

- We have recorded 36,295 passengers these days, by which we have already broken a record of airport in Niš, and by the end of year we expect that the number of passengers shall exceed 120,000 - said Vladica Đurđanović, Director of Constantine the Great Airport in Niš for Business.

He added that if the number of passengers that use this airport continues to grow, and if additional funds are invested in its equipping, it is realistic to expect that by the end of 2017, the plan of 300,000 passengers will be achieved.

Our speaker does not hide how satisfied he is since airport in Niš is becoming the base for low cost companies in Serbia, which was proved to be the good strategy of its revival, after having languished for the years, even decades and only birds were flying from its runway. Now the situation is much better- from this airport the planes of Hungarian company Wizz Air are flying to Malmö (Sweden) and Basel (Switzerland), and according to the announcements as of August 20, this low cost company shall have flights two times a week to Dortmund(Germany). Irish low cost company Rian Air shall join Wizz Air as of August 1, also with flights twice a week to Eindhoven (Netherlands) and Munich (Germany), as of September 4 to Berlin (Germany), as of October 31 to Dusseldorf (Germany) and Bratislava (Slovakia), and as of November 1, to Milan(Italy).

- Those are excellent results, especially after the series of unsuccessful years, when the airport was not functioning. However, for sustainability of its business operation investments in infrastructure and equipment are needed. Practically, there were no investments in the airport of Niš since its founding, i.e. 1986, if we don't take into account the investments of the Government of Norway to repair the runway NATO bombed in 1999. If we want to have 300.000 passengers by the end of next year, it is necessary to extend terminal building, invest into renewal of the equipment, and to provide devices for instrument approach of airplane and approach lighting system on the runway - Đurđanović pointed out.

As one of the arguments in favor of the need for infrastructure investment, he specified that the roof of existing terminal building leaks since it was riddled with shrapnel during NATO bombing, and then just improvised repair was performed. He also pointed out that the airport equipment is thirty years old. Encouraging data is that air traffic control of Serbia and Montenegro (SMATSA) published tender for procurement of instrument approach system (ALS system), that should be installed in 2017 and airport in Niš shall try to provide funds for approach lights from SMATSA, Civil Aviation Directorate and Belgrade Airport in the amount of around EUR 1.2 million.

- Once we provide ALT system and approach lights, airport shall obtain the so-called Category 1. For airlines, it means that in the event of fog or bad weather they will not have to reroute their airplanes towards other airports and thus increase costs. Airport in Niš currently has no category but carriers selected us based on the exact measurements in

the last ten years which show that it does not have many foggy days and the risk of these type of inconvenience is small - claims Đurđanović.

He assessed that revival of Constantine the Great Airport could have the positive impact on foreign investors in Niš and the region, "because they primarily ask whether potential investment destination has highway and airport". He strongly believes that revival of airport has already resulted in purchase of the largest hotels in Niš that have been waiting for the right buyers and capital for years. Positive effects are expected in tourism, in which the city of Niš should invest. In that context, Đurđanović reminds that these days charter flight arrived from Russia with Russian sportsmen, that went to Kopaonik and that four more charter flights were announced. "Currently there are no charters from other countries, which is bad. It seems that our tourist organizations, especially those in Niš, are not ready or do not have capacity for arrangements which include charter flights- said Vladica Đurđanović.

Evaluation

Calculation shows that from June last year until today around 70,000 passengers arrived to Niš airport, which with the assumption that each of them in Niš and nearby spent EUR200 means inflow of around EUR 14 million. "Putting this airport into operation in fact provides bigger opportunities for other industries. Competent people in the city, region and state as well as tourist agencies and other economic entities should realize that and use it in the best manner", concluded Đurđanović.

Security at high level

- Niš airport is highly secured which is extremely important at the moment when terrorism is in expansion. We have qualified and expert security staff and border police station is also located there, i.e. gendarmerie and civil police, which indicates that we pay attention to passengers' safety. There is no profile within Employment Bureau competent for organization of security system, i.e. airport security system, but those profiles are "modelled" by additional education. Safety manager on the airport is Radmila Nerandžić, who graduated from Faculty of Sport and Physical Education and has all necessary certificates for that job, issued by the Educational Center at Belgrade airport - said the director of airport in Niš and adds that the experts of low cost and some Russian companies checked airport security and gave positive mark.