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# Cooperation gives a lift to airport regions

A well-planned airport that is integrated with the surrounding areas can provide an economic boost to an entire region. The airLED project involves four central European regions in elaborating long-term development concepts for economically isolated airport areas. The project analyses the needs of "Airport Cities" and supports bodies representing stakeholders in airport development.

As **business markets** become national and international in scale, airports and their adjacent areas are being seen as catalysts for local economic development. The economic advantages accruing to airport catchment areas extend well beyond their immediate location, and provide an opportunity to enhance the competitiveness and cohesion of the whole central European region. To assist in this process, the airLED project studied the impact of airports and encouraged best practices in planning airport development.

The project used status-quo analyses in the four airLED

regions, looking at the current status of key factors that influence an airport region's future development. These reports focus on the spatial, environmental, architectural and economic character of the areas around airports, as well as the need for environmental protection. The factors are analysed according to their effect on "direct" impact zones near the airport and "indirect" impact zones a little further away. Project researchers also investigated the current financial and infrastructural position of the airports and their business partners, to determine the possible size and volume of future economic developments.

The airLED case studies of airports in different phases of their lives do not simply tell us what the critical factors are, but also throw some light on the possible solutions to problems – and the various development paths that can be taken.

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Additional research by the product included an EU State-of-the-Art report, which gives some insight into the current state of European airports and the regions surrounding them. The study aims to provide an evaluation of the situation in the European airport market, taking stock of new trends, new challenges airports and surrounding regions face – and possible answers to these challenges.

### Success factors

Using their research, project partners were able to lay down "Airport City criteria" for determining the potential of airports. Top priorities include a good location, a qualified workforce and a favourable investment environment. But the first criteria, location, is given for each region, so the challenge stakeholders face is making the most of where they are. To help stakeholders from each region meet this challenge, the project invited them to join Regional Development Coordination Bodies and take part in regular meetings, where they can share ideas and experiences. Using the ideas produced through these meetings, and the project's research, airLED seeks to develop clear strategic plans that can be communicated effectively. The project encourages creation of economic zones, where investors are entitled to allowances like tax breaks, good infrastructure, skilled manpower and a generally favourable economic and social environment. These zones can provide direct and indirect incentives to boost investment, and a follow-up-care policy can be adopted to keep investors in the city over the long term. The airLED project results in economic development plan that can be integrated into local, regional or national plans. It also provides its partner cities with databases, publications and other tools to attract the kind of investment that can help create jobs.

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1.4

Billion passengers pass through Europe's airports every year

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Main pillars: transport and logistics; spatial development, environment and architecture; business and investment development

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Common vision: to become an Airport City