

Ownership and Privatization of Airports, Airlines and Air Traffic Control: Getting it Right

The European Aviation Conference is a premier conference in the aviation calendar, bringing together experts from industry, academia and government to discuss and make practical proposals regarding current issues and evolving trends in aviation.

This year the focus is on ownership issues, which continue to be a source of debate. There is renewed interest in privatisation of airports. At the same time, the impact of privatization on fees and charges is being contested.

Ownership patterns in airlines are fairly settled, but attention is being paid to the persistence of ownership rules in international air service agreements and whether institutional investors of multiple airline equities can exert influence on the market.

Compared to privatized or commercialized air traffic control systems in countries such as New Zealand, Australian and Canada, critics argue that publicly owned air traffic control systems across Europe are poorly coordinated, uncompetitive and in some cases, inefficient.

Against this background, the 2018 EAC will investigate some of the following questions:

Airports:

- Overall, has privatisation delivered in terms of performance? Has partial privatisation, popular in Europe, been successful? Airlines have become very concerned about the privatisation of airports - do they have good reason?
- Who now owns the airports?
- Can regulation achieve a balance between improving performance and protecting all stakeholders – especially the travelling public? How effective is competition in safeguarding customers?

Airlines:

- In Europe and North America airlines are largely privately owned but limited by ownership restrictions. Who is gaining from these restrictions?
- Who now owns the airlines, and will there be implications for competition policy?
- Are there genuine concerns arising from state-owned airlines or are complaints about them a smokescreen for protection?

Air navigation service providers:

- Except in the US, considerable progress has been made in separating the regulation of ATC services from their operation and in commercialisation. But overwhelmingly ATC services remain publicly-owned monopolies.
- Will new technology, such as remote towers and SESAR/NextGen, offer the opportunity of increased competition?
- Do those ATC companies which have been removed from public ownership offer models for others to follow? Is for-profit as found in the UK and Italy or not-for-profit as pioneered in Canada the better way forward?

The Speakers and Chairs

Industry speakers and chairs this year include Brian Pierce, Rigas Doganis and Barry Humphries; University participants, Professors Anne Graham and Peter Forsyth, and government, regulatory and consultancy perspectives will be offered by Mike Tretheway, Peter Griffiths and Jagoda Egeland. A complete list of speakers will be announced shortly.

Conference Structure and Venue

The Conference is organised in a number of different formats to facilitate participation and discussion. As well as standard presentations with question-and-answer sessions, EAC 2018 will feature the Martin Kunz Lecture, a Debate on aviation ownership, a Data Roundtable focusing on the difficulties of obtaining data on European air transport, and an Industry Symposium reflecting the host city, Athens.

Awards to be made at the Conference

To stimulate continued research into applied policy questions in aviation, the winners of the 2018 European Aviation Economics and Management Prizes will be announced at the conference. These prizes are sponsored by the the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Routledge Publishers; prize winners will each receive a cash award from the former and a books from the latter.

Want to know more?

Programme details and further information about the venue, hotels and booking arrangements will soon be added to the EAC website: www.eac-conference.com

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Athens, Greece, 8-9 November 2018