructure where the needs and opportunities for enhanced cybersecurity are discussed. It provides a platform to cooperate and create a tailored approach to various components of security equipment, such as security scanners, X-ray technology, Explosive Trace Detection (ETD), Closed-circuit television (CCTV) and many others. This includes requirements and guidelines to acknowledge the needs of airports and to stimulate open discussion with vendors on the specifications of their product, thus creating reciprocal communication and agreements. Open Architecture is built on expectations and deliverables that benefit both sides and help to clearly build a pathway to strong and reliable business partnerships. Dynamic, resilient and adaptable tools that respond to emerging needs and opportunities for enhanced cybersecurity are discussed. It provides a platform to cooperate and create a tailored approach to various components of security equipment, such as security scanners, X-ray technology, Explosive Trace Detection (ETD), Closed-circuit television (CCTV) and many others. This includes requirements and guidelines to acknowledge the needs of airports and to stimulate open discussion with vendors on the specifications of their product, thus creating reciprocal communication and agreements. Open Architecture is built on expectations and deliverables that benefit both sides and help to clearly build a pathway to strong and reliable business partnerships.

Cyber Tribe: a new collective approach to airport screening equipment

The cyber domain has become the new battlefield of malicious activities. Cyber criminals attack every 39 seconds somewhere in the world. To combat these threats, ACI EUROPE’s member airports, together with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and European regulators, created a list of 18 cybersecurity requirements to help airports to collaborate with vendors and ensure “cybersecurity by design” in security screening equipment.

Report by Daiga Dege


Daiga Dege is ACI EUROPE’s Cybersecurity Coordinator.
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In light of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, many airports have been exploring innovative health screening measures to keep passengers safe from health threats and rebuild their confidence in air travel.

Temperature screening is one of the most widely adopted measures. "It can be fast, easy and contactless to identify passengers with a raised temperature – an important symptom of infection with COVID-19 – providing airports with a feasible way to fight against the pandemic," explains Prof. Zhiqiang Chen from Tsinghua University, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, NUCTECH.

As such, NUCTECH, a leading supplier of advanced security and safety solutions, has developed standalone and integrated solutions for elevated body temperature. "They both could conduct health screening at a safe distance in a non-invasive and automatic way, delivering a frictionless and healthy passenger journey with minimal disruption to airport operations," says Prof. Chen.

Temperature screening technology as a layer of health screening measures should not lead to additional stress on passenger processes by potentially incurring extra wait time and crowd gathering. "NUCTECH’s FeverBlock screening system, a cutting-edgebinocular thermal camera system, is designed for airports to perform mass screening of people," explains Prof. Chen. "By combining infrared thermal imaging technology with visible light technology, it conducts skin temperature screening across multiple people automatically and rapidly at a safe distance of one to five metres, delivering a throughput of 200 people per minute."

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing an important role in the evolution of the FeverBlock screening system to improve its detection accuracy and reduce false alarm rates. The embedded AI face detection algorithm can locate human faces quickly and accurately. "Also, it is capable of self-corrections of deviation caused by distance or forehead-body temperature difference," says Prof. Chen. "Automatic compensation calculations would minimise false positives and negatives of this kind."

In order to further streamline the screening process, NUCTECH has developed state-of-the-art thermal imaging modules to be integrated with existing security scanners and an innovative robotic platform. "For instance, combined with the terahertz wave body scanner, temperature checking can be completed simultaneously with security screening," says Prof. Chen. "With a high throughput of 2,000 persons/hour, the solution allows for passengers to go through safety and security checking in a seamless, touchless and privacy-respecting manner."

The thermal imaging module can also be mounted on NUCTECH’s iGuard robotic platform for flexible deployment. The integrated solution can automatically patrol a pre-defined place to serve as a temporary fever-screening post, quickly responding to fluctuations in flight schedules.

Improving hygiene standards through comprehensive disinfection

The EASA/ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol recommends that airports deploy separate physical booths for suspected COVID-19 cases requiring further assessment. Similarly, the booths should be disinfected after each use to prevent viral transmission to the next occupants.

"In this case, NUCTECH’s WeSpace..."
physical isolation unit is coming in handy to provide airports with an ad-hoc isolation room for the suspected cases waiting for further medical assessment,” explains Prof. Chen. “WeSpace, equipped with UV disinfection technology, can be disinfected and sterilized fast and effectively after each use. Usually, thorough sterilization can be completed within half an hour to eliminate the presence of viruses, preventing cross transmission to the next occupants and effectively containing the spread of contagious diseases.”

Equipped with a two-way communication system and a mobile tablet, the isolation room can be utilised for safe interviews and contactless medical observation. Coupled with tailor-made mobile application, it allows officials to perform epidemiological surveys for contact tracing, while protecting airport staff and passengers from risky exposure to virus.

Disinfection has become a crucial step to deliver a safe environment for both passengers and staff. A unique challenge is the high contact nature of the screening process, with frequent close interactions between passengers and interfaces of baggage trays. “A study from Finland’s National Institute for Health and Welfare uncovers that the tray used in the security checkpoint is the place containing the most germs and viruses at the airport,” says Prof. Chen.

NUCTECH has introduced a UV-C Tray Disinfection Module, specially designed for cleaning trays at security checkpoints and easily integrated with tray return systems. “The solution can deliver high doses of UV-C light and eliminate 99.99% of viruses and bacteria attached on trays automatically,” Prof. Chen comments.

Another innovation is the iGuard disinfection robot, a recently-developed mobile disinfection system by NUCTECH. Large quantities of disinfectant or a UVC module can be mounted onto iGuard to enable comprehensive cleaning around high footfall areas. It is equipped with a large 15-litre container for disinfection spray. “UV-C light can also be configured to cover a broad area by disinfecting the air around the autonomously moving robot,” says Prof. Chen. “As a tireless robot, iGuard is capable of long working hours with steady performance. It is easy to operate and can be automatically recharged after finishing routine cleaning. Capable of 24/7 services, it can operate automatically with only a few operators needed to supervise the fleet.”

**Automation and intelligence**

More and more advanced technologies are being utilised to facilitate a touchless and efficient passenger experience, while reassuring passengers and airport staff of safety and security.

Approved by ECAC at EDSCB standard C3, the Kylin Ti X-ray CT inspection system enables liquids and laptops to be left inside passenger bags. “Fewer trays are needed and less contact among passengers, staff and the surface of trays,” Prof. Chen explains. “Moreover, the high throughput could help airports maintain a steady passenger flow and make it easier to avoid any congregation of people.”

Meanwhile, millimetre wave body scanners have been employed by many airports as a primary or secondary passenger screening technology. “As a better alternative to a traditional metal detector, it not only improves detection of non-metal items, but also enables a targeted secondary search by highlighting the position of concealment under clothing on a generic figure,” says Prof. Chen. AI is also playing an increasingly vital role in transformation of the security process by empowering the whole system with more automation and intelligence. “AI-enabled algorithms have greatly improved the detection capabilities of millimetre wave body scanners and CT scanners with automatic recognition of targeted items, and also delivered very low false alarm rates, demonstrating the potential for reduction of high-contact re-checks,” Prof. Chen explains. “This can significantly speed-up passenger flow and reduce unnecessary interactions between passengers and staff, while improving security levels in an efficient and effective way.”

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, health and security will remain top priorities for the aviation community. To facilitate travel and improve passenger experience, while maintaining high security levels in an efficient and effective way.

Prof. Chen emphasises the importance of airports and other stakeholders working together to apply innovative security and health measures to support airport operations. “Sooner or later, the airports and aviation industry will recover from the current crisis. It is time to reshape the future of air travel and lay the foundations for its future growth by piecing together hygiene measures, health screening technologies, self-service and automated solutions to better adapt to the post-COVID-19 era.”
Regaining passenger confidence and providing a safe environment

An interview with Jose Antonio Canle, Head of SEMA Infrastructure and Escalator Business Hub, KONE. By Ross Falconer

KONE has launched its new ‘Health & Well-Being Solutions’, which are designed to ensure a ‘Health Safety Net’ around airport users and travellers. “We are really proud to say that our KONE Health & Well-Being Solutions have been well accepted by our customers and we have a significant number of elevators and escalators already equipped with these solutions, with very positive customer feedback,” says Canle. “We can also add that some of them are using our solutions as part of their marketing campaigns to restore customer confidence.”

Connectivity and digitalisation

All companies are focused on developing new services and solutions based on the connectivity and digitalisation of their products. “Thanks to 5G implementation we’ll soon see a dramatic change in how we understand any business,” Canle comments.

The KONE 24/7 Connected Services for airports were launched in 2018 and the company is in the process of connecting its elevators and escalators to the KONE Digital Platform. “This is giving us enormous visibility about the behaviour of our equipment, being able to predict any failure or misuse, and optimising the downtime of the elevators and escalators during maintenance,” says Canle. “Not only that, thanks to our KONE Digital Platform we have started to offer new services and solutions based on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The opportunities that AI is giving us are unlimited. We are collaborating with our customers to define new solutions based on AI and are in the process of building our KONE Partner Ecosystem to collaborate with different accredited partners to meet new customer and end-user needs.”

Canle adds that this year KONE DX – the first fully-connected elevator – has been launched, and KONE is in a position to be able to apply Application Programming Interface (API) to help its products interact with external software components and operating systems. “With these solutions, we can say that KONE is already in that ‘co-creative stage’ working together with our customers and partners to define new solutions and services to match their new expectations. Our aim is to deliver ‘digital experiences’ to all our customers.”

I t goes without saying that we are living in unprecedented times, with uncertainty as to how long the world will be dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. “With this picture in mind, we have to show passengers and airport users that being at the airport will be perfectly safe for them,” says Jose Antonio Canle, Head of SEMA Infrastructure and Escalator Business Hub, KONE. “We should see this situation as a call for all aviation industry stakeholders to change our way of understanding this business.”

More important than ever is the need for all stakeholders to work together in what Canle describes as a ‘co-creation approach’. “We’ll need just one infected person at any airport to destroy passenger confidence and go back to the starting point. Our goal should be to create a ‘Health Safety Net’ around passengers and airport users, with each stakeholder contributing their best solutions and technology to ensure this is achieved.”

KONE has launched its new ‘Health & Well-Being Solutions’, which are designed to ensure a ‘Health Safety Net’ around airport users and travellers. “We know that one of the riskiest places to be, when we are talking about the possibility of being infected by the virus, is any closed area – for example, inside elevators,” Canle explains. “To avoid that risk, we have the KONE Elevator AirPurifier to ensure a cleaner air quality inside our elevators.”

Another risk factor is potentially-infected surfaces, and here too KONE has developed solutions. KONE Elevator Call reduces the need to touch elevator buttons, while KONE HandrailSanitizer for escalators, autowalks and ramps uses a new ultra-violet, self-cleaning solution for thorough disinfection.

“We are really proud to say that our KONE Health & Well-Being Solutions have been well accepted by our customers and we have a significant number of elevators and escalators already equipped with these solutions, with very positive customer feedback,” says Canle. “We can also add that some of them are using our solutions as part of their marketing campaigns to restore customer confidence.”

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Istanbul Airport committed to award-winning end-to-end fully digital passenger experience

An interview with Ersin Inankul, Chief Digital and Commercial Officer, IGA Istanbul Airport. By Ross Falconer

It is 18 months since the “Great Move” to the new Istanbul Airport. During that time, it has welcomed 70 million passengers and is now connected with over 300 destinations.

In line with digital transformation trends, the airport is committed to designing an end-to-end fully digital passenger experience that will take the digital customer journey to the next level.

Leading these efforts is Ersin Inankul, who began in the new role of Chief Digital and Commercial Officer at Istanbul Airport in February 2020.

“Following the start of the new role, I have focused on merging commercial needs with IT capabilities,” he begins.

“Currently, my focus is on developing a new digital strategy for commercial activities at Istanbul Airport to gain a deep and detailed view of our customer behaviour across all channels. I am developing a unique open commercial platform for technology-enabled collaboration with all related parties to enhance the services they offer and improve our passenger experience.”

The main projects prioritised within this scope include an e-commerce platform, digital wallet, digital passenger journey during the COVID-19 pandemic, contactless transactions, reward programme, digital marketing, and digital advertising platform.

Inankul’s previous experience includes being CIO at Istanbul Airport, as well as roles at TAV Information Technologies and TAV Construction. “Previously, I have successfully led multi-million-dollar telecom and airport projects in Turkey, Georgia, Tunisia, and the Middle East,” he explains. “This diversified pathway has allowed me to develop a multidisciplinary background, and an ability to adapt to and benefit from a variety of challenges.

Currently, Istanbul Airport has more passenger capacity than the previous 12 airports I have worked with combined, and I have successfully managed to build the IT infrastructure and meet the technological needs of this airport thanks to my former experiences.”

A digital state of mind

Inankul emphasises that, in today’s world, a digital state of mind is required in all business decisions. Therefore, combining both responsibilities – Digital and Commercial – in one role helps to eliminate organisational bureaucracy and accelerate the digital transformation pace smoothly.

“Considering digital innovations, we plan to generalise our biometric applications,” says Inankul. “In particular, Istanbul Airport’s passenger processing systems will be reinforced with biometric solutions that incorporate facial recognition technology.”

Smart cameras will retrieve passengers’ biometric data from check-in desks and self-service kiosks, processing the data for use at various control points, such as security, border control, lounges, retail stores and boarding gates.

Once unique identification information is formed, comprising a combination of biometric data, flight details and passport or identity card, passengers will not be required to present any documents while travelling through the airport. This, Inankul explains, will reduce the time travellers
Ersin Inankul, Chief Digital and Commercial Officer, iGA Istanbul Airport: “We continue our work at Istanbul Airport with the aim of transforming the time spent at the airport into a unique travel experience. Our goal is for our passengers to experience a beautiful and memorable journey by focusing on art and culture, away from travel stress.”

On the commercial side, Istanbul Airport is establishing its own digital marketplace – istbuy.com – which will utilise Augmented Reality and Artificial Intelligence. “Thanks to this platform, we will be able to showcase and sell all the products and services available in duty free before our passengers arrive at the airport,” says Inankul. “We will be delivering campaigns and special offers customised according to our passengers’ behaviours in commercial stores, using different technologies, including notifications via beacons and instant offers with Augmented Reality.”

The airport’s ‘Digital Passenger Journey’ will be integrated with the Istanbul Airport app, with the aim of providing an environment in which travellers can plan their time at the airport in advance, minimising stress and focusing on moments of enjoyment.

**ACI EUROPE Best Airport for Digital Transformation**

The successful focus on digital innovation was recognised at the recent 16th ACI EUROPE Awards, at which Istanbul Airport won the Digital Transformation Award. This award recognises airports that have embraced digitalisation, as well as innovative technologies and procedures, to enhance their operations.

Kadri Samsunlu, Chief Executive Officer, IGA Airport Operation: “Digital transformation is critical in many aspects, from operational performance to strategic advantages. Through taking advantage of different fields of technology, combined with the vision of SESAR (Single European Sky ATM Research), at Istanbul Airport we offer our passengers a unique digital journey experience thanks to the smart solutions we provide, as well as advanced technologies and different practices of digitalisation. With this process, we are achieving an even better operational capability and are able to reduce the airport costs as well as create an enhanced passenger experience that is digitally-aware. In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that our airport provides valuable insights into how digital transformation can be carried out in the best way possible. Winning the ‘Best European Airport Award for Digital Transformation’ is a great honour and a motivating affirmation of our ongoing efforts at iGA Istanbul Airport.”

Inankul adds: “It is a great honour for me and my team to be deemed worthy of this award in such a hard category and among Europe’s most important airports, despite being a new airport. We believe in the power of digital transformation to serve as the airport of the future. With the advantages that digital transformation offers, such new practices will provide us with the critical data for the purposes of managing the workload and to shape the trade at the airport.”

“We attach importance to local and international diversity”

Istanbul Airport’s 48,000sqm retail area offers passengers the opportunity to shop from many major international brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Gucci, Saint Laurent, Hugo Boss, and Fendi, as well as local concepts that create a sense of place.

The Bosphorus Zone in the duty free shopping area, with architecture inspired by the Bosphorus in Istanbul, brings together iconic global brands and local Turkish brands. “We attach importance to local and international diversity in our airport,” Inankul emphasises. “In addition to luxury stores, we created a concept consisting of stores that sell Turkish delight, baklava, coffee, and local souvenirs.”

So, while the jewellery and accessories range includes major brands BVLGARI, Swarovski and Pandora, there are also ‘ATÜ Bazaar’ stores offering a comprehensive selection of local products such as Turkish delight and Turkish coffee. “We continue to work with new brands that want to take a place in our airport,” Inankul explains. “Examples of brands that already have a store at the airport are Pierre Cardin/Cacharel, LCW, D&R, Zen Diamond, Saat & Saat, Hermes, Prada, Yargıcı, Longchamp, Michael Kors, Mavi, Vakko, Desa, Ipekylol, Nike, Kgili, and Ray-Ban.”

In January 2020, ATU Duty Free, a partnership between TAV Airports and Unifree Duty Free/Gebr. Heinemann, opened a new 800sqm multi-brand concept, the Luxury Square, at Istanbul Airport.

“The traditionally strong sub-category of handbags leads sales, but, perhaps
surprisingly, footwear and streetwear are the other segments performing above expectations,” Inankul explains. “We have tried to create a perfect mix, with some classic brands that appeal strongly to millennials today, such as Burberry, Givenchy or Chloé, and hot brands such as Off-White or Palm Angels.”

Importantly, the opportunity to purchase across categories in the Luxury Square is strong. “You don’t feel like you’re in a zone just for fashion and accessories. Cross-product sales and categories such as sports shoes, bags, and sunglasses, which are among the most demanded categories, are all together. It was designed as an area that is easy to shop and access.”

In addition to the retail offer, there are 67 food & beverage units spread across an area of more than 33,000sqm. Two new outlets opened in July 2020: Subway’s first outlet at Istanbul Airport, and local brand Cups & Clouds – a stylish coffee shop with an apron scene on Pier B.

“We try to enrich the menu we can offer to passengers,” says Inankul. “So far, we have restaurants with Turkish, Japanese, and Italian cuisines (Tadinda Anadolu, Yo Sushi, Enzo) and also with healthy and vegan options (Gram). We plan to diversify with other cuisine preferences. Our fast food line consists of international brands like Burger King, Sbarro, Popeyes, and Subway.”

In terms of coffee shop concepts, international brands like Starbucks and Gloria Jeans are complemented by local outlets such as Cups and Clouds. Turkish-based international brand Simit Sarayi, meanwhile, has an important bakery concept at Istanbul Airport. “Our main target on the F&B side is to fill the brand basket not only with familiar and international names, but also local and quality ones,” Inankul adds.

Integrating digital experience with physical retail experience

From the 90s to the present day, shopping habits have evolved from traditional resources to online channels. “The combination of multichannel marketing and online shopping with physical stores offers an ideal shopping experience. The online experience lays the groundwork for physical purchasing behaviour,” says Inankul.

Indeed, the airport is following the trend of integrating digital experience with physical retail experience in the development of the ‘istbuy.com’ digital marketplace platform.

“We will take the retail experience to the next level with a service where passengers can shop with a higher level of awareness and consciousness, inform themselves on what awaits them at the airport before they arrive here, especially when the time they will spend at the airport is limited, and also get access to advantageous offers and suggestions at any time,” Inankul enthuses.

The digital marketplace platform will allow all commercial stores to generate campaigns both individually and interactively. This campaign module will be supported by Augmented Reality (AR), so travellers will be able to display campaigns and special products available in all stores on their mobile devices, while receiving indoor navigation service through their smartphone cameras.

“Under this AR-supported campaign system, an AI-supported recommendation engine will be employed,” Inankul comments. “The system will generate passenger-specific recommendations, and will offer its suggestions via the marketplace, AR, Istanbul Airport app, and various digital screens. In addition, we will offer our passengers the opportunity to earn and spend points, as well as contactless payment, thanks to the digital wallet available on the system, based on their spending habits and behaviour patterns at our airport.”

In line with digital transformation trends, it is evident that AR applications, mobile contactless payment, and technologies that support the social distancing introduced as a result of COVID-19, will remain at the forefront.

Inankul explains that Istanbul Airport is continuing its efforts to design an end-to-end fully digital passenger experience, taking the customer journey to the next level. In this context, it is making use of chatbot, voice assistant, mobile payment, biometric, and AR technologies. “By integrating all these technology solutions with our big data management platforms, we will recognise the passenger even before travel, mitigate their travel concerns, and start to offer solutions suited to their habits and needs even before they arrive at the airport, while allowing for a much more enjoyable and comfortable airport experience.”

Istanbul Airport’s 46,000sqm retail area offers passengers the opportunity to shop from many major international brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Gucci, Saint Laurent, Hugo Boss, and Fendi, as well as local concepts that create a sense of place.
How travellers interact with everyday environments is set to change. Safe and clean spaces are and will be a priority. KONE’s expertise in people flow planning, along with a suite of health and well-being solutions, such as self-cleaning escalator handrails and antibacterial elevator surfaces, will help airports rethink the passenger experience in the terminals and get ready for a new reality.

For more info please visit: www.kone.com/airports

FOR SAFE AND SMOOTH PASSENGER FLOW IN AIRPORTS
Over the last few decades, we’ve witnessed a shift from environmental monitoring to environmental management and now to Environmental Intelligence (EI). More recently, we’ve seen the increasing impact environmental considerations are having on all businesses, including airports.

It is in this context that Envirosuite decided to partner with Frost & Sullivan to understand global perceptions about environmental management, the emerging market of EI, and how organisations are planning on using environmental data and technology-driven processes to unlock more value for their businesses.

"Frost & Sullivan polled 272 senior executives across various geographies and sectors to understand the challenges and approaches to environmental management in airports, cities, mining, construction, waste and wastewater, as well as a range of industrial sites such as heavy manufacturing, ports, smelters, and agribusiness," says Kent Espersen, Vice President, EMEA, Envirosuite.

In the report, Environmental Intelligence: driving business growth in a changing climate, it’s evident that the environment is increasingly impacting business. “Over the last three years, 53% of respondents said they experienced dramatic impacts on their business from environmental factors,” Espersen explains. “Nearly 86% of the airports’ respondents mentioned facing significant or dramatic impacts from environmental factors.”

Almost 80% of respondents from airports cited public complaints and site proximity to the public as a major factor that impacts their organisations. “As previously presented in the white paper, Exploring the Aviation industry in the ‘new era’, it was highlighted that community beliefs around the environment and noise, in particular, have shifted as a result of COVID-19 and that it will be an ongoing challenge for airports as the industry emerges,” says Espersen.

He notes that there are also internal challenges for airports, including driving the focus for environmental management within their organisations. "The main challenges for those polled were little or no incentive internally to improve environmental performance, and inadequacy of current environmental analytical tools used. This shows that there is room for both airports and technology providers to do more.”

The report also identifies EI as critical to unlocking business growth. There is a discernible shift from viewing EI as a compliance exercise, to using EI as a powerful tool to add value to a business’ operations. "However, only 34% of total survey respondents indicated that they were familiar with the concept of EI and were currently applying it within their organisations, while 44% suggested they were planning to implement it in the next two years," Espersen notes. "There’s good reason to adopt an EI approach and technology, with 48% of respondents citing key benefits such as reducing operating costs, reducing health, safety and environment (HSE) breaches, and improved community engagement.”

COVID-19 has also brought the bottom line firmly into focus for organisations across the world, and EI is something that isn’t just good for communities and the environment, it is a growth driver that Espersen describes as “a competitive edge”.

“Organisations are slowly starting to realise that EI is so much more than a tick-box exercise; it’s now, more than ever, business critical,” he says. “Those who underestimate the importance and impact of EI are potentially putting their organisations at risk. The early adopters who are already implementing EI practices are seeing significant results.” One of the megatrends identified by Frost & Sullivan as driving the need for environmental management is ‘connectivity and convergence’. “By 2025, there will be over seven connected devices per human, over five billion mobile internet users, 1.2 billion 5G subscribers, and a tenfold increase in data generation,” Espersen explains. “We are seeing this megatrend of connectivity and convergence, which will uncover new opportunities to address social and economic challenges, including environmental issues.”

He highlights several key technological factors driving improvements in environmental management: data analytics, sensor technologies, integration of multiple environmental parameters, and improved data connectivity and the use of cloud technology.

Looking ahead, Envirosuite believes that airports should be looking to refocus their noise and climate offerings to provide the data stakeholders need when they need it. This will be done by leveraging technologies that will allow aviation to grow in a sustainable way. “In addition, the insights and trends coming out of the data need to be trustworthy to ensure the focus can be on the outcome needed. You can only manage what you are measuring,” Espersen concludes.

Using environmental data and technology-driven processes to unlock more value for businesses

An interview with Kent Espersen, Vice President, EMEA, Envirosuite. By Ross Falconer
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The world we live in today is a very uncertain place. The crisis unleashed by COVID-19 was unforeseen and certainly on a larger scale than anything we have seen before in the aviation industry. But it is not the first crisis, nor will it be the last, that the industry is called upon to deal with.

“To survive this and future crises we need to become agile as organisations, able to adjust in the face of uncertainty in order to conserve our liquidity and ensure business continuity,” says Eleni Kaloyirou, CEO Hermes Airports. “At the same time, we have to maintain our vision for the future and, while we may need to adapt parts of our strategy, we shouldn’t lose sight of where we are headed so that we don’t take actions that are detrimental to our long-term strategic priorities.”

Hermes Airports, which manages Cyprus’ two gateways – Larnaka and Pafos airports – has made extensive efforts not just to survive, but also to excel during the COVID-19 crisis. “Our priorities from the start of the pandemic have been the protection and safety of our staff and passengers, ensuring at the same time business continuity – an effort that required quick reflexes,” Kaloyirou explains. “I would highlight two main areas where we have done well: the preservation of our operational efficiency and the seamless implementation of the newly-introduced measures by all airport stakeholders.”

Hermes Airports’ COVID-19 response focused on “People, Communication and Restart”

An interview with Eleni Kaloyirou, CEO Hermes Airports.

By Ross Falconer

Safe and seamless processing of passengers

In its response to COVID-19, Hermes Airports has focused on three key areas: People, Communication and Restart. From the beginning of the crisis, it recognised the importance of communication and took steps to stay connected with passengers, airlines, all airport stakeholders, and its own people. “We have kept both the passengers and the public informed on all important updates relating to the airports’ operation,” says Kaloyirou. “This was achieved with the use of our digital channels, but also the chatbot service which proved to be extremely useful as it provided responses on a 24-hour basis to enquiries about the health protocols, as well as flights.”

Regular virtual meetings were held with all airport stakeholders to ensure everyone was kept informed of the developing situation, the need to implement the health protocols, and mitigation measures. “At the same time, when staying home was the new modus operandi, we wanted to let people know that we care both for their physical and mental health, so we embarked on a Stay Safe / Stay Home social media campaign,” Kaloyirou explains. “Under the umbrella of ‘Travelling Never Ends’ we watched sold-out shows from home, we remembered, and we reminded people why we love our country, and found ways to make staying at home more pleasant using the hashtag #wecareforyou.”

Likewise, Hermes Airports wanted to support the well-being of its staff by offering daily tips through the company’s intranet, as well as a series of weekly webinars and videos that encouraged employees to maintain their positivity and calmness. “Moreover, we acted as a bridge between airlines and the rest of the tourism stakeholders – government, tourism boards, hoteliers, etc – to communicate the message that Cyprus was preparing for restart and doing all that was necessary to keep the destination safe and ready to welcome airline customers back,” Kaloyirou adds.

Hermes Airports worked closely with the Cypriot Government for the preparation of a detailed State travel protocol.
encompassing new operating procedures aimed at maintaining the good epidemiological condition of the island, while also ensuring that the airports would be at the forefront of building confidence in Cyprus as a safe destination.

“We then acted as a coordinator for its implementation by all stakeholders,” says Kaloyirou. “A new cleaning protocol was adopted and necessary adaptations to the existing infrastructure were made.”

These adaptations included the installation of thermal cameras for arriving and departing passengers as well as staff, the requirement to wear masks throughout the airport for passengers and employees, the installation of Perspex screens at all points with customer contact, and the implementation of a procedure for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases. “Finally, we adapted a number of spaces within the airport to serve as testing areas for COVID-19 for incoming flights – a crucial element in the government’s response to the pandemic, and we put in place the procedures to facilitate the safe and seamless processing of passengers through these,” Kaloyirou comments.

Generating green power and decreasing carbon footprint

Larnaka and Pafos airports are both accredited at Level 3+ Neutrality of ACI’s Airport Carbon Accreditation and preserving its sustainability roadmap remains a top priority for Hermes Airports. “In this direction, one of the initiatives we are currently undertaking is the implementation of two photovoltaic plants for onsite power generation at the two airports, generating green power for self-consumption of between 25% and 30% of the airports’ power requirements, further contributing to the reduction of Hermes’ carbon dioxide emissions,” says Kaloyirou.

An important major project at Larnaka Airport was the upgrade of the HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system, which was completed in phases due to its complex nature. “It helps us attain an overall reduction in energy consumption, thus decreasing the carbon footprint of the main energy-consuming infrastructure of the airport, while improving the capacity and efficiency of the system,” Kaloyirou explains. “The total energy reduction achieved from the implementation of this project is equal to 30% and 2,400 tons of carbon emissions.”

“A whole new momentum for recovery and longer-term growth”

Significantly, Wizz Air announced a new base at Larnaka Airport in May 2020, during the lockdown period. Starting in July, the airline has based two A320s at Larnaka with 11 new services to seven countries.

“Right in the midst of the crisis, years of discussions and deliberations with Wizz Air bore fruit,” says Kaloyirou. “The establishment of a base is a vote of confidence by the airline for Cyprus and the airport. It came at a very critical time, giving room for optimism and created a whole new momentum for recovery and longer-term growth.”

Looking ahead, Hermes Airports, like the rest of the industry, accepts that a return to 2019 passenger levels will take time. Nevertheless, Kaloyirou has no doubt that demand for air travel will continue to exist and will gradually revive, especially for an island country like Cyprus with a heavy dependence on tourism. “Our long-term strategic priorities remain in place and, if anything, we can see that we need to increase our focus on the sustainability of our business. Our immediate priority is to work collectively as an industry towards the harmonisation of travel regulations and testing throughout Europe, so that we can start to restore traffic and connectivity, until a more permanent solution in terms of a vaccine or a cure is found.”
The COVID-19 pandemic has meant more airport staff working remotely. The requirement to seamlessly share information across different teams has underlined the benefits of all-in-one cloud-based software to manage airport operations.

"With Eforsair, the airport situation can be monitored remotely in real time via the dashboard, and directors or managers can intervene if necessary," says Bob Slade, Airport Operations IT Specialist, EFORSA. "Everyone shares the same platform and instantly sees the same data during online meetings. The statistical data is also current for inter-departmental analysis and decision-making, so strategic changes can be implemented as situations develop."

Eforsair Business is an Airfield Operational Management System that works on desktop and mobile devices. As the name suggests, it is designed for all airfield services but is adaptable for other airport departments.

"Essentially it’s a logbook, but it contains more elements than traditional ones," Slade explains. "It includes facets such as shift management, Wildlife Hazard Management (WHM) with geolocation, asset management, document management, and major incident management."

When something significant occurs, everyone who needs to know about the event is automatically informed via the communications element as soon as it is committed into the system. From this point onwards, with appropriate permissions, recipients may access the system to see what’s going on and input any relevant data, irrespective of their location.

"The approach we use is unusual as it’s an all-in-one system for all departments," Slade comments. "There are no separate modules and any future developments to the system, dependent on client needs, will be included at no charge."

Eforsair has developed an Economy version of its software, which is now available free-of-charge in response to the COVID-19 situation. "It was originally designed as a taster version of Eforsair Business, but our Managing Director’s view was that airport budgets would decline, and remote business management would become more necessary, so we decided to help out the vulnerable airports," Slade explains.

Eforsair Economy is a logbook with built-in notifications and training management elements. It is deployed with full tutorials and all the base data needed to make it fully functional. This version is limited to four departments, with unlimited user access, and works on all devices. "It serves virtually all the needs of small General Aviation airports in our view, and we decided to help out the vulnerable airports," Slade explains.

Eforsair Business is already used by 24 French airports, while it has recently been deployed to airports in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and the UK. There are versions currently available in four languages – English, French, Italian and Spanish – with a German version coming online by the end of the year.

Slade adds that, if a business has multiple employees, then collaboration should be a top priority, with cloud-computing making collaboration a simple process. "When we demonstrate to our customers, their reaction is phenomenal and makes all our hard work worthwhile. We carried out a recent survey and there was positive consensus throughout. Our favourite comment came from a potential UK customer: ‘It’s opened our eyes for sure, and I’ve been in aviation some 40 years now’. So, we are confident that we are moving in the right direction.”
In this new normal, we have made our processes safer to make all your travels that will start from our airport healthier.

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#wecare
Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen’s focus on passenger health, safety and experience

An interview with Ersel Gőral, CEO Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport. By Ross Falconer

The main strategy of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen is to provide a seamless experience to travelers and become the preferred city airport. Progress towards achieving this goal has involved implementing time-saving services for passengers, especially with digital applications. One notable example is the e-passport gates that have been implemented to ease bottlenecks at border control. Passengers are now able to complete the process, stress-free, in under 30 seconds.

“With the help of passenger flow tracking systems, we can track how crowds are moving across the airport, identify busy locations in real time, and produce alerts for the operations team to take immediate actions to solve the problems,” explains Ersel Gőral, CEO Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport. “The information is also used for smart toilet cleaning. The cleaning resources are allocated based on usage. Besides operational excellence, the system also helps with monitoring social distancing, ensuring passenger health and safety.”

Another innovation is Aerobot – a robot that informs and reminds travellers about COVID-19 precautions at the airport. It also helps with flight schedule information and indoor navigation throughout the terminal.

Since flights resumed on 1 June 2020, following the COVID-19 related shutdown, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen has continued to implement comprehensive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of passengers and employees.

“We were quick to comply with the requirements of the Pandemic Certification Programme, which the Directorate General of Civil Aviation introduced for all airport operators and other civil aviation organisations in Turkey,” says Gőral. “First of all, as the terminal operator, we offer Flash Pass and Meet & Assist services at the airport for our guests to proceed faster,” Gőral explains. “At the terminal, our guests can use self-check-in kiosks, self-drop kiosks, mobile security checks, and mobile boarding. Additionally, all conventional equipment has been repositioned and enriched with new functionalities to allow passengers to perform the processes themselves using their identity documents.”

Blockchain has been a vital element of the airport’s digital transformation. Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen uses a blockchain platform for information flow to its stakeholders in a fast and accurate way. “Blockchain allows us both to send out information instantly to our stakeholders and to verify the information being given,” Gőral comments. “With this system, efficiency has increased in our workforce and on our stakeholders’ side. We have minimised human error with blockchain, automating many processes that were previously performed manually. The critical information shared among the stakeholders is now fully validated, accurate and real-time. Therefore, while getting rid of any delays, the time gained is the biggest positive aspect.”

Digital transformation: investment and innovation

In addition to health and safety measures, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen has made a number of technological investments and innovations. For example, due to the pandemic face-to-face communication is being minimised, with passengers preferring online solutions. “As the terminal operator, we offer Flash Pass and Meet & Assist services at the airport for our guests to proceed faster,” Gőral explains. “At the terminal, our guests can use self-check-in kiosks, self-drop kiosks, mobile security checks, and mobile boarding. Additionally, all conventional equipment has been repositioned and enriched with new functionalities to allow passengers to perform the processes themselves using their identity documents.”

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“Inspiring trust” and showing “We Care”

The pandemic period allowed the airport to accelerate and complete maintenance work on its existing runway, as well as install additional check-in islands in the terminal. “Before the airport reopened on 1 June, we completed the cleaning and hygiene checks, the disinfection of all terminal facilities and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems, and all necessary maintenance works,” says Göral. “All ICT (information communication technology) infrastructure and business continuity management practices have been fully simulated to ensure resilient, uninterrupted 24/7 operation.”

At Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen, the message to both employees and passengers throughout the crisis period has been focused on “inspiring trust”. “We used transparent and sincere language, and said ‘We Care’ to communicate all of the measures we implemented,” Göral explains. “In the period from 1 June to 1 November 2020, nearly 7.2 million passengers departed from our terminal to their chosen destinations. While many European airports have operated well below capacity, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen was the busiest airport in Europe on 20 October.”

The airport expects to reach 18 million passengers by the end of this year – a decrease of 50% compared with 2019. Göral anticipates that the impact of the pandemic will still be felt early next year, but is optimistic that the Turkish civil aviation industry will experience a faster recovery than many other countries around the world. “Particularly for Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen, we do expect to get back to 2019 traffic levels as of 2022. We continue to work on new digital projects and developments focusing on passenger health, safety and experience. Sabiha Gökçen, being the city airport of Istanbul, aims to provide passengers with an enhanced experience and support various stakeholders, including the airlines, in managing their operations more efficiently.”
Baggage collection is one of the main bottlenecks of a smooth passenger journey, with crowding at the carousel potentially a serious problem, especially since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic. “As with everyone in the aviation business we had to adapt, change our perspective and workshop some new ideas,” begins Ilya Burkin, Regional Sales Director, ADB SAFEGATE Airport Systems. “One of those ideas is that we can provide information on when a bag is loaded onto the carousel and is subsequently ready to be collected, which can be provided directly to a passenger’s phone after scanning a QR code. The passenger can then decide where to wait for their baggage without the need to stand by the baggage carousel. This supports social distancing and creates a far better passenger experience, with fewer passengers around the carousel.”

The ADB SAFEGATE solution can also be integrated with airports’ and airlines’ own mobile apps, pushing the information through those channels. This, additionally, has the potential to open commercial opportunities and expand online engagement with passengers.

Innovation is crucial for the air transport industry and its recovery. “We are not only talking about creating a safe environment, but also rationalising costs, creating additional revenue streams, and accelerating the pace of change,” says Burkin. “Usually passengers see just the tip of the iceberg, with the work of thousands of people, dozens of IT and engineering systems, and complex operational processes all contributing to that perfect passenger journey we all strive to create.”

“A concern which must be addressed”

2020 is ADB SAFEGATE’s centenary year and, on its 100th anniversary, the company is reconfirming its commitment to the aviation industry by producing new products and services. Its AS-TRAK baggage management solution has extensive capabilities in tracking baggage at every stage of its journey, which Burkin explains “helps airports to save money and provide a better passenger experience, as well as additional revenue streams through open integration with third-party systems.”

Meanwhile, the response to the new solution to help avoid crowding around baggage carousels has been overwhelmingly positive. “We have requests from airports and airlines around the world, and the industry recognises this is a concern which must be addressed,” Burkin comments. “The solution we offer is quite straightforward and efficient. There were questions about human behaviour and whether passengers would adopt a new solution, but our trials have proved pessimists wrong – people love when they are given an alternative, something which makes their life easier and safer.”

Indeed, while the new solution to minimise crowding around baggage carousels is timely during the COVID-19 pandemic, Burkin anticipates that travellers will continue to embrace it post-pandemic. “One of the most positive items of feedback from the airports was ‘why haven’t we thought about it before?’ Being a frequent traveller myself before COVID-19, I can say waiting is not my forte and I would 100% use a solution like this in the future if it were provided by an airport or airline.”

Burkin adds that ADB SAFEGATE is also in discussions on how its solutions can support social distancing around the gate, so as to minimise overcrowding when flights are departing at the same time. “Our aspiration is to help airports to overcome this crisis and for our products and services to contribute to reaching that goal.”
Unique range of contactless biometric solutions for access control and time & attendance for airport staff

VisionPass, near-motion facial recognition
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IDEMIA already serves 60+ airports worldwide

WORLD #1 IN BIOMETRICS
Contactless biometrics for access control: a hygienic and frictionless experience

An interview with Nicolas Raffin, VP Marketing Biometric Devices, IDEMIA. By Ross Falconer

Any innovative solutions are being developed for the new normal in airport facilitation post-COVID-19. Contactless biometrics for access control is one important area, in terms of offering both a hygienic and frictionless experience.

"Let's first be clear," begins Nicolas Raffin, VP Marketing Biometric Devices, IDEMIA. "For us, one-finger touch biometric readers are still an efficient biometric option, and there are simple and efficient ways to make them compliant with COVID-19 processes: by regularly cleaning/disinfecting the sensor, or by installing a gel dispenser next to the reader. The worst option would be to disable or remove such readers, because COVID did not eliminate the reasons why biometrics were needed. This being said, contactless biometric terminals are particularly well-suited for high-traffic locations where high throughputs are needed, as they reduce the various steps in biometric verification.

Being contactless, of course, provides a hygiene benefit, since users do not touch the sensor or any part of the device. IDEMIA’s MorphoWave device scans four fingerprints in less than one second through a fully touchless hand gesture.

VisionPass, meanwhile, is a face recognition device for access control. "We have received a great response level to this new product for staff access control," says Raffin. "First of all, for its technology and performance level that matches airports' needs – efficiency with a large number of users, on a variety of indoor and outdoor locations – but also as it is perceived, like MorphoWave, as a safe and secure option to efficiently protect staff who do not have to touch any part of the device."

When designing VisionPass, IDEMIA sat down with integrators, clients and users to understand their needs and pains with facial recognition in particular. This shaped the specification for IDEMIA’s R&D department, and Raffin emphasises that there was no compromise on security, as well as user convenience and satisfaction.

In July 2020, VisionPass won the Security Industry Association (SIA) New Product Showcase Award in the Biometric category. "This is a key recognition of the technical and performance excellence of our product," says Raffin. "Receiving this award proves that both our approach, and the ‘recipe’ chosen, were good ones. We are also very proud because we received the same prestigious award two years ago when we launched MorphoWave, our contactless fingerprint scanner."

MorphoWave devices are deployed in many airports worldwide, offering frictionless biometric access. "For us, frictionless means security, speed and convenience," Raffin comments. "Under COVID, that also means hygienic, since when you wave the hand you don't touch any part of the device.”

Prague Airport has deployed more than 60 MorphoWave Compact readers in its Security Restricted Areas. The airport combines MorphoWave fingerprint scanning with the use of its existing access badge to provide a two-factor authentication.

In June 2020, it was announced that IDEMIA’s MorphoWave contactless fingerprint technology outperformed all other devices in the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)’s latest Accuracy and Interoperability Test on all criteria involved. "This is another recognition by NIST of the excellence of our biometric algorithms, and this is very important for clients selecting a biometric terminal, because it is primarily meant for security, so it should be very reliable and accurate," Raffin explains. "This test, in particular, is quite interesting as it confirms MorphoWave’s capability to efficiently scan and verify, in a contactless way, fingerprints that were initially captured in a contact way and stored in a legacy database.”

IDEMIA has a powerful biometric offer with VisionPass and MorphoWave, and Raffin’s message to airports is clear. "First of all, I would say: deploy biometrics. You have access badges with a staff photo, but is that enough to ensure who is using the badge? Biometrics is the only authentication factor to guarantee it. Due to the number of staff, variety of profiles, and variety of locations to equip in an airport – doors, gates, parking, indoor or outdoor – go for contactless biometrics that will provide a very high level of accuracy even for large numbers of users, a high throughput, and great user convenience to facilitate adoption and avoid lengthy complicated training.”
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A future-proofed baggage handling system should deliver the optimum efficiency and maximum capacity to meet and support an airport’s masterplan. The right system will give the airport fast and easy management of baggage flow and balance loads between redundant routes.

“Using the available Explosive Detection System (EDS) resources, the system should keep the number of screening machines to a minimum,” explains Klaus Schaefer, Managing Director, BEUMER Group. “The potential to reduce the CAPEX for security screening is often overlooked. A system which uses advanced technology should give the airport the opportunity to reduce OPEX by optimising maintenance for the baggage handling system. If the airport chooses a tote-based, Independent Carrier System (ICS) for baggage handling, efficiency and capacity will be added by avoiding the tracking failures and jams which cause delays.”

Self-service is a significant trend in the passenger service strategy of airports of all sizes. BEUMER Group’s CrisBag system allows passengers to place their bags directly into totes upon arrival at the terminal. “Higher efficiency at check-in will enable airports to improve the number of passengers processed at each bag drop and reduce the operating cost,” says Schaefer. “The CrisBag self bag drop enables check-in staff to transition from providing a routine check-in service to focusing on supporting individual passengers and their interaction.”

Each bag is placed in a tote by the passenger at check-in, so the system has 100% accurate track-and-trace at every stage of the baggage handling process. “This eliminates the need to have a conventional belt conveyor and avoids the potential bag jams,” Schaefer comments. “Immediate scanning inside the bag drop provides automatic verification of the bag tag, dimensions and weight before the bag is sent through the baggage handling system.”

The CrisBag system is performing with high efficiency at San Francisco Airport (SFO), where it recently went live. The system was designed to combine safety with a reduction in energy usage, precise baggage tracking, and to minimise the total cost of ownership. “SFO chose BEUMER’s CrisBag system to support the move to using a single baggage handling system and to improve the efficiency of operations throughout Terminal 1,” says Schaefer. “Installing a single baggage handling system provides greater flexibility for the airlines and the airport services.”

Meanwhile, as part of the Singapore Changi Airport Terminal 2 baggage handling system upgrade, the mechanical design and control software of the existing till-tray sorters will be modernised along with an extension of the entire baggage handling system. “The upgrading project will also include a new CrisStore baggage storage to further modernise the system and the baggage handling,” Schaefer adds.

The baggage handling system integrator should always look to integrate as many optimisation points as possible. BEUMER Group takes this concept further by integrating and optimising the complete end-to-end process.

“The ability to use data analytics is top of the list of operational benefits,” Schaefer explains. “By supporting a data-driven approach to baggage handling, data analytics has huge potential to reduce OPEX by delivering greater operational visibility.”

An increasing number of airports are changing from a conventional lane- or conveyor-based Early Baggage Store (EBS) to a rack-based store. “The airport can use the CrisStore to store early bags and to build batches of bags for speed-loading to make-up,” says Schaefer.

“The aim is to significantly increase the efficient use of manpower and to optimise the design and use of the make-up area. Another critical factor is that kind of storage supports rationalisation of the baggage reclaim process.”

Reclaim on Demand is another point of optimisation being considered. This eliminates the need for passengers to wait beside a carousel for hold baggage to arrive. “Instead, passengers will be able to wait in the arrival hall and keep a distance until an in-app message on their mobile phone confirms that the bag is ready for collection,” Schaefer explains. “A QR code sent to the passenger’s mobile phone will verify their identity and open the Reclaim on Demand kiosk so that the bag can be collected. Passengers will be able to leave baggage at the airport until it is convenient to collect the bag and Reclaim on Demand will support social distancing in the baggage reclaim areas.”

Klaus Schaefer, Managing Director, BEUMER Group: “BEUMER will soon announce a new and extensive CrisBag installation in another part of the world where there is increased interest in ICS-based baggage handling technology. BEUMER has also started work for the Hamad International Airport Expansion Project to supply and install the baggage handling system for the Remote Transfer Baggage Facility Building.”
Hamburg

Biggest non-capital city in Europe;
Highest GDP per capita in Germany;
A true maritime city:
8% of Hamburg's surface is water
Hamburg Airport responded very quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a comprehensive package of measures designed to ensure that all processes, from check-in to boarding, comply with the current recommendations for infection control. This includes clear social distancing rules and enhanced hygiene and cleaning regimes.

"In this way, we ensure that safe travel is always possible at Hamburg Airport," says Michael Eggenschwiler, CEO Hamburg Airport. "It is important to us that all passengers and visitors at the airport feel comfortable and safe. Recently, Hamburg Airport was recognised as a 4-star airport by Skytrax for its exemplary response to COVID-19."

Face masks are mandatory in the terminals, and cleaning teams and mobile service personnel pass through the terminals regularly.

Meanwhile, to help travellers comply with the now-familiar hygiene rules during their time at the airport, there are Perspex screens, hand disinfectant dispensers, informative posters, and floor markings.

"Passengers can purchase face masks, disinfectant wipes and disinfectant gels for their travels at self-service kiosks," Eggenschwiler explains. "For non-contact check-in, the airlines offer mobile check-in facilities, as well as the check-in and self bag drop kiosks at the airport. With a mobile service team in the terminals and on the Passenger Pier, the airport is providing additional support and information for all passengers. These are just a few examples of the many measures, large and small, that we have taken to protect passengers, visitors and, of course, our workforce."

There is a COVID-19 test centre at Hamburg Airport operated by biotech company Centogene. "The airport supports this service because modern testing technology provides solutions that ensure safe travel even in these difficult times," says Eggenschwiler. "Demand for the test centre is strong. People want to remain mobile and so are making use of the services available."

"Working to ensure that mobility and ecology can go hand-in-hand"

Environmental protection has long been a focus for Hamburg Airport. The airport is currently accredited at Level 3 Optimisation of ACI’s Airport Carbon Accreditation, and by the end of 2021 its target is to be the first airport in Germany to reach Level 3+ Neutrality.

"As one of the steps we are taking to reach this goal, we are further strengthening our commitment to alternative fuel sources," Eggenschwiler explains. "There must also be improvements to the energy efficiency of our own facilities. Our personnel want to be role models, working every day to ensure that mobility and ecology can go hand-in-hand."
Within the aviation sector, there is intensive ongoing research into the development of alternative fuels. “Our aim is to see such fuels being used in Hamburg as soon as possible, and so we as an airport are supporting the innovative ‘KEROSyN100’ and ‘GreenPower2Jet’ projects,” Eggenschwiler comments. “Furthermore, Hamburg Airport’s modern Schedule of Fees & Charges contains incentives for the airlines to deploy larger aircraft with efficient technologies. This reduces per-passenger kerosene consumption.”

‘KEROSyN100’ is the only project of its kind in Germany. The project partners, including Hamburg Airport, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the production and purchase of synthetic kerosene. Surplus wind energy from the region is used to produce the fuel, and the goal is for 5% of the kerosene used at Hamburg Airport to be synthetic within five years.

Plans are also in place to convert the entire fleet of baggage tugs to hydrogen power. “The airport started using alternative fuels for its baggage tugs 18 years ago,” Eggenschwiler explains. “There are numerous opportunities for using this leading-edge technology at the airport. The energy transition cannot succeed without hydrogen.”

In addition, more than 80% of Hamburg Airport’s surface vehicles today operate with alternative and/or synthetic fuels. “In the future, all viable alternative fuels will be used, and further innovative technologies will be implemented,” says Eggenschwiler. “Since the end of 2016, all diesel-powered vehicles at Hamburg Airport use a synthetic, zero-emissions fuel. Hamburg was the first airport in the world to achieve this.”

Hamburg Airport also makes an important contribution to species protection and biodiversity, with the airport site providing largely undisturbed habitats for animal and plant species. “Indeed, we have the largest contiguous green space in Germany’s second-largest city,” Eggenschwiler notes. “130 vertebrate species have been identified on the airport premises. Our environmental experts are involved in various projects focused, for example, on protecting communal and honey bees, and providing a home for rare kingfishers.”

Meanwhile, travellers are able to make a discretionary donation to a regional environmental project to compensate for the CO2 emissions of their flight. Hamburg Airport is the first in Germany to offer such a local platform. The climate donation is voluntary, and the passenger can choose the amount.

**€120 million main apron refurbishment**

Refurbishment of the airport’s main apron was recently completed. This four-year project was undertaken during ongoing operations and completed within the allocated time and budget.

“We are the oldest commercial airport worldwide to still operate from its original location,” says Eggenschwiler. “This investment of around €120 million had become necessary because the concrete surfaces were between 40 and 60 years old, and their usability would have come to an end in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the airport was able to implement the structural requirements for such future-oriented projects as the innovative ‘Follow the Greens’ guidance system and landside power facilities on the apron.”

**Identifying areas for cost-efficiency improvement and revenue growth**

The crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, which encompasses all of the world’s economic sectors, is particularly hard on companies in the aviation industry. “Air travel has been brought almost completely to a standstill,” says Eggenschwiler. “Companies are facing high overheads without generating revenue. It is not yet clear when air travel will resume in Europe. What is clear, though, is that we will not see the traffic volumes forecast at the end of 2019. For the coming years, too, a significant decline in aircraft movements and passenger volume must be expected. One of our key aims is, therefore, to see aviation recover as quickly as possible once the pandemic situation calms down.”

The commercial basis for this has to be put in place, and Eggenschwiler adds that, in view of the dynamic, highly volatile market environment, Hamburg Airport had already launched an efficiency programme in 2019. “This programme identifies areas for cost-efficiency improvement and revenue growth. Today, we are benefiting from this 12-month head-start, which puts us in a position where we can recover from the crisis somewhat more quickly than others.”
As passenger traffic suffers, cargo is creating new opportunities for European airports

By Frederic Horst, Managing Director, Cargo Facts Consulting

With passenger traffic in October still down 75% compared to 2019, there is little cause for cheer for most of Europe’s airports. Meanwhile, ACI EUROPE estimates that almost 200 airports may face insolvency if things do not improve by year-end. However, despite all the gloom surrounding the business, freight tonnage and freighter movements at cargo and express-focused airports have done well, even though overall European air cargo volumes are down. Freighters and express are likely to continue to do extremely well for a number of years and now is the chance for airports to position themselves to attract and hold onto this traffic.

In our latest September forecast, we expect cargo traffic to be down 17% with growth of 14% in 2021, which would bring air cargo back up to about 95% of 2019 levels. For the first eight months of 2020, EU-27 airfreight exports were down by about 20% and imports by 8% for 15% when excluding the boost from personal protective equipment and other COVID-19-related material and equipment.

On an airport level, the declines have not been evenly spread. The big combination carrier hubs London Heathrow, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and Paris are all showing significant double-digit declines, while some airports, notably Liege, Luxembourg and Leipzig are showing healthy growth. This growth has been coming from three areas: freighter traffic, express, and e-commerce related flying. Normally, the freighter share of air cargo traffic is around 50%, but over the coming years we expect this to be much higher – closer to 65% in 2020 and slowly returning back to 50% as passenger capacity returns over the coming years. This has naturally benefited airports that are more freighter-focused. Freighter aircraft movements at Leipzig and Cologne increased by 3% and 7%, respectively, in the first eight months of this year, according to statistics collected by Eurostat. However, airports such as Frankfurt and Amsterdam also saw all cargo flights increase by 32% and 59%, respectively, but this also includes passenger aircraft operating on cargo-only missions (also called passenger freighters). Meanwhile, the big global express carriers DHL, UPS and FedEx have all increased both intercontinental and intra-European flying – not just in 2020, but also in the preceding years.

While domestic freight and mail flights have been declining over the past 10 years, intra-European cargo flights have increased, growing in 2019, 2018 and 2017 by 6%, 2% and 8%, respectively. Measured in 757 equivalents, the growth in 2019 was 6.6% as we saw larger equipment (767s and A330s) increasingly operated on intra-European sectors. In 2019, 737s and 757s accounted for 29% and 22% of aircraft movements, respectively, followed by A300s and 767s, each accounting for around 14% of movements. ATR-42/72 feeder flights accounted for close to 9% of all intra-European cargo movements. For 2020, we expect intra-European flights to grow by about 2% and a further 3% per year for the next five years. Most of this will come from express flying, while Amazon continues to expand its dedicated European network and now operates about 30 flights per day between 12 airports in Europe using 737s. Some of these (Cologne, Leipzig, East Midlands) are express hubs, but others such as Katowice, London Southend, Belfast or Hannover are not. E-commerce related flying has put a lot of airports on the cargo map that did not exist before, particularly in the US – where Amazon operates 150 flights per day with a mix of 767 and 737s. Additional network expansion can provide further opportunities for airports looking for growth.

The same applies to intercontinental services, where particularly Liege has been successful in attracting a large number of flights dedicated to the movement of cross border e-commerce from China. By our estimates, cross-border e-commerce into the European Union has been growing three times as fast as domestic e-commerce. Building up the partnerships to attract this traffic is a time-consuming process, but can serve as a springboard for attracting other traffic as well.
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The EU Commission’s package of immigration initiatives for the common external border sets the stage for a new wave of technological innovations in the travel industry.

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Introduction of the Schengen Entry-Exit System (EES) in 2022 is predicted to be the next frontier of border control, as 26 European countries embrace state-of-the-art smart technologies and improved operational means to protect national borders.

“While many people may mistakenly think innovative technology will replace human operated tasks, the successful implementation of EU Smart Borders actually involves ground-breaking technologies to support Border Control Officers and make their mission more effective and enjoyable,” explains Jeff Lennon, Head of Strategic Sales & Global Partnerships, Vision-Box.

The implementation of self-service systems and automated border controls will streamline the movement of passengers by providing Border Guards with enriched travel information, interoperability between Member States and central EU platforms, and accelerated processing capabilities for labour-intensive tasks.

“Automating highly repetitive tasks, such as document authentication, identity verification and cross-referencing watchlists, frees-up officers to focus on the psychological and behavioural assessments they’re specifically trained to undertake,” says Lennon. “Whether it’s analysing a passenger’s body language, identifying someone who seems unusually nervous, or noticing contradictions in their speech, human-centric risk-based assessment is the final line of defence for all border crossings.”

Additionally, the EES aims to use digital stamps, facial image recognition, and biometric data collection to create a real-time validation of travellers’ movements and identity. Instead of relying on Member States’ border control agencies to physically stamp travel documents, digital time and location stamps will be stored in a shared, central EU-wide database, relieving Border Control Officers from interpreting information from non-standardised stamps.

“The EU Smart Borders package sets the stage for a new wave of technological innovations in the travel industry,” Lennon comments. “While technology can increase efficiency, reliability and security for managing the flow of travellers, EU Member States also need to think about the practical challenges of implementing new processes, adopting new technologies, and overcoming the complexity of integrating machine-operated systems into national security measures.”

“Seamless experiences for the connected traveller”

Despite the challenges of implementing Europe-wide initiatives and standardising highly-technical processes across multiple stakeholders, the opportunity to build a truly connected, orchestrated and intelligent ‘new frontier’ to protect our borders is unprecedented.

“Vision-Box is committed to providing out-of-the-box innovations to push technical boundaries and deliver future-proof solutions to long-standing problems,” Lennon explains. “We pride ourselves on executing seamless experiences for the connected traveller and guaranteeing reliability and scalability across our suite of technologies.”

Jeff Lennon, Head of Strategic Sales & Global Partnerships, Vision-Box: “Vision-Box is committed to providing out-of-the-box innovations to push technical boundaries and deliver future-proof solutions to long-standing problems. We pride ourselves on executing seamless experiences for the connected traveller and guaranteeing reliability and scalability across our suite of technologies.”
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The seamless traveller experience may start from their home, where travellers can perform an EES pre-registration using their mobile phone. During this step, Third Country Nationals are requested to provide their biographic information, as well as to reply to a set of questions, normally performed at physical borders.

Upon arrival at a Schengen border, the pre-registered individuals are requested to use a kiosk to complete the remaining steps, in compliance with the Entry-Exit System regulation. “In line with the COVID-19 pandemic, and to enhance travellers’ comfort and increase sanitization, Vision-Box has evolved its existing Seamless portfolio that enables travellers to interact with the kiosks by using their smartphones in a completely touchless way,” says Lennon.

Once the registration is completed, eligible travellers may be invited to officially cross the border, either using an On-The-Move Automated Border Control eGate, or a Smart manual booth, only presenting their face to reconcile their border-crossing profile. “This unique approach accelerates the whole process and provides a complete touchless and seamless walk-through, enabling a quick and safe border crossing process,” Lennon explains. “This is exactly what we are currently implementing at Helsinki Airport phase 2 with our long-time partner, The Finnish Border Guards, through a prime contract we were awarded in early 2019. It is the first official EES deployment in Europe at an airport, paving the way for other Member States and airports to avoid reinventing the wheel.”

Vision-Box aims to support EU Member States in complying with the Entry-Exit System regulations. “Our Border Control portfolio includes a set of touchpoints, combining state-of-the-art technology with our Orchestra™ Software suite to ensure strict compliance with both the Entry-Exit System regulations and GDPR,” says Lennon.

Key solution features relevant to the new Entry-Exit System requirements include: hardware and software elements that enable the GDPR-compliant capture and exchange of personal information, automatic camera height-adjustment and smart illumination compensation for capturing high-quality facial biometrics, and user-centric customer experience design that optimises passenger processing efficiency.

“We pride ourselves in offering a truly unique value-add through a proven delivery capability. Leveraging proven innovative technology, sustained by robust processes and organisational change-management support, all from a single one-stop-shop,” Lennon emphasises. “In addition, we have unparalleled real-world experience in border control with over 6,000 solutions delivered to date, and best practices and lessons learned from previous projects in Europe.”

“Complete contactless border crossing”

COVID-19 has profoundly impacted the travel industry, with contactless processes evolving from being a desired concept to a very much needed reality. Borders are no exception, and the right balance needs to be achieved between security and contactless, hygienic facilitation. “Touchless screen control technology, such as enabling the utilisation of mobile phones as a remote control, will reduce the need for touching surfaces, relieving operators from guaranteeing a more recurrent disinfection of the touchpoints,” says Lennon. “Unleashing the power of facial recognition as the primary biometric modality for touchless data validation and border crossing enables the reduction of traveller contact with eGates or manual counters. Arrival passengers who pre-registered at a kiosk can directly go to the next step, where no additional action is required except validating their face image against the initial kiosk record. This approach will ensure a complete contactless border crossing, while guaranteeing high-level standards of security.”

As with any technological innovation, implementing cutting-edge smart borders solutions doesn’t come without its challenges. While EES and ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System) also express the EU Commission’s desire to embrace new technologies to achieve real-time interoperability in the digital control of Schengen entries and exit, Lennon believes we’re yet to scrape the surface of how technology could shape the future of EU border controls.

“To ensure a smooth and seamless passenger flow, industry leaders must deliver user-friendly solutions that are easy to understand across a range of ages, nationalities, and languages,” he says.

Crucially, Vision-Box’s global coverage across more than 80 international airports down to its growing presence across 13 European States generate a culturally diverse repository of training data to help the community building highly-representative Artificial Intelligence (AI) models.

Lennon explains that, as the technology advances, Vision-Box is committed to combating challenges associated with unconscious machine bias and delivering systems that are sensitive to a range of nationalities, races, genders, and ages. “A large and diverse dataset gives way to fair and representative modelling. Additionally, innovators in this space must explore the best way to inform passengers about what to expect before using Automated Border Control systems, and offer clear guidance while using them, to ensure a smooth and painless process from start to finish.”
“Jan-du attitude” will continue to drive “Budapest’s bouncebackability”

Kam Jandu, Chief Commercial Officer, Budapest Airport, talks to Airport Business on his decade (plus) at the airport on the eve of “going backpacking”.

Am Jandu (52), raised in the UK’s industrial West Midlands to an Indian family, originally started his career in the aviation-related field of rent-a-car, from the very beginning in customer-focused roles on the front desk of Budget, before joining the management of Hertz, where he worked indirectly for a certain James Hogan, VP Marketing & Sales, who later went on to Elhad fame.

Jandu’s move to aviation came in the late-90s when he joined then-named British Midland in a Sales and Marketing role. He did this “so well” that when bmi joined Star Alliance in 2001, Star Alliance tapped into his marketing and sales skills, leading him to move his family to Frankfurt for three years as the group’s Director of Sales. Moving up within aviation he stayed within the Star Alliance family when he moved his family back to the UK to become GM Sales for bmi.

Then, following the 2008 financial crisis, AviAlliance, the owners of Budapest Airport (and the airports of Athens, Düsseldorf, and Hamburg), went in search of a new Aviation Director – an expert airline marketer with inside knowledge of the carriers. Ostensibly the new job was to build traffic for the much re-developed Budapest Airport where AviAlliance had heavily invested in the new ‘SkyCourt’ terminal, the heart of the modern airport. “They sold me the job on the basis of needing my marketing and sales background – what I didn’t immediately appreciate was that the ‘Aviation Director’ post also came with responsibility for security and operations – I ended up with a lot more than I bargained for, including 800 staff – 70% of the workforce,” explains Jandu, who once again moved his family to an entirely new cultural setting. The year was 2009.

“Not being a security or operations expert, I had to learn and build up – and simultaneously do the same for sales and marketing – it all needed to be done in time for mid-2011 and the opening of SkyCourt – we achieved those deadlines, but unfortunately Malév missed its own recovery targets and collapsed in 2012.” Despite the potentially catastrophic loss of the national and home carrier, Jandu doesn’t like to dwell on the Malév failure. Instead, he summarises the episode with a casual but profound observation: “We recovered the traffic we had lost within 12 months.”

However, the loss of Malév permanently changed the demographics of the airport: “Part of Malév’s failure had been its effort to deliver a hub and spoke system over Budapest – with that path abandoned, we went after point-to-point European traffic – after all it didn’t matter to us financially where a passenger had come from, furthermore these people stayed in Budapest, rather than connecting, and spent their money in Hungary.”

The move to retail: “it’s just economics after all”

Following the swift traffic recovery, Jandu was promoted to become Chief Commercial Officer in 2014. “This change meant I lost responsibility for several
hundred staff I had managed in security and operations, but I was immediately given control of retail – something I had little experience of before, other than as a consumer.”

Once again, Jandu set about learning new skills, observing at the time that “retail is just economics after all”. However, Jandu saw important structural synergies to the combination of aviation marketing and retail, which would bear real fruit during his stewardship:

“The integration of the two departments produced vital understanding of the opportunities – while traffic had recovered, the airport’s retail was in need of change, and we were able to quickly understand that the loss of long-haul had meant that the offer was imbalanced with too many high-end brands, which didn’t work with the dominance of the European short-haul business – we needed to increase the value for our concessionaires.”

Overhaul of the retail mix followed, heavily allied to unified campaigns orchestrated between the airport, retailer, and brands on the ‘Trinity’ model. The results were emphatic: “Most retail revenues doubled by 2015 – a upward trend which continued to accelerate through 2015-19; we had exactly the right demographic for what they were now offering, all the concessionaires were happy, and everyone wanted to renew and grow.”
BARTA – bringing the airline and retailer together

In another prime example of the synergies of operating both airline and retail development, Jandu’s department went further and hard-wired the two commercial activities together in a scheme which became known as the ‘BARTA’ cooperation, a pioneering financial arrangement launched in 2017 whereby Wizz Air would directly promote Budapest Airport retail – namely Heinemann Duty Free, from the very point of booking. (BARTA, a term coined by Future Travel Experience, stands for: ‘Brands, Airports, Retailers, Tech companies and Airlines’.)

“There was nervousness that the revenues of each side would be impacted, but BARTA proved that it did deliver growth for all parties – it was a leap of faith made possible because I was in this unique, privileged position of dealing with the senior management of both the airline and the retailer.”

The BARTA experiment has currently been paused by COVID-19, but Jandu believes that airports must return to its principles: ‘It does work, the technology is there, it just needs relationships involving openness and trust. Airport retail will be relevant forever, but we must address the fact that young people want to manage their entire lives on their phones, and that will mark the lasting importance of BARTA-type airline-retail partnerships first trialled in Budapest.”

Bringing the long-haul world back to Budapest

As Jandu and his team set about their aviation development tasks the airport achieved record years of growth every year until end-2019 when it attained its 16.2 million highest-ever point – exactly double the passenger throughput of 2009 when Jandu had first arrived.

Despite the structural shift to concentrating on European point-to-point, Jandu agrees that the headline achievements often go to the long-haul routes – American Airlines to JFK in 2010, then connections from Qatar, Emirates and Air Canada Rouge. “Then in a single year we went from one Chinese city to six as we welcomed China Eastern, Hainan and Air China.”

Of course, LOT also now has a hub at Budapest Airport offering long-haul to New York and Seoul – a route that is competed with Korean Air. “We’re missing Japan,” concedes Jandu, laying down a challenge for his yet-unknown successor.

Of course, today Wizz Air is the adopted home and ‘national’ carrier: “We have a winning partnership, a good close, collaboration – although we also have that with Ryanair – we regularly give the airlines route suggestions and we’re thrilled when they take them up – it’s testimony, both to our team, and Budapest Airport’s continuous potential to just keep on delivering.”

Despite the reconnection to long-haul, Jandu maintains “core growth and strength remains firmly rooted in intra-Europe – the potential is by no means near exhaustion...”
– besides the LCCs, we are also firmly in the targets of all the network carriers who have put a high value on the links between their hubs and Budapest.” By example Jandu cites how British Airways increased its Heathrow frequencies to four/daily in 2018: “Heathrow slots pairs can change hands for well in excess of $50 million, so the expansion into this spread of frequencies shows just how strongly they believe in the value of the Budapest market.”

Jandu’s impressive record was recognised with the industry’s highest accolade for airline development with presentation of ‘The Best Airline Marketing Award’ at World Routes in Adelaide 2019. “As there is no award this year, that also means we’re reigning champions through 2020-21,” observes Jandu wryly.

Runner of 10 marathons – and eight Budapest Runway Runs

Jandu’s other trophies are more personal – 10 marathon finishers’ medals, including all six Majors – a record of some courage considering that he nurses a genetical heart condition which had cruelly taken the life of his father and brother at a far-too young age. This probably explains the philanthropic side to his sport, with Jandu having driven the establishment of the pioneering Budapest Airport Runway Run, now an annual fixture in the air transport industry’s sporting and fundraising calendar. “Runway runs are common in the US where many airports have four or more runways, but they were unheard of at major airports in Europe until we made a major commitment to an annual event almost a decade ago. Since then, we’ve been widely copied, and I am only too delighted by all the fundraising efforts of other airports – but we’re still the only airport that does it in true style, with well over 1,000 runners from all over the world coming to Budapest each year to run the race in bright Saturday sunshine.”

Jandu reckons some 6,000 runners have competed in the 10k runway run covering a collective 60,000km - the equivalent of 1.5 times around the globe. “But the biggest achievement is that we have raised over €200,000 for local and international causes along with our core partners and sponsors – anna.aero, Airbus, Qatar and Wizz Air.”

Will it survive the departure of its founder? Jandu asserts it will: “I think it was very significant that despite this year’s turmoil, including a total ban on inward travel to Hungary, the race still took place – that sets a great precedent for the years ahead, that it will continue for its charitable aspects, as well as the passionate belief of all participating stakeholders, customers, and staff.”

Next up: The backpacking adventure

Despite over 30 years on the front line of marketing, Jandu does not intend to hang up his spurs just yet, but he is going to take a sabbatical of several months: “I’m going to backpack around India and Australia, and some other exotic places – if we are allowed to travel.” Those who know Jandu will wonder just how rough this ‘backpacking’ experience will be, and whether it involves room service and minibar access, but we don’t doubt the beneficial value he will bring back to his trade in his desire: “to help better understand our industry through immersed travel in those markets.”

Significantly, Jandu did not dwell heavily on COVID-19 in this interview, despite the fact that Hungary’s blanket ban on entry by all foreigners has made its impact even more felt. Believing that the industry standstill needs no additional comment from him, Jandu instead prefers to give an optimistic recovery forecast – not least in Budapest: “The stakeholders of Budapest have a good hand - the preponderance of European point-to-point traffic, together with Hungary’s affordability, gives Budapest Airport and all its partners great prospects of recovery – Budapest has what it takes – bouncebackability.”

*‘Bouncebackability’ is indeed a word listed in the Oxford English Dictionary, originally coined by the coach of the nearly-relegated Crystal Palace in 2004, before working its way into the business parlance of Central Europe’s preeminent airport.*
Since the very beginning of the pandemic, ANA Aeroportos de Portugal has implemented new procedures and adapted facilities and services to the new sanitary requirements.

“This agile response allowed us to keep the airports fully safe and operational during the crisis, even during the lockdown, which was crucial for cargo activities and for humanitarian flights to bring people scattered all over the world back to their homes before air traffic was paused,” explains Thierry Ligonnière, CEO ANA Aeroportos de Portugal. “Our action plan was actually implemented even before specific health safety regulations were issued for air transportation, because we were truly concerned about how passengers and staff could feel about being exposed to risk, and we felt it was our responsibility to make them feel comfortable and protected being at the airport, but also before and after. So, we decided to go big and ensure the highest standards of sanitary protection, working with all our stakeholders and other national and international partners so as to guarantee consistently safe conditions in the end-to-end air travel experience.”

To maintain and adapt an appropriate response, ANA Aeroportos de Portugal has been continuously following-up all of its business parameters – health safety, facilitation, communication, marketing, operations, HR, etc – in its “crisis control tower”. “The participation of all of the directors, including innovation, really brought a wide array of skills to our management of such an unprecedented situation,” says Ligonnière. “It brought efficiency, transversally, and motivation to a new level.”

The 10 airports in the ANA network (Lisbon, Porto, Faro, Beja, Ponta Delgada, Horta, Santa Maria, Flores, Madeira, and Porto Santo) have remained open and operational throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

‘ANA responded very quickly to the crisis: while national and international regulations were being discussed on which temperature control to use or which cleaning products to apply, ANA launched new processes to increase sanitary security in a record time,” Ligonnière comments. “As an example, at the end of March, we invested in walkthrough temperature-screening cameras and launched new disinfecting procedures, innovating with the utilisation of medical robotic UV cleaning equipment.”

Procedures were also adjusted to avoid unnecessary contact or queuing. At the beginning of April, ANA Aeroportos de Portugal set up glass partitions at all counters and installed gel dispensers and sanitary information throughout the terminals, which were later reinforced with a huge communication campaign launched throughout the VINCI Airports’ network. Passenger flows were altered in order to prevent concentrations, and counters were allocated alternately at check-in, security, border control, and boarding gates. Shops, bars and restaurants adjusted their capacity and procedures, with staff committed to the new health requirements. Protection and disinfection kits were provided in vending machines very early in the process.

“Besides the additional cleaning and disinfection procedures, the air renewal system inside the terminals was also improved,” says Ligonnière. “In July, it took ANA only a few days to make a COVID-testing service available upon arrival, for certain origins, in order to apply the resolution of the Ministers Council. There again, we showed full reactivity to the evolution of the epidemic.”

New technology and the highest cleaning standards

Lisbon and Porto airports are both certified by Turismo de Portugal and Bureau Veritas for their cleaning and sanitary measures. Indeed, ANA was the first in Portugal to advocate for a transversal health safety certification for all tourism stakeholders.

“This certification has been organised by Turismo de Portugal and we ourselves have been granted the ‘Clean and Safe’ label, in a ceremony with the Secretary of State of Tourism that took place in Lisbon Airport in June,” Ligonnière explains. ANA also supported VINCI Airports in...
initiating, as early as May, a process to have the consistency and efficiency of its common pan-European safety plan evaluated by a recognised external entity, which would also audit its deployment in the Portuguese airports.

"It represented, again, after weeks of efforts of fast implementation, another significant amount of work to formalise the plan, check, process by process, that we were consistent with all local sanitary guidelines, and get confirmation through onsite audits that we were compliant," says Ligonnière. "In short, we went through the development of a full sanitary contingency plan, formalised and audited, over just a few weeks."

On top of the VINCI Airports Guidelines, audited by Bureau Veritas, and the application of EASA Guidelines and ACI Airport Health Accreditation, ANA is proud of the investment made in new technology and the highest cleaning standards.

ANA also implemented the usage of masks before it was even mandatory and ensured that the passenger experience was as contactless as possible in all the steps of journey. "In terms of innovation, one of the first implemented measures was a contactless system for temperature control set up in arrivals, allowing a fluid traffic flow during this health inspection," Ligonnière explains. "We also tried out robotic UV equipment for cleaning larger areas and X-ray security screening."

Because ANA also wanted to bring passengers into this collective effort and give them a possibility to challenge the efficiency of measures and deliver feedback, Lisbon Airport developed "U-Monitor" – an app that enables passengers to report any situation impacting their perception of sanitary safety (a dispenser that ran out of gel, someone not wearing a mask, distances not respected, etc). "They can do it onsite through their own smartphone, allowing our operational teams to solve any issue immediately," says Ligonnière. "Using a contactless QR code system, passengers can give their feedback about all the implemented measures."

He adds that recognition of all the work developed during this unprecedented situation is truly important. "Trust is the major factor for the recovery and for the sustainability of the aviation industry. Having national and international entities attributing sanitary and health certifications to our airports is a highly valued message to the aviation community and to passengers."

Lisbon Airport a VINCI Innovation Centre of Excellence

For quite some time, it had become clear to ANA and VINCI Airports that the passenger journey would have to be seamless, to minimise the processing time for passengers. The new health and sanitary needs gave an additional sense of urgency to progress in this direction and be as contactless as possible.

"Lisbon Airport is one of the five VINCI Innovation Centres of Excellence namely for Smart Terminal Operations and Technology, where new contactless solutions are implemented or adapted for more automated boarding procedures, without compromising safety or security," Ligonnière explains.

An ongoing project is a pilot project called "Biometrics on the move", which is being tested in two different stages of the passenger journey: at the self-baggage drop system and at immigration, using biometric data, without the need of any contact. "We are working within the VINCI group to share experiences in order to accelerate these innovation projects and achieve a full contactless airport," says Ligonnière. "One example is the MONA project already deployed in Lyon Airport, tested in flights to Porto."

Among the many solutions implemented at ANA’s airports are automatic self-check-in, contactless e-gates that only need to read the code in a boarding pass, vending machines with contactless payment, disinfecting gel operated by a foot pedal, and a temperature reading system, totally contactless, for arriving passengers.

Ongoing developments include a contactless screen technology for check-in kiosks, where the passenger can complete the process through remote-control via their mobile phone. "New solutions for flow management are also ongoing, involving virtual queuing which should be available very soon to our passengers, who will be able to pre-book a slot to process through security, without queuing," Ligonnière comments.

There is a gradual individual and collective awareness of the new sanitary rules on the side of the passengers. Identifying their needs has been driving ANA’s efforts over the last years, and identifying their new expectations is becoming the next challenge.

"Recognising the quickly-changing trends that are occurring due to the new paradigm created by COVID-19, we launched the next step of our evolution," says Ligonnière. "Passengers are increasingly aware of ways to mitigate the risk of contagion and have new requirements, counting on the airport to enforce measures and ensure the respect of new rules. We already have a number of ongoing projects, many of them based on new technology and innovation. Maintaining a process of improvement is more critical than ever, to prepare the future and reach ‘the new Excellence’."
Loganair became an independent airline in 2017 after its longstanding franchise agreement with Flybe ended. Since its rebirth, ‘Scotland’s Airline’ has grown strongly. It ended 2019 with 1.6 million seats across 68 non-stop routes and six countries. This includes its intra-Orkney ‘lifeline’ services using nine-seat Islanders, including on Papa Westray to Westray – the world’s shortest scheduled route.

Loganair is now the UK’s third-largest domestic airline after easyJet and British Airways. But, with a network of 39 UK airports, it is by far the number one by this measure.

Flybe routes crucial for Loganair

“We took over around 14 flybe routes,” begins Jonathan Hinkles, CEO Loganair. “They’re important – if we didn’t have these routes we would be heading in a different direction during this pandemic.”

Hinkles categorises flybe’s route network into three. “Firstly, routes picked up by others; secondly, routes possibly viable that no-one is serving; and thirdly, routes that no-one should have been operating in the first place.”

Multiple routes remain in the second category, both domestically and internationally. “Perhaps 10-15 routes still remain in this category, especially involving Dublin, Paris-CDG, and Amsterdam. We think a good number of these did well.”

Loganair has no intention of being another flybe

An interview with Jonathan Hinkles, CEO Loganair.

By James Pearson

11 of flybe’s 15 most profitable international routes remain unserved, including the above cities. “Domestically, Manchester-Edinburgh, Edinburgh-Cardiff, and Birmingham to Newquay – all in category two – remain unserved,” Hinkles adds.

The largest of these, Edinburgh-Manchester, won’t be straightforward. “This route needs real hub service,” says Hinkles, with connectivity over the English airport. Loganair shelved its plans to begin an up-to four-daily service.

Loganair began Glasgow to Belfast City in early-September, connecting the regional carrier’s top airport to Northern Ireland. The route had 142,000 passengers with flybe in 2019 and a seat factor of 77%.

The airline began Isle of Man to Manchester, a market of 173,000 passengers last year, in March. The Isle of Man is an increasingly important part of its network.

“Our core is still Scotland and Newcastle, plus now the Isle of Man,” says Hinkles. Loganair is becoming an increasingly important operator to/from the island, with three non-stop routes this winter: Liverpool, London City, and Manchester. “Our operations base in the Isle of Man is already set up. We don’t want to create a new base anywhere else.”

Scandinavian markets key for Loganair future

Going forward, Hinkles sees Loganair concentrating on the UK, Scandinavia, and Ireland markets. “We’re finding Scandinavian markets – Norway and Denmark – have actually worked well for us,” he says. “The yield environment is stronger and the sectors are shorter. You tend to find that the average fares to Norway are very similar to those of an average point in Germany, but we’re doing half an hour’s less flying each way to get there. It does really make a difference to the economics.”
"Airports are largely being rational"

Asked what Loganair wants from airports, Hinkles is unequivocal: "There needs to be more of a partnership with airports. We won’t sign-up to long-term deals. There’s absolutely no way we can do that with the current market uncertainty."

Given COVID-19, "everything is now a significant risk". As such, understanding and proactivity from airports is required. "Airports are generally being open. They’re largely being rational and reasonable," says Hinkles. Some have cut minimum passenger thresholds, for example, while Hinkles praises Newquay Airport for acting very quickly in agreeing to terms for its new Manchester service that begins on 28 March 2021.

Loganair is talking to many airports about new route opportunities. "There will be a number of potential thinner routes that full-service carriers end," Hinkles comments. "A good place to be in a recession is to have smaller planes.. get the bottom that others cut."

One full aircraft for Blue Islands partnership

Loganair and Blue Islands began their new partnership in September. "We’re like-minded carriers. Our partnership allows us to have what we couldn’t provide ourselves," says Hinkles, citing the example of Glasgow, Edinburgh, or Newcastle over Southampton to the Channel Islands. "In summer 2021, we’ll have 11 daily flights at Southampton. We’ll have one entire aircraft there because of our Blue Islands partnership."

The relationship benefits from spare aircraft capacity and the confidence arising from the two carriers working together. "We have been providing them with support on common areas. We have the same reservation system, for example. We have a good relationship with them."

Loganair: “no ambition to have 60+ aircraft and look like flybe”

"We have a big plan for summer 2021 that is reasonable and rational," says Hinkles. "We’re planning to have 41 aircraft by then, two fewer than expected at the beginning of coronavirus."

This is down from the 43 to 50 aircraft the carrier thought it would have immediately before flybe’s end. Yet, "we have no ambition to get to 60+ aircraft and look like flybe."

"In the longer-term, our Saab 340s are leaving the fleet – it’s been 15-18 years. They’ll be replaced with ATRs with 33 to 48 seats, or up to 70 seats," Hinkles explains. "The ATRs are newer and more maintenance-efficient aircraft with a much lower trip cost than the Saabs." And seat economics are "a different world completely."

Hinkles says this will inevitably mean frequency "adjustments". This may be interesting on predominantly domestic routes where frequency is disproportionately important – at least if there’s reasonable overland access.

This is maybe the point. "Shorter overland markets are under severe pressure for the foreseeable future," Hinkles notes. "Historically, people would drive or take the train on routes of four hours or less. Now, that’s six to seven hours." This will clearly influence Loganair’s network and future development.

The Loganair and Blue Islands relationship partly came about from Loganair providing support to its sister carrier. "In summer 2021, we’ll have 11 daily flights at Southampton. We’ll have one entire aircraft there because of our Blue Islands partnership," says Jonathan Hinkles, CEO Loganair.

Jonathan Hinkles, CEO Loganair: "We have a big plan for summer 2021 that is reasonable and rational. We’re planning to have 41 aircraft by then, two fewer than expected at the beginning of coronavirus."
VINCI Airports launches end-to-end biometric travel assistant at Lyon-Saint Exupéry Airport

On 5 October 2020, at the VINCI Airports Centre of Excellence for Innovation based at Lyon-Saint Exupéry Airport, Xavier Huillard, Chairman and CEO of VINCI, and Nicolas Notebaert, CEO of VINCI Concessions and President of VINCI Airports, inaugurated Mona, a new travel assistant designed to revolutionise the passenger experience. In launching Mona, VINCI Airports has taken a major step towards the mobility of the future, offering travellers the opportunity to trial a biometric journey from their home to the plane. Mona allows travellers to set up a customer account by downloading an app to their smartphone, in order to take advantage of this new service, completely free of charge. Thanks to facial recognition technology and a special journey through the airport, Mona users can go through the various checkpoints – from luggage drop off to boarding (with the exception of border control) – without making any physical contact, simply by showing their face.

In addition to providing information about flights and the passenger journey in real time, Mona is also able to offer users a number of personalised services and experiences, developed in partnership with airlines and retailers. “With Mona, VINCI Airports is launching a world-first that adds a new dimension to the airport experience,” says Notebaert. “At a time when contactless technology is proving increasingly important and personalisation is becoming the norm, our network once again proves it is able to continuously reinvent itself.”

Schiphol introduces new contactless F&B ordering service

In collaboration with HMSHost International, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol has started a pilot that makes it possible for passengers to order food and drinks at outlets after security control in advance with a QR code. Schiphol passengers can scan a QR code from one of the physical banners or media screens located both at and after the airport security check. This will allow them to place their order, pay online and choose a time to collect. Visitors to Schiphol Plaza were already able to place an order in advance using the Foodsy app. As the option to pre-order food and drinks proved successful, the airport expands with HMSHost International to catering outlets after security. Nearly all of the catering outlets in Lounge 1 (Schengen) are participating, including Starbucks, La Place, Grand Café Het Paleis and Grab & Fly.

“The use of digital innovations contributes to safe, easy and fast travel,” says Irene Muysson, Head of Retail, F&B, Commercial Services, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. “This service offers various advantages. If passengers need to wait at security, they can spend their time with ordering a meal or drink. It also means they will not have to queue on arrival in the Lounge, as their order will be ready at the indicated time. They will still have time left over to prepare for the trip or to relax. The number of physical interactions has also been limited, with all stages of the ordering process – from ordering to payment – now taking place online.”
Istanbul Airport achieves ‘China Friendly Airport’ status

Istanbul Airport has been awarded the ‘China Friendly Airport’ document, recognising the measures it has implemented to enhance the travel experience of Chinese visitors. Dedicated check-in areas are provided for passengers from China, while flight information screens and ticket processing screens are translated into Chinese. Other measures include accounts on social media platforms such as Weibo and Wechat, having the IGA Istanbul Airport mobile app available in Chinese, the presence of hot water dispensers on the arrival and departure floors, ‘Welcome’ signs on the passenger bridges, and Chinese-speaking staff wearing special uniforms.

“China is an important country for us; we have historical, cultural and economic relations,” says Kadri Samsunlu, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, IGA Airport Operation. “We have been working on reviving the historical ‘Silk Road’ between the two countries by air. We would like our Chinese guests to talk about the unique experience they had at Istanbul Airport, and how they have felt at home in a way that would contribute to our country’s tourism.”

London Gatwick first UK airport to install UV cleaning treatment for security trays

London Gatwick is the first UK airport to treat its security trays with enough UV light energy to guarantee a 99.9% microbe disinfection rate – protecting passengers and staff and reducing the spread of coronaviruses, including COVID-19, and other infections on this high-touch surface area.

The new system, as trays exit the baggage screening security trays and ›underneath the hand tray pass through a covered ‘UV-tunnel’ fixed underneath the hand baggage screening system, as trays exit the scanners, so that every tray is treated immediately before each passenger uses it. The system uses short-wavelength UV-C light, which laboratory tests show is effective against coronaviruses, including COVID-19 and SARS, as the radiation warps the structure of their genetic material and prevents the viral particles from replicating.

“This new system has proven itself to be extremely reliable and provides a really high degree of reassurance as every single passenger and staff member using the system will have a tray that has only just been disinfected,” says Adrian Witherow, Chief Operating Officer, Gatwick Airport.

Milan Bergamo Airport opens new lounge for passengers with reduced mobility

Milan Bergamo Airport has reconfigured its terminal to create more room in a creative and sustainable way. Among the initial phases, the airport has devoted particular attention to passengers with reduced mobility (PRMs) and has created a new PRM Lounge dedicated to those with special needs.

“As everyone becomes more conscious and aware of those around them, it is even more important for us to ensure each and every one of our passengers, regardless of their ability levels, has access to our premium products to allow them to pass through safely and efficiently,” explains Giacomo Cattaneo, Director of Commercial Aviation, SACBO.
The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry is changing airport security processes, with many airports upgrading their passenger screening systems to address health concerns.

“Current manual or supervised screening requires airports to commit significant personnel and resources, while constraining passenger flows and impacting the overall passenger experience,” begins Richard van Wijk, Global Aviation Practice Lead, Nokia. “Airports need a screening system that is accurate, scalable, and supports multiple queues. The Nokia Automated Analytics Solution for Access Control is the first fully automated group triage solution for airports.”

Van Wijk explains that the solution is nearly transparent to passengers, while enabling airports to rapidly identify travellers with an elevated temperature, as well as those not adhering to health guidelines such as wearing face masks. Automated real-time signage directs travellers to appropriate countermeasures, while alerting safety personnel to intervene for follow-up only with at-risk individuals.

“It is cost-efficient as the staffing requirement is much-reduced compared to current passenger screening systems, which require manual guidance of passenger flow with typically at least two staff on rotation for each screening position,” says van Wijk. “The solution is applicable beyond COVID-19, so airports are making a long-term investment in safe operations. Overall, the solution enables contactless screening of passengers for improved airport safety.”

The Nokia solution supports multiple screening lanes with a single camera. “Compared to manual screening, it improves passenger flow by automating scanning of passengers and providing customised real-time digital signage for regulating flows,” van Wijk explains. “Fast detection of individuals and families helps to redirect them using digital signage without impacting passenger flows or disrupting the need to maintain social distancing.”

Meanwhile, in terms of security screening reporting, the Nokia NAAS counts triaged passengers and generates statistics on the incidence of elevated temperature at a screening location, from an aircraft, or over a time period. “It can also calculate the speed of passenger flow in a queue and trigger the activation of additional lines, or the dispatch of personnel, to enhance line-serving efficiency,” says van Wijk.

Non-health-related airport analytics

The Nokia NAAS solution can address more than COVID-19 health screening, including non-health-related airport analytics. “It helps airports optimise their operations and their security monitoring,” van Wijk comments. “For example, it can detect crowd build-up to help manage adequate physical distancing or determine anomalous traffic patterns and crowd movement in a specific location for early alerting of security to developing situations. The solution also leverages analytics to determine facility usage to turn down the HVAC in certain parts of the airport and save heating/cooling cost. It uses geofencing to detect unauthorised persons or vehicles in restricted or remote unmanned areas, while flow analytics identify the best spot to put the next digital signage for advertising.”

The Nokia “bring your own algorithm” approach means that the Nokia NAAS solution can be constantly improved and adapted to specific airport processes. It can function as an open analytics platform that interprets streaming data from a wide variety of IoT devices and cameras to improve operational efficiency and safety for both passengers and airport personnel.

As the aviation industry works on recovery, the contactless journey is a priority to restore the confidence of travellers. Van Wijk emphasises that thermal screening will play a role in improving security screening and regaining passenger confidence. “The Nokia NAAS is an innovative solution, providing airports with an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve thermal screening and more. We are looking forward to working with many airports on this.”

“Airports need a screening system that is accurate, scalable, and supports multiple queues”

An interview with Richard van Wijk, Global Aviation Practice Lead, Nokia. By Ross Falconer
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