The air transport sector makes a major contribution to Belgium’s economy

There are different ways of measuring air transport’s impact on an economy. We look at three: the jobs and spending generated by airlines and their supply chain, the flows of trade, tourism and investment resulting from users of all airlines serving the country, and the city pair connections that make these flows possible. All provide a different but illuminating perspective on the importance of air transport.

The air transport sector supports...

Airlines, airport operators, airport on-site enterprises (restaurants and retail), aircraft manufacturers, and air navigation service providers employ 40,000 people in Belgium. In addition, by buying goods and services from local suppliers the sector supported another 34,000 jobs. On top of this, the sector is estimated to support a further 17,000 jobs through the wages it pays its employees, some or all of which are subsequently spent on consumer goods and services. Foreign tourists arriving by air to Belgium, who spend their money in the local economy, are estimated to support an additional 35,000 jobs. In total 127,000 jobs are supported by air transport and tourists arriving by air.

...and spending

The air transport industry, including airlines and its supply chain, are estimated to support US $9 billion of GDP in Belgium. Spending by foreign tourists supports a further US $3.3 billion of the country’s GDP, totaling to US $12.3 billion. In total, 2.6 percent of the country’s GDP is supported by inputs to the air transport sector and foreign tourists arriving by air.

For forecasts of the industry’s GDP and jobs contribution over the next 20 years see page 4

Source: Oxford Economics
Air transport facilitates flows of goods, investment and people

The importance of air transport to Belgium.

The most important benefits from air transport go to passengers and shippers and the spillover impacts on their businesses. The value to passengers, shippers and the economy can be seen from the spending of foreign tourists and the value of exports (though note these figures include all modes of transport). A key economic flow, stimulated by good air transport connections, is foreign direct investment, creating productive assets that will generate a long-term flow of GDP.

**Top five international tourist arrivals (all modes of transport) by country of residence**
1. Netherlands
2. France
3. Germany
4. United Kingdom
5. Spain

**Top five busiest direct flights arrivals**
1. Spain
2. Italy
3. Germany
4. France
5. United Kingdom

**Top five busiest air cargo routes**
1. United States
2. Qatar
3. Russian Federation
4. Mexico
5. United Arab Emirates

Source: UNWTO and IATA

**Annual passenger flows by region (origin-destination, '000s)**

Europe is the largest market for passenger flows to and from Belgium followed by Africa and Asia-Pacific. 11.8 million passengers arrived from Europe (78.9 percent of the total), 1.3 million passengers arrived to Belgium from Africa (8.7 percent) and 722 thousand passengers arrived from Asia-Pacific (4.8 percent).

Source: IATA Direct Data Solutions

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Note: Data relate to all modes of transport / Source: UNWTO, UNCTAD and World Bank

1. Spain
2. Italy
3. Germany
4. France
5. United Kingdom

1. United States
2. Qatar
3. Russian Federation
4. Mexico
5. United Arab Emirates

1. Netherlands
2. France
3. Germany
4. United Kingdom
5. Spain

Arrivals of non-resident tourists at national borders or in all types of accommodation establishments, by country of residence.
Air transport connects Belgium to cities around the world

Air transport generates benefits to consumers and the wider economy by providing speedy connections between cities. These virtual bridges in the air enable the economic flows of goods, investments, people and ideas that are the fundamental drivers of economic growth.

Map of Belgium's air connectivity, by its largest markets (segment basis)

IATA’s measure of how well a country is connected to economically important cities around the world is shown above. The map shows Belgium’s connectivity at a regional level and how it has evolved. Belgium’s connections to Asia-Pacific have grown the fastest over the last five years.

Number of international city pairs direct service in the top ten countries by passenger numbers in the world

1. United States
2. People’s Republic of China
3. Japan
4. United Kingdom
5. India
6. Indonesia
7. Spain
8. Germany
9. Brazil
10. France

262 INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS SERVED
130 CITY PAIRS IN THE TOP 10 COUNTRIES BY PASSENGER NUMBERS
84 NUMBER OF OPERATING AIRLINES
256,400 LANDINGS AND TAKEOFFS

Source: IATA, Aviation Benefits Beyond Borders 2018 report

The air connectivity scores reported are total destination weighted seats per 1000 people. IATA developed the Air Connectivity Indicator calculated based on the total route capacity (in terms of seats available) weighted by the destination airport’s relative capacity (calculated as the ratio of seats available at that airport relative to the capacity at the airport with most available seats) divided by the population size of the country with a 0.15% of connectivity threshold in 2013.
Ease of travel, cost competitiveness, and trade facilitation are vitally important

If air transport’s unique contribution is the bridges it creates between cities, then the flows of goods, people, investment and ideas that stimulate economic development must flow unimpeded to maximise their contribution to consumers and the wider economy. Here we measure how freely goods and people flow across borders.

Passenger facilitation and cost competitiveness

Belgium’s passenger facilitation (3.9/10) scores slightly below the European average (4.1/10). On the World Economic Forum’s Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index, the country ranks 73rd for visa openness and 33rd out of 136 countries for cost competitiveness. In all these scores and ranks, higher is better.

Measures of air cargo trade facilitation

Belgium’s facilitation of air cargo through its customs’ and borders’ regulations ranks 22nd out of 124 countries in terms of the Air Trade Facilitation Index (ATFI) and 14th out of 135 countries in terms of the eFreight Friendliness Index (EFFI) globally. The Enabling Trade Index (ETI) ranks Belgium 10th out of 136 countries globally for the facilitation of the free flow of goods over borders and to its destination.

Forecast scenarios for passenger traffic, jobs and GDP footprint

Air transport market in Belgium is forecast under the “current trends” scenario to grow by 36% in the next 20 years. This would result in an additional 6 million passenger journeys by 2037. If met, this increased demand would support approximately US $16.7 billion of GDP and almost 148,000 jobs.

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