



Ms. Brídín O'Leary
Commission for Aviation Regulation
3rd Floor, Alexander House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2

15th August 2008

Consultation on the regulatory approach taken towards the quality of service at Dublin Airport

Dear Ms. O'Leary,

The IBEC Transport Council, representing transport users and providers, welcomes the opportunity to deliver a submission on the regulatory approach to be taken towards the quality of service at Dublin Airport. Given that we are an island nation on the periphery of Europe, effective air transport systems for internal and external trade and travel are essential. The quality of this infrastructure and the services delivered have a significant impact on the Irish economy and society.

Airports continue to enjoy rapid growth in traffic but associated congestion is fuelling a highly negative view of our air transport system. Ireland's air infrastructure is ranked 30th globally¹ and since 1990, air passenger numbers have increased by over 255% nationally. By 2009, passenger numbers at Dublin Airport are projected to increase to over 25 million per year.

IBEC members have extensive experience of airports globally and support the view that poor quality air transport gateways can undermine competitiveness in several ways:

- Attractiveness for inward investment may be diminished as companies prefer locations with transport links that allow for the smooth movement of people.
- As companies invest in subsidiaries and increasingly work with international outsourcing partners, the ease of travel in and between different countries is essential.
- Connectivity and simplicity in reaching global destinations will dictate the success of indigenous enterprises in international markets.
- With respect to Dublin Airport and the image it portrays, it is often the first and last impression of Ireland for a vast majority of visitors. The quality of service that these individuals experience significantly colours their perception of the country and their willingness to pursue further business/other activities in Ireland.

¹ World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index 2007

Developing metrics to measure the quality of services delivered at Dublin Airport is an important step in maintaining and enhancing airport services which reflect customers' needs. However, as referred to in the Commission's consultation paper (CP3/2008), the mechanisms chosen will determine the success or failure of the scheme. Time should be taken to develop the most appropriate method for service quality assessment, which has the flexibility to be reviewed and optimised following implementation. This will result in a sustained high-quality service for all users.

Defining and measuring quality of service

A satisfactory passenger² experience is fundamental to the success of Dublin Airport. Therefore, the passenger should be at the core of metrics chosen to measure the quality of service. Ultimately, it is the experience of the passenger which will determine the success of the Airport and the associated economic benefits. This experience, to varying degrees, will be the responsibility of the airlines, the airport authority, airport tenants/concessionaires, security operators and the efficiency of associated operations and, the State via immigration and customs services.

In addition to passengers, the quality of service delivered to the following groups should also be taken in account:

- Airlines;
- Parties associated with passengers (in 2007 there were 2.9 million "meeters and greeters" at Dublin Airport);
- Ground handling agents;
- Cargo companies;
- Concessionaires.

Metrics focusing on user satisfaction must not be simplistic. The passenger experience at the airport is made up of a complex series of moments of contact. In order to accurately and fully reflect this intricate interaction, the metrics measuring this experience must be comprehensive. If measures are too simplistic, there is a danger that real quality will be sacrificed by focusing on improvements needed to satisfy the established metrics and not on the full experience of the user. A number of detailed quality measures are already frequently gathered by the Dublin Airport Authority and synergises between these and proposed metrics should be examined.

Benchmarking quality

Dublin Airport currently caters for over 23 million passengers per year. In comparing quality standards and best practise, it is important that Dublin Airport is benchmarked with leading international airports of similar size that serve comparable demographics and passenger profiles. Such airports could include those previously used in the Airports Council International surveys, namely:

² Reference to passenger includes, but is not limited to, business, OAP, general tourist, child and special-needs travellers.



Zurich, Brussels, Copenhagen, Athens, Oslo, Stockholm, Stansted, Manchester, Vienna, Melbourne and Vancouver.

Connecting airport charges to quality standards

While the concept of connecting airport charges to the quality of service should be debated, further details are required as to the specific proposals to be put forward. The Commission should focus first on establishing an effective and appropriate mechanism for measuring service quality at Dublin Airport. Following successful implementation, discussion can then begin on the next step of coupling quality performance with airport charges.

I trust the points put forward in this submission will inform the Commission's paper on the quality of service at Dublin Airport. It is a significant issue for IBEC members and I look forward to further engagements with your office on this and other matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Sweetman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Paul Sweetman
Head of Transport Policy, IBEC