

Sajtóközlemény / Press release

Budapest Airport year in review: Developments reached 90 billion HUF

Budapest, 3 February 2023. 2022 was an extremely challenging, yet very successful year for Budapest Airport. The company recovered 75% of its pre-COVID passenger traffic, added brand new destinations to its schedule and became a regional leader in quality, while air cargo volumes hit unprecedented records. A number of important sustainability investments were launched, and the value of the airport developments implemented over four years reached 90 billion HUF by the end of the year. Last year, the airport operator continued to prepare for the reopening of Terminal 1 and the construction of Terminal 3, while winning more Hungarian and international awards in the areas of quality, sustainability, HR and communication.

2022 was not an uneventful year in the life of Budapest Airport. Not only did the airport operator take big steps forward in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, but it also had to deal with unexpected and unforeseen situations, such as the influx of refugees caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the consequences of the economic slowdown, the energy crisis and the spillover effects of the summer disruptions experienced by most European airports. In addition, soaring inflation and the extra profits tax imposed on airlines also impacted Budapest Airport, most notably in the last quarter of 2022 and 2023.

The first two months of last year transpired as normal and as forecast by Budapest Airport, but the refugee crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the end of February generated extraordinary tasks at Ferenc Liszt International Airport. To ensure the smooth handling of evacuation flights, Budapest Airport temporarily reopened Terminal 1, from where more than 8000 students departed, mainly for India, Nigeria, Ecuador and Morocco, and 3200 Ukrainian citizens arrived. The airport operator ensured proper care for all refugees together with the authorities, embassies, ministries and aid agencies, while traffic at Terminal 2 continued seamlessly.

In parallel with managing the refugee situation, Budapest Airport was continuously preparing for the increased passenger traffic of the summer months, as it was already apparent in April that the first really strong summer after COVID would be full of challenges for most airports, especially those where staff shortages had reached critical levels. Thanks to Budapest Airport's timely preparations for the post-pandemic recovery in terms of human resources, capacity and infrastructure expansion, the higher passenger traffic did not cause any disruptions at the airport. While many European airports experienced severe disruptions, Budapest Airport continued to operate seamlessly during the summer period, and thanks to several newly introduced processes, ground handling companies also operated without disruptions.

During the summer months, traffic reached 80% of pre-pandemic levels, again exceeding 1 million passengers per month. However, the announcement in May of an extra profits tax on airlines forced the company to recalculate passenger numbers during the summer, and the soaring inflation in the fall again prompted the airport operator to revise its forecasts. The economic situation in Hungary and internationally caused passenger numbers to start falling again in the fall, the passenger mix at the airport began to change in favor of foreign tourists due to the high euro exchange rate and forecasts showed that the full recovery of pre-pandemic passenger numbers would be delayed by one year, to 2024, due to these impacts.

The fall started with a major commitment: in September, the biggest noise protection program ever, offering the most services and worth a total of 1.2 billion HUF (3 million EUR), was launched. The program, which has been running for more than ten years, has now been extended to 4000 properties, aims to reduce noise burdens for people living near Ferenc Liszt International Airport by retrofitting or replacing windows in living and bedrooms, insulating roller shutter casings and installing soundproof ventilators.

In addition to all these highlights, Budapest Airport was continuously preparing for the reopening of Terminal 1 in 2022, where the operator is only waiting for the building permit to arrive. According to plans and forecasts, the doubled and refurbished Terminal 1 should open by summer 2025 at the latest, in order to cope with the growing passenger traffic with the usual, high-quality services and to further develop the country's tourism. A delay in the reopening of Terminal 1 will have a direct and significant impact on the growth of tourism in Hungary. Meanwhile, preparations for the construction of Terminal 3, the first main segments of which are scheduled to be completed in 2030, also continued over the past year. Preparations for the international design competition, phasing and preliminary studies are currently under way, to ensure that construction does not disrupt the operation of Terminal 2.

What did 2022 mean in numbers?

Passenger traffic and destinations

12,205,070 passengers used Ferenc Liszt International Airport in 2022, 216% more than in the first year of the pandemic (2020) and 164% more than in the second year (2021). Passenger traffic thus reached 75% of the record year of 2019 by the end of the year. August was the busiest month of the year, with 1 299 814 passengers.

A total of 140 destinations were accessible from Budapest in 2022, practically the same as in 2019. All long haul destinations except those to North America have been restored, to add to those that existed during the pandemic. Thus, direct flights to China are available again from the end of 2022. 11 new destinations were added to the schedule last year and 4 new airlines joined the mix at Budapest airport. The most popular destinations were London, Tel Aviv and Paris.

Air cargo volumes set another record

The volume of air cargo reached 194 000 tons by the end of the year, breaking all previous records. This represents a 5.8% increase compared to last year and a 44% increase compared to 2019, which is exceptional compared to other European airports, as the global economic slowdown has caused a decline in air cargo, while Budapest Airport's role as an air cargo hub in the Central and Eastern European region has been further strengthened. In addition, the record cargo volume was achieved with fewer aircraft movements, with cargo flights down 11.5 per cent compared to 2021.

90 billion in development projects

By the end of 2022, the value of the developments carried out by Budapest Airport over the past 4 years reached 90 billion HUF, and by the spring of 2023, this figure will exceed 100 billion HUF. Last year, the Universal Airport Hub at Kálvin Square was opened, the self-service baggage check-in system was expanded, an observation and smoking terrace was opened in the transit area of Terminal 2B, elevators at the airport were modernized and 100 new baggage trolleys were made available to passengers. The airport now has 5 nursing rooms and 12 strollers that can be used by passengers.

A number of infrastructure developments were carried out behind the scenes; the load-bearing concrete pavement was refurbished on 7 aircraft stands, over more than 4000 square meters, the drainage system on the eastern side of runway II was modernized and the upgrading of taxiways B4 and B5 was completed on schedule.

In response to growing demand, the BUD Cargo City is being expanded; Budapest Airport is adding an additional 6500 m² of warehouses, 1500 m² of offices, live animal handling and other service facilities, as well as two new aircraft stands to the complex. The expansion will increase annual cargo capacity of the airport from 250 000 to 300 000 tons.

Preparations for the reopening of Terminal 1 and the construction of the new Terminal 3 and the related infrastructure were ongoing throughout the year. In the meantime, Budapest Airport has started the temporary reconstruction of the car park in front of Terminal 2, where it plans to provide 586 additional parking spaces for cars and 8 for buses in a high quality environment, from June.

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Sustainability: Budapest Airport remains in the elite group

In the past year, Budapest Airport modernized the airport's heating centers and boiler house, saving around 170 000 m³ of natural gas and 340 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. By the end of 2022, BUD had 13 fully electric and 11 hybrid vehicles in its fleet, and our ground handling partners have already replaced a total of 134 pieces of ground service equipment. With the development of e-mobility at the airport, annual savings have thus reached 412 000 liters of fuel and, correspondingly, approximately 1080 tons of carbon dioxide. Last year, 65% of the airport's electricity demand was covered by green energy, and from January this year, 100% of the electricity supply comes from renewable sources. In 2022, Budapest Airport continued to be part of an elite international team of 44 airports that have achieved level 3+ airport carbon accreditation and fully offset their carbon emissions during operations. The next target is the highest level, 4+ "transition", which is currently fulfilled by only 33 airports worldwide.

Outstanding quality

Each quarter of last year brought outstanding results in airport service quality; the scores of the tri-monthly, internationally recognized ASQ (airport service quality) surveys in 2022 exceeded all previous scores. Throughout the year, the overall passenger satisfaction level was above 4 on a scale of 5, 7.5% higher overall than in 2019. These scores put Budapest Airport ahead of its regional competitors in the same category and confirm the success of its development efforts over the past years. Passengers primarily rated the kindness and helpfulness of security staff, the seamlessness of security screening, the short waiting times and the overall cleanliness of the terminals with outstanding scores.

Higher employee headcount than before the pandemic

The BUD group (Budapest Airport, RÜK, BUD Security) currently employs 1460 people, 447 of whom joined the group last year. Since the end of the coronavirus pandemic, i.e. from February 2021, a total of 611 employees who are active today have started working for the BUD group. Overall, this means that the number of BUD group employees has now exceeded the 2019 level, despite the fact that the company was forced to make two mass redundancies in 2020, due to the negative impact of COVID. After the pandemic, 131 of the colleagues affected by the redundancies returned to the BUD group.

2022 was a year full of awards

Last year, Budapest Airport won the Skytrax "*Best airport in Eastern Europe*" award for the ninth time in a row, as an employer, the company received Investors In People's gold rating, and Budapest Airport was also ranked among the 7 best employers in the world. The *We Are BUD* event for the airport community won the HRkomm award, and the company's cargo operations also received a prestigious recognition when it won *Cargo airport of the year* at the Air Cargo News Awards, bettering Singapore, Brussels and Liège. The airport operator also won three sustainability-related awards in 2022: 2nd place in the Green Balance category of the Effekt 2030 - Community Investment Awards, Deloitte's *Green Frog Award* in the category "*First Sustainability Report*" and the LIVE CONSCIOUSLY. THINK GREEN sustainability awareness marketing campaign was voted campaign of the year at the Frontier Awards Gala.

"Reptér" was the hit song of 2022

In 2021, Budapest Airport re-recorded the music video of the then 40-year-old song "Reptér" (Airport) with György Korda, giving a new impetus to the airport's anthem. In November, the modernized version reached 5.5 million views on YouTube, and thanks to a year-end campaign and exclusive concert with the artist couple, the number of views has now jumped to 8.1 million.

Operating the airport to a high standard is a complex task that requires close cooperation. Budapest Airport would hereby like thank all staff, airport partners and authorities for their joint efforts to ensure that Ferenc Liszt International Airport continues to be the best airport in Eastern Europe.

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Notes to editors

Budapest Airport is the best airport in the region, as recognized by Skytrax in 9 consecutive years from 2014 to 2021, based on passenger ratings. Over the past years, BUD has emerged as a leader, becoming the fastest developing airport in the region. Together with its airline partners, it is a key contributor to the development of tourism in Hungary and Budapest. The BUD Cargo City is a focal point for import and export air cargo; Budapest Airport's aim is to become the cargo gateway for East-Central Europe.