
Air cargo through Europe's major hubs still short of pre-pandemic levels

2023/08/31 00:40 στην κατηγορία INTERNATIONAL

Air cargo throughput at some of Europe's biggest hubs continues to fall well short of pre-pandemic levels – an indication that the market remains stagnant, or at best is slowly recovering.

Throughput of airfreight and airmail last month at Frankfurt (FRA), Europe's biggest air cargo hub, exceeded the July 2022 level by 2.3%, reaching 164,503 tonnes, but mainly due to measures to reduce freighter capacity last year.

And airport operator Fraport said the figure was “significantly below the July average over many years ,of about 178,000 tonnes”.

As a result of more passenger flights and discontinuation of so-called ‘preighter’ services, there had been “a tremendous increase” in cargo on passenger aircraft in July (+19.7 %), **Fraport noted, reaching about 93% of the July 2019 belly load volume.**

As for the ratio between cargo transported on freighter and passenger flights, this was 60:40 – about the same as in pre-pandemic 2019, while tonnage carried on freighter aircraft was up 2.9% on July 2022, but down 8.7 % on 2019.

“Like the whole industry, we are impacted by the continuing overall economic slowdown. This is clearly reflected in the cargo figures for July,” a spokesperson for Fraport told *The Loadstar*.

“Regarding passenger traffic, we see further growth this year. On the one hand, this boosts belly [cargo] capacity, but on the other, 2023 remains challenging for aviation, because in addition to the continuing shortage of personnel at numerous service providers, operational restrictions – such as those resulting from airspace closures – continue to challenge us.”

Air cargo volumes returning to pre-pandemic levels at FRA was dependent on the speed of the economic recovery, said the spokesperson, and added: **“Given the influencing factors already alluded to, we are unable to forecast with any certainty when this is likely to happen.”**

As for Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS), cargo throughput was 113,537 tonnes last month, compared with 120,131 tonnes in July 2022.

A deeper dive into the figures reveals a modest recovery in volumes to and from Asia, by far its most important geographical region, where volumes totalled 42,167 tonnes (+2.1%). But all other regions were in negative territory, compared with July last year, in particular, North America, down 21.2%, at 19,278 tonnes.

London Heathrow (LHR) handled 114,887 tonnes of cargo last month, compared with 110,044 tonnes in July 2022, and 130,589 tonnes in July 2019.

And volumes at Leipzig/Halle Airport (LEJ) in July were around 114,600 tonnes, 9% below July 22, a decline that “reflects the general global economic slowdown”, a spokesperson told *The Loadstar*.

From January to July, LEJ handled around 802,303 tonnes, 10% less than in the same period in 2022, but is up on the 714,000 tonnes handled between January and July 2019.

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29/8/23