**CAPA Global Aviation Awards for Excellence**
**recognises top aviation leaders**

British Airways, Swoop and Spirit Airlines have been recognised among the top airlines at CAPA’s annual Global Aviation Awards for Excellence in Malta this evening (5-Dec-2019). The nine award categories covering airlines, airports and aviation leadership were presented at a dazzling ceremony at the Westin Dragonara Resort in St Julian’s, attended by over 150 aviation luminaries from across the globe as part of the 2019 [**CAPA World Aviation Outlook Summit**](https://was19.capaevents.com/).

Regarded as the pre-eminent awards for strategic excellence in aviation, CAPA first established the awards in 2003 to recognise successful airlines and airports based in the Asia Pacific region. The awards later expanded to the global stage in 2012 to acknowledge aviation excellence worldwide.

CAPA – Centre for Aviation (CAPA), Chairman Emeritus, Peter Harbison said: “In the dynamic and ever-evolving environment of the aviation industry, CAPA’s Global Aviation Awards for Excellence serve as an opportunity to stop and recognise key achievements across our industry over the last 12 months and celebrate with industry peers.”

**Airline Winners**

The six winners in the airline category represent carriers that have shown the greatest strategic impact on the development of the airline industry within their class, and have established themselves as leaders, providing a benchmark for others to follow.

### Airline of the Year: British Airways

The British Airways brand may only be 45 years old, but the airline has been built on a legacy that dates back 100 years to 1919 when forerunner company, Aircraft Transport and Travel Limited (AT&T), launched the world's first daily international scheduled air service between London and Paris.

From Instone, Handley Page, Daimler Airways and British Air Marine Navigation Company Limited; via the likes of Imperial Airways Limited, British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), British European Airways (BEA) and British Caledonian; to the current British Airways, the UK carrier has been an important part of the aviation scene not just in the United Kingdom, but across the globe.

It has been an innovator - not less than flying the supersonic Concorde jet - and has evolved into a new generation airline as it has refined its activity to better compete with the intense competition from Europe's LCC powerhouses. It is now in the midst of a major fleet renewal which will see the arrival of new long haul aircraft, introducing new and redesigned lounges, new dining across all cabins, new bedding and amenity kits, enhanced onboard WiFi and power access at every aircraft seat.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “British Airways was famously the world’s favourite airline in the 1990s and it has taken some tough decisions to maintain its market position against increasing competition. Under the leadership of CEO Alex Cruz, BA has not been afraid to adopt new ticketing practices, service levels etc and is now among the frontrunners of distribution change and technology adoption - at the same time as achieving an industry leading ROIC. It is certainly "100 not out" for one of the world’s most famous airline brands.”

British Airways, Chairman and CEO Alex Cruz said: “On behalf of everyone at British Airways, we are truly honoured to accept this award. In this, our centenary year, we have much to celebrate from our past and much to look forward to for the future. We pioneered the first commercial passenger flight as Air Transport and Travel Limited starting with just one route to Paris. Since then, we have lead from the front, introducing innovative products such as the first lie-flat Business Class seat, operating the first jet-engine aircraft across the Atlantic, and flying customers at twice the speed of sound on Concorde.

"We’re now transforming British Airways so we are fit for the future. We are investing £6.5 billion in new, more efficient aircraft, introducing new products, innovating with technology and we are committed to net zero emissions by 2050. British Airways has a proud history of taking Britain to the world and bringing the world to Britain, and that is set to continue for years to come.”

### Airline Executive of the Year: Ethiopian Airlines, CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam

This award is presented to the airline executive who has had the greatest individual influence on the aviation industry, demonstrating outstanding strategic thinking and innovative direction for the growth of their business and the industry.

 Airline executives across the globe could learn a lot from Tewolde GebreMariam who has helped deliver sustained profitability for Ethiopian Airlines. He became group CEO in January 2011, but before that had held various several senior leadership positions in different divisions in the airline including Ethiopian Cargo, area offices and sales and marketing. In fact, he has now completed almost 35 years' service having started as a transportation agent back in 1985.

Under his stewardship, Ethiopian Airlines has stood out from the crowd in Africa and is now attempting to build on the continent’s potential as it expands in partnership with other African countries to build much needed intra-African connectivity.

This year has been a tough one for all involved with the airline following the crash in March 2019 of ‘ET302’, with the loss of all 157 passengers and crew onboard, an event that subsequently lead to the grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX airliner.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Tewolde GebreMariam has become a giant in African aviation over the past decades. He has guided a marginal airline into becoming a major global force, with a modern fleet and a world class operation. This past year he has been most strenuously challenged following the MAX accident, and emerges with an even stronger reputation. We are proud to present him with this award and look forward to him continuing to lead the airline to even greater heights."

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Tewolde GebreMariam said: “I am honoured to have received the award and I sincerely thank CAPA for the recognition. We at Ethiopian have achieved greater milestones as one family. I want to dedicate this award to my colleagues: more than 16,000 brave men and women around the world who always challenge themselves to soar higher with the mind-set that every step they take can become new history and milestone in today’s 21st century aviation business.”

### Low Cost Airline of the Year: Spirit Airlines

Spirit Airlines was selected for pioneering the ultra-low-cost model in North America, and more recently, turning its operations around and improving its customer relations. It is further evolving the model by leveraging new technology to drive up its non-ticket revenue, which should grow by 3% in 2020 after reaching USD56 to USD57 in 2019.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Spirit Airlines has projected the ULCC model into the North America mainstream, and its growth has directly resulted in the creation of fare classes in the marketplace, resulting in passengers having more choice, at the same time as airlines improving their revenue management.”

Spirit Airlines President and Chief Executive Officer, Ted Christie said: “We are committed to providing the best value in the sky, and this award recognises our mission to deliver an extraordinary guest experience, while keeping our costs and fares competitive.”

“Spirit continues to invest in the guest experience and set the pace as America’s fastest growing airline with our reliable on-time operation, one of the youngest, most fuel-efficient fleets in the U.S., and an enhanced inflight experience with new, more comfortable seats and an updated cabin design. This award is testament to the hard work of our entire Spirit Family across the US, Caribbean and Latin America, and a milestone in Spirit’s continued evolution to deliver More Go,” he added.

### Regional Airline of the Year: airBaltic

airBaltic was selected for its strong return to growth and profitability after emerging from a challenging restructuring period. Annual passenger numbers, essentially unchanged at 2.6 million between 2008 and 2015, look set to reach five million in 2019, a near doubling in four years. Revenues have enjoyed similar growth.

airBaltic's restructuring years and the 2016 minority investment from a private investor have helped to secure its turnaround and renewed profitable growth. This has been supported by its decision to buy the Airbus A220-300 and eventually to replace all its Boeing 737s and Bombardier Dash-8s with the new aircraft.

airBaltic made six consecutive years of positive net profits by 2018. CEO Martin Gauss has said that 2021 or 2022 could be a suitable time for an IPO, provided the airline is meeting targets. Meanwhile, he is prudently continuing to build the airline's track record of disciplined growth to ensure sustainable profitability.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “airBaltic combines an LCC cost base with a compelling hybrid business class product, while its route network meshes point to point demand with a hub and spoke model. Its growth and return to profit, built on a strong market share in its home market of Latvia and the wider Baltic region, should certainly attract investor interest.”

Martin Gauss, Chief Executive Officer of airBaltic said: “We at airBaltic have had yet another year of intense work and successful growth. We have continued developing our services, modernising the fleet and widening the route network for better connectivity. More passengers appreciate our product and choose airBaltic as their carrier. As a result, our total market share in the Baltics this year has reached 37%, ranking airBaltic the No 1 airline in Latvia and Estonia with 60% and 21% market share respectively. The CAPA Regional Airline of the Year award is a great honour and an excellent motivation for our team to follow the course of constant improvement and growth.”

### Airline Turnaround of the Year: LOT Polish Airlines

LOT Polish Airlines was selected for its return to profit since 2016, following an extended period of loss-making, while also resuming strong traffic growth. In 2019, it expects to carry 10 million passengers for the first time, more than twice its traffic of just four years ago.

A restructuring programme started in 2012 made LOT much more competitive and better placed to face strong low-cost competition on short haul routes in Poland. While short haul competition is fierce, LOT is the leading airline on routes within Central Europe. Moreover, it is Central Europe's only long-haul operator of any significance, styling itself as the region's favourite network airline.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Large LCC airline competition is strong in Poland, but their focus on price sensitive short/medium haul point to point markets leaves a gap for full-service airlines following a hub strategy that includes long-haul destinations. No other legacy airline in Central Europe is able to fill this gap as effectively as LOT has been able to. This has not been as easy as it might sound, but LOT have pursued opportunities most effectively"

LOT Polish Airlines CEO, Rafał Milczarski said: “As LOT Polish Airlines, we are proud to be honoured with the CAPA Airline Turnaround of the Year Award. As this prestigious award goes to airlines that have recently turned around through innovative strategic changes and successful restructuring exercises, we are delighted that our success has been so highly recognised by our colleagues and partners from the industry. Despite challenges we all face in the international aviation market, LOT has been able to grow in the recent four years into a trans-regional leader and the fastest developing airline in Europe. With more than a hundred routes now on our offer, we have doubled the number of passengers and, at the same time, significantly reduced our climate impact per passenger. This is all thanks to the incredible enthusiasm and professionalism of our Team, to whom this award should be credited in the first place.”

### Start-Up Airline of the Year: Swoop

Swoop was selected for its execution of creating a brand within a brand and introducing the ULCC model in Canada on a large scale, transporting roughly one million passengers during its first year of operations. It is progressing towards its cost and ancillary revenue targets and continues to effectively operate distinctly from its parent company.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Swoop has risen to the challenge of maintaining a separate identity and strategy from its parent company. It is introducing a fresh new voice that has stimulated traffic in Canada’s market and has adapted quickly to execute the ULCC model successfully in that market.”

“To be recognised as Start-up Airline of the Year is a tremendous honour and an incredible milestone for Swoop,” said Steven Greenway, President, Swoop. “This award is a testament to our innovative nature, and we are proud to be making travel more affordable and accessible for Canadians through our unique unbundled model.”

## Airport Winners

The three winners in the airport category have demonstrated the utmost strategic leadership across the globe and taken significant steps to progress the aviation industry in the last 12 months.

### Large Airport of the Year: Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport

Awarded to the airport with over 30 million annual passengers that has been the biggest standout strategically, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport has established itself as a leader and done the most to advance the progress of the aviation industry.

The airport was selected for sustaining passenger traffic, following a decade of very high growth, in the face of the opening of a brand new, capacity-unconstrained airport across the city, increasing passenger capacity in 2018 and air movements in 2019, and holding cargo capacity at its second-highest level in six years.

Being sufficiently bold as to plan for a future that includes a second runway and a new terminal, plus a dedicated cargo apron, despite the threat from the new Istanbul Airport, all the while continuing to handle existing traffic as the world’s third busiest single-runway airport.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Since its inception, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport has lived under the shadow of its larger neighbour across the Bosporus. But over the decade between 2008-2017 it grew passenger numbers at a remarkable  average of 25% annually, projecting it into the category of a "large airport". Primarily an LCC airport and the main hub for Pegasus Airlines, this growth rate inevitably placed enormous pressures on resources, requiring creativity of management and the flexibility to accommodate the new levels."

“We are deeply honoured to receive this award from CAPA. It’s a recognition of our remarkable growth story.” said Ersel Göral, CEO, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW).

"The significance of this award also coincides with the 10th year since the opening of SAW’s new terminal, where traffic has grown more than six times, serving over 200 million passengers since then,” he added.

Today, SAW is Turkey’s second busiest airport and Europe’s 12th busiest airport, handling over 35 million passengers per annum. Located 40km away from the city centre, SAW is well positioned as the city airport of Istanbul, following the recent opening of the new Istanbul Airport as well as the closure of Atatürk International Airport.

Its location and direct accessibility via metro next year, together with its ongoing developments (second runway, new terminal) SAW is poised to play a significant role in Turkey’s aviation landscape, especially in supporting Istanbul to be one of the world’s mega aviation hubs in the coming years.

### Medium Airport of the Year: Vienna International Airport

This award recognises the airport with 10 to 30 million annual passengers that has been the biggest standout strategically.

Vienna International Airport was selected for sustaining consistently high rates of passenger growth in 2018 (10.8%) and 2019 (19.5% to Sep-2019), despite adverse operating conditions such as the loss of airberlin, which had been the second-largest carrier. That rate is up to four times higher this year than competitors such as Prague and Budapest airports.

Innovation in route development for example the search for new routes to Chinese regional cities such as Xi’An, thus extending the airport’s established reputation for connecting smaller and regional cities in the west and east.

For keeping ahead of further anticipated traffic growth through infrastructure investment of up to USD550 million by way of expansion of terminal 3 and modernisation of the terminal 2 pier east as well as planning beyond that through provision of a third runway on or after 2030.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “Adapting to the loss of a significant operator, airberlin, offered challenges for Vienna International Airport, which it has successfully navigated this year. Through effective route development strategies, the airport has managed to recover rapidly, while simultaneously diversifying its route network. Vienna International has established itself an important hub for eastern Europe and beyond and is preparing for further growth with timely infrastructure development."

Vienna International Airport Joint CEO and COO Julian Jäger said: “We are very pleased about this recognition. Vienna International Airport has been very successfully growing in different areas in recent years. The flight offering has been strongly expanded, the quality of service has further improved and the terminal infrastructure is being continuously modernised and upgraded. Parallel to the dynamic growth, we have already been able to reduce CO2 emissions by 70% since 2011. By the year 2030 we want to operate our airport in a completely CO2 neutral manner. The CAPA award confirms our strategy and the fact that we are on the right path”.

### Regional/Small Airport of the Year: Seville Airport

Seville Airport was selected for sustaining consistent and strong passenger traffic growth since 2013, which peaked at 25% in 2018 and which is running at over 20% in 2019. That is a full 20 percentage points and 15 percentage points respectively higher than that recorded by parent company AENA in the same periods.

Thereby helping to consolidate Seville’s position as an emerging business and conference centre for the whole of southern Spain in addition to its already established credentials as a tourist destination.

The airport was also selected for anticipating the growing demand for long-haul services to Latin America which by-pass Madrid, by inaugurating EUR62 million of infrastructure improvements which include a runway extension.

CAPA Chairman Emeritus Peter Harbison said: “AENA-led Seville Airport in southern Spain has captured a vital role in the region's tourism and the aerospace industry, by virtue of a holistic strategy working with local economic development and tourism bodies. It is a good case study of how approaching airport development in this way can anchor important operators like Ryanair, with its maintenance base and expanding array of services. The airport's remarkable growth is testament to that success."

Sevilla Airport Director, Jesús Caballero Pinto said: “For Sevilla Airport, this award is extremely important, because it represents a recognition of the enormous effort made over the last five years in order to improve our air connectivity. In addition, it is a great motivation to continue improving.”

## Special Recognition Winners

Two additional Special Recognition awards were also presented. The first went to Johnny Thorsen who was recognised for Innovation in the Aviation and Travel Sector - and the second award went to Leslie Cassar for Outstanding Service to Australian and Maltese Aviation.

For more information on the CAPA Awards for Excellence, visit [**centreforaviation.com/about/capa-awards**](https://centreforaviation.com/about/capa-awards)

##

#### About CAPA - Centre for Aviation

CAPA - Centre for Aviation (CAPA), part of Aviation Week Network, is the leading provider of independent aviation market intelligence, analysis and data services covering worldwide developments. Established in 1990, CAPA’s platforms help the aviation sector and supplier businesses stay informed, remain connected to industry leaders and fuel inspiration to drive change. CAPA’s global C-level and corporate travel summits are held in key aviation markets around the world, attracting executive level speakers, attendees and leading stakeholders of the global commercial aviation industry. Understanding aviation markets is our great strength and passion, along with providing CAPA members, clients and partners with an unparalleled level of expertise and insight. For more information and details on membership and events, please visit centreforaviation.com.

Aviation Week Network, the largest multimedia information and services provider for the global aviation, aerospace, and defence industries, serving 1.7 million professionals around the world, is part of Informa Markets, a division of Informa PLC.

#### About Informa Markets

Informa Markets creates platforms for industries and specialist markets to trade, innovate and grow. Our portfolio is comprised of more than 550 international B2B events and brands in markets including Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, Infrastructure, Construction & Real Estate, Fashion & Apparel, Hospitality, Food & Beverage, and Health & Nutrition, among others. We provide customers and partners around the globe with opportunities to engage, experience and do business through face-to-face exhibitions, specialist digital content and actionable data solutions. As the world’s leading exhibitions organiser, we bring a diverse range of specialist markets to life, unlocking opportunities and helping them to thrive 365 days of the year. For more information, please visit [**informamarkets.com**](http://www.informamarkets.com/)

#### For media enquiries please contact:

Daniella Baxter
Global Marketing Director
CAPA – Centre for Aviation
P: +61 2 9241 3200
**daniella.baxter@centreforaviation.com**

Annaliese Vella
Content Marketing Executive
CAPA – Centre for Aviation
P: +61 2 9241 3200
**avella@centreforaviation.com**