

Legnica Airport as a Potential Airport of Pan-European Transport Corridor III

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Legnica airbase is one of the oldest objects of that type at Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk) district. It has been built before WW I as an airfield for German aeronautic service. During years 1944-1993, Legnica airbase was used by Soviet Army as air transport base for local command of Warsaw Pact forces. Next Legnica airbase was overtaken by Polish local authority which unfortunately didn't have concrete and definite plans of using that airport, although it has excellent location due to industry and logistic infrastructure. In result, during 1990. Legnica airport (ICAO code: EPLE) was used rather rarely, and sometimes handled light sport or business air traffic. At present in conditions of European Union (especially in case of III Pan European Transport Corridor), Legnica airport can be very useful.

In order to consider the problem of the Legnica airport, its launching or closing down, one should get acquainted with the history of the city from the period of its greatest boom on the turn of 19th and 20th century, i.e. at the time when the city was administrated by mayor Ottomar Ortell. His greatest dream was to build up an economically self-sufficient city. This dream came true after 40 years. Legnica became a city with a stunning railway station and an airport which was built in the first phase of world aviation development. Therefore, it became, next to Wrocław, one of the most beautiful cities of Central Europe. Legnica airport is the only and the last chance for the city and region to develop, despite the negative opinion of the local press, totally dependent on the City Hall officials.

The Legnica Airport is one of the oldest in the Lower Silesia region. It was established at the beginning of 20th century for the German aeronautical army. It was there where the zeppelin airship Schutte-Lanz SL 2 had its base in a characteristic large hangar that did not survive to present times. German air force Luftwaffe stationed there until 1945.

After the Second World War the airport was taken by the Soviet Army, who used it for their own purposes (mainly as a place of local command of armies of the Warsaw Pact) until early 90's. During this time. The Polish people didn't have access to the airport. By the way, the issue of Russian presence in Legnica became lately widely known thanks to the movie "Little Moscow". Legnica airport was able to accommodate such large machines, as An 12 airplanes or Mi-6 helicopters. All that is left after the Soviet Army returned home, are huge hangars that at one time could hold two heavy transport planes.

When the airport had been taken by Polish government, it wasn't properly used. Despite its huge potential, the airport didn't developed at all. The only activity was conducted by a small air sports club. Its members created Aviation Association of Legnica which main goal was to develop city aviation and to use its potential as much as possible. In the 90's the airport received an ICAO (Location Indicator) code (EPLF), and even provided a small air traffic. Also small sport and business planes landed there. At that time, the air traffic could have been bigger, and could have been more beneficial for the city's development, but the

local authorities did not use this opportunity. Due to the lack of ideas and interests, a large part of the airport's infrastructure was stolen. Nevertheless, the airstrip and taxiways are still in a good shape.

At this moment, the airport belongs to the Legnica community, but it is managed by the company known as Economic Activity Zone (EAZ) Ltd. This company, according to the agreement with the city president, should retain the air infrastructure. Unfortunately, it does not fulfill its tasks. Moreover, EAZ wrote a suggestion to The Civil Aviation Office proposing the closure of the airport. Official information about this topic (NOTAM – notice for airmen) is available in the Internet.¹

EPL E LEGNICA
 B1366/08 - AD CLSD FOR AIR
TRAFFIC. 23 APR 11:30 2008 UN-
 TIL 31 DEC 23:59 2009. CRE-
 ATED:
 02 JUN 10:50 2008

>>> EPL E (LEGNICA) <<<

METAR NOT AVAILABLE
 TAF NOT AVAILABLE

AD CLSD FOR AIR TRAFFIC².
 : NOTAM **EP/B5547/09**

>>> END-OF-BULLETIN <<<

EAZ, as a company, cannot run an airport properly, because it lacks ideas, and invention. Despite this fact, EAZ still promises to develop the airport, and to seek for investors. These are, however, only mystifications. Because of this situation, right-wing councilors of Legnica community decided to write a suggestion regarding EAZ closure.

To this situation, immediately reacted Aviation Association of Legnica and "AIR-LOGISTIC Legnica / INVEST FLY Energy". They made an offer of developing the airfield. The company meets all the legal requirements that are

needed to administrate the airport.³ In its proposal, the company would like to take over the airport's premises in leasing. However, the city will still be the owner. It is worth mentioning that LTL and ALL have serious business contacts, and possibilities. Professor Witold Grzybowski, as the adviser and the government expert, as well as the author of the project "Private-public Partnership", is willing to cooperate in acquiring EU funds. It is worth to emphasize the fact that the city authorities did not apply for such funds. A very important person, who cooperates with LTL/ALL, is Denzler von Bothd – the owner of Italian airlines "Air Blu". He is much concerned with the Legnica airport, and underlines its ideal localization as a potential cargo port. Denzler visited Legnica during his meeting with LTL board. An official meeting with president Krzakowski was also held, where Denzler presented his concepts. Unfortunately, the development of Legnica airport did not work out, and Denzler fulfilled similar plan in the former USSR countries. Nevertheless, the investor is still interested in Legnica airport. LTL/ALL are still in contact with him.

AIR LOGISTIC Legnica Company presents the plan of developing the Legnica airfield in the following stages:

1. Taking-over the management of Legnica airport (EPL E) according to art. 70 Acts of Air Law with the consent of the Chairman of the Civil Aviation Office
2. Writing down the change mentioned above in the register of airports
3. Starting up the Legnica airport, and notifying this decision to the Polish Agency of the Air Navigation and the Chairman of the Civil Aviation Office
4. Creating the Flight Training Office (FTO) according to present rules of JAR FCL 1. The office should first train the people for private pilot license (PPL). Later, the training will be extended into Commercial Pilot License (CPL), and the license to pilot multiengine planes.
5. Purchasing of two airplanes Cessna 152 to conduct the PPL training. It is possible to buy also Cessna 172 and PA-34.

¹ <https://www.ippc.no/ippc/showbriefing.jsp>

² „LOTNISKÓ ZAMKNIĘTE DLA RUCHU LOTNICYZEGO”

³ According to the Polish Aviation Act of 3rd July 2002 (Journal of Law No 130 item. 1112 with changes)

6. Employing the necessary staff with entitlements of the professional pilot, and the first class air instructor as well as creating Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS)
7. Performing essential undertakings in order to change the Legnica airport into public airfield.⁴ It would also include transformation of AIR LOGISTIC LEGNICA into LTD (limited liability company)
8. Creating required air infrastructure (such as hangars, petrol station, security, hardstand, leading roads, and airport adapting to flights according to IFR standards)
9. Establishing the aviation business (including irregular passengers and goods transport)
10. Establishing a logistics-stock centre in order to serve freight traffic

Due to its specific localization nearby Germany and Czech Republic, Lower Silesian Voivodeship is a good place for the international freight traffic to other European countries. Transport is one of the most important economic factors in the development of the region. Therefore, it is important to open Legnica airport. Moreover, The Legnica Special Economic Zone, A4 highway (and future A3), Wrocław-Germany railway connection are factors that have a big impact for such facility. In this environment it is a great demand for air transport, and airports with logistics-transport infrastructure.

The dynamic growth of air transport is in Poland on a very high level and amounts circa 30%. Presently, there are 19 firms in Poland that own Aerial Works Certificate and these numbers are growing.

When established, this enterprise on Legnica airport (EPL) would quickly obtain AWC certificate, because it has convenient localization and existing infrastructure. Moreover, it would fill the gap of aviation services in south-western Poland

⁴ In regards of availability for users the airports are divided for public and non-public. Public airport is the airport opened for all airplanes during the time established and officially published by the airport management. Non-public airport is the airport opened only:

- for the planes defined in registration documentation of this airport
- for the planes having the permission of the management.

(Lubin airport has short and narrow lane, Jelenia Góra airport – grassy strip, Mirosławice airport – short grassy waist, and Szymanów airport – short grassy waist).

EPL has following advantages:

- closeness of the important railway junction between Germany and Ukraine
- closeness of A4 (and future expressway A3)
- convenient road system between Legnica and Lubin (cooper basin)
- less than 250 km from Berlin and/or Prague
- direct localization in the R-11 air corridor that goes through Warsaw, Łódź, Frankfurt and further to the West
- EPL is the first Polish airport on the West and the last on the East where the airplane can be tanked
- beneficial meteorological localization in the so-called pole of the warmth (large distance from the mountains engages small turbulences, and a large distance from wooden and humid areas causes small amount of fogs)
- the airport has good transport connections with hotels and the culinary background
- localization next to The Legnica Special Economic Zone that offer numerous investment possibilities
- EPL could help Wrocław airport in passengers transportation, especially during Euro 2012

The fully working airport with its facilities could be beneficial to the city itself. Finally the airport would offer circa 500-1000 new work places in the region. It is also worth mentioning that these job offers would be more attractive than the jobs, for example in supermarket (which, according to airport's opponents should be built on the airport field).

EPL could be used for the following types of transport:

- General Aviation
- Aviation connected with pilot training
- Passenger traffic – supporting Wrocław airport for example during Euro 2012
- Aviation connected with public and emergency services

- Air shows and presentations
- Cargo freight traffic, as Legnica has suitable localization and high demand (for example for VW factory in Polkowice). However, cargo freight traffic would consider only those planes which mass do not exceed 5700 kilos. This limitation is caused by the lack of the appropriate navigation equipment.

GENERAL AVIATION

The basic type of air transport in Legnica would be general aviation. This term is described in detail by AOPA⁵ (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association) which by the way supports the Legnica airport reactivation:

General Aviation is generally associated with a small, single-engine plane that is based on suburban airport. This image may be only applied to about one fourth of small planes that are included in general aviation term. The rest 75% of over 40 millions of hours flown out annually by General Aviation planes is: instructional flights, business trips, agriculture aviation, air alert flights, customs and frontier guard flights. Actually these operations are so different that ICAO decided to define General Aviation as every flight that is on non-commercial terms. It should be, therefore, not associated with carriage of passengers, and/or goods. In this meaning even such machines as demonstration model of Airbus, or BBJ—Boeing Business Jet 737 used by government or business VIPs, are general aviation planes. Of course this category does not include warplanes.

An inseparable part of General Aviation is AW – Aerial Works designed to conduct special services in such branches as: agriculture, construction, aerial photography, air observation of: power grids, pipelines, gas pipelines. It also is used in patrol, and search and rescue operations.

⁵ AOPA POLAND is an association existing in Poland from 1996. Its members are pilots and airplane and helicopters owners. AOPA POLAND is a 41st member of IAOPA—an International Organization that associates over 400,000 pilots and aircrafts owners from 61 countries all over the world. It is the only organization that has its representation in ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organization, JAA – Joint Aviation Authorities, and EUROCONTROL – The European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation.

The numbers concerning General Aviation are really impressive: 350,000 airplanes, and about 700,000 pilots that take part in these operations. For comparison about 60,000 airplanes and 400,000 pilots are engaged in the commercial air transport, including cargo and charters.

Poland, as the majority of countries of former socialism block, is unfortunately at the end of the list. General Aviation in USA poses 206.500 planes, Germany – 10.900, Switzerland – 3.400, Austria – 1,300, whereas in Poland there are only 720 machines, and in Czech Republic – 706. However, the Polish market is constantly developing.

In USA one plane falls on 1.423 citizens, in Switzerland – on 3.705, in Germany – 10.430, in Austria – 11.002, and in Poland – circa 55.000 citizens. In Czech Republic one plane falls on 15.000 people. (Source: AEROKURIER 3/2001, IAOPA report from 2001)

The importance of General Aviation becomes even greater, when one should understand that each airline aircraft pilot begins his career in a cabin of small GA plane. Moreover, GA planes and helicopters are used for crucial social services such as police investigation, aerial ambulance, research operations, forest fire etc., making people's lives safe.

For national economy such operations as: air photography, measurements, and patrols, have a crucial meaning. For many distant areas contact with civilized world would be impossible without GA. It is also a major factor in creating new work places. The benefits are measured in dozens of million dollars in those countries where GA is active. Therefore, GA needs and ideas should be treated seriously in the aspect of economic development for many countries and regions.

The economical progress, which took place during 60s and 70s of the XX century, allowed GA to become a useful form of transportation despite weather conditions. The development of radio communication and navigation, and GPS technology along with the progress in the field of air traffic control, caused a rapid growth of companies using General Aviation planes in their everyday operations. GA planes may now compete with commercial air lines – especially on short distances up to 800 km.

The last decades of the 20th century are times of consolidation and reinforcement of GA position all over the world. More and more pilots got the qualifications to operate the plane using navigation instruments which allowed to use the plane in practically every weather conditions. Various schools for pilots had to adjust to more complicated requirements in training.

General Aviation acquired the status of the comfortable means of transportation in relation to commercial airlines that are troubled by frequent flight delays, canceling flights, and inexperienced staff (for example: in the first half of the last year 32% of passenger flights starting from 14 biggest airports in France were late for more than 15 minutes). Latest terrorist attacks – for example in USA – proved that it is much safer to travel by GA small planes than by commercial lines.

Bigger and more economically developed countries were more willing to notice the benefits that are connected with the GA growth due to easy access to distant and rarely populated regions. According to published data, annual income of GA in USA amounts over 65 billion of dollars.

However, even smaller, but still economically developed countries could benefit from more flexible and efficient GA planes. According to

German calculations one small airplane registered in the airplane register gives work for about 10 people, while the choppers are able to give employment for about 15 workers. All countries, also Poland, take advantage from GA.

Nevertheless, GA cannot operate without its bases. Legnica airport has a chance and requirement to become one, especially that even the present infrastructure allows for operating small GA planes.

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