

IMI - Nationwide airport development strategy

The Transport Ministry has completed work on a long-term strategy for Polish airports. This document will give the government a much more pro-active role in coordinating the development of this area than it had in the past. In Poland airports are owned by commercial companies in which local authorities usually have controlling stakes. This means they do not need to consult the national government about their development plans. This often results in a lack of coordination in long-term regional planning between local and national authorities.

From 2007-2013 the European Union will provide almost 350 million Euro from its Cohesion Fund and 372 million Euro from Regional Operational Programs for different airport projects in Poland. Together with airports' own financial resources, local government funds and bank loans these funds will enable Poland to modernize Polish airports in order to meet EU standards and keep up with increasing demand

Currently, the network of airports in Poland is six times smaller than in the "Old" EU countries. In Poland one airport serves 3.1 million passengers, while the average number in the EU is 459,000. Poland has only one airport of category B (serving 5-10 million passengers) – Warsaw Airport. There are four airports of cat. C (1-5 million passengers) – Krakow, Katowice, Gdansk, and Wroclaw. The remaining eight airports are small airports of category D.

According to the Civil Aviation Office, the number of passengers served by Polish airports in 2006 was 15 million, it is expected that this number will grow to 25 million in 2010 and 35 million in 2020.

The Ministry of Transport stated that the existing airport infrastructure will not be able to handle this growth and that Poland needs to build new airports. The regions indicated by the Ministry for the construction of new airports are Mazury (North Eastern part of Poland, near Olsztyn), Podlasie (also North-Eastern part of Poland, near Bialystok), near city of Lublin (South-Eastern part of Poland), near city of Kielce (200 km South of Warsaw), and near city of Kolobrzeg (North-Western part of Poland). Additionally, the Ministry confirmed that the plans for construction of a new airport hub with a capacity of up to 50 million passengers were abandoned due to the current decentralization trends in the airport industry in the world. This situation created a need for construction of an additional airport close to Warsaw, supporting Warsaw Okecie Airport. A former military airport in Modlin (North of Warsaw) was chosen for low-cost carriers and charters. It is expected that the Modlin Airport will start operation in fall 2008.

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