

French airports recorded success for low-cost airlines

Écrit par merchid.berger@finances.gouv.fr (Merchid BERGER)

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The attendance record at French airports was beaten again last year, despite a slowdown in traffic from October. With the curve always going downwards in January, the UAF expects a difficult 2013 under these conditions, with the contraction of Air France bases and fewer routes being opened by low-cost airlines.

The UAF, the Association of French Airports, draws rather satisfactory results for 2012 for air transport on the 135 association member platforms. The activity appears positive with 168 million passengers, an increase of 2.7%. Enough to hold up against the European average which stands at 1.8%.

However the growth is not homogenous. **It is mostly the provincial airports where low-cost airlines have opened routes, notably short haul direct routes, which are reaping the best figures with a growth of 6.1%.**

Some airports are much better with more than one million passengers like Marseille (+12.7%), Nantes (+11.9%) and Lille (+20%), but with the arrival of Ryanair, Tours is beating records (+39.9%) with 169, 341 passengers.

Conversely, Paris with its 88,788,765 passengers and its total of 56.4% of the total traffic in the metropolis (down one point from 2011), saw its volume of activity virtually unchanged at +0.8% spread between CDG at +1% and Orly at +0.3%. "Paris is the trend in major European airports," says Jean-Michel Vernhes, president of the UAF. Or more precisely, the major airports of the European Union, because outside the Union the growth jumped 8.8%, notably in Turkey and in Russia.

Among the low-cost airlines EasyJet continues its deployment with traffic up 9%; Ryanair follows with 7%, while Vueling saw its share of the market jump 31%. **Overall, the low-cost transportation rose 9.5% with 35,159, 470 passengers.**

It has 22.3% of the overall passenger traffic and even 33.4% if we only take the provincial airports into consideration.

Contrary to the metropolis results, activity was down significantly in the French overseas

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territorial departments: -3.3% for Réunion, -2.7% for Guadeloupe, -5.1% for Martinique, -1.4% for Noumea Tontouta. "We'll see if the arrival of XL Airways will stimulate traffic in 2013," thinks Jean-Michel Vernhes.

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