



SBAE 2025 MARKET TRENDS AND INDUSTRY OVERVIEW - GENERAL AVIATION SERVICE SHARES DETAILS

News / Business aviation



Third edition of the Spanish Business Aviation Event on November 5–6 brought together country's leading figures in business aviation. Round tables, open debates, the participation of high-level representatives from the Spanish government, strengthening public-private dialogue. Sector's agenda was quite clear: sustainability, ReFuelEU regulation, operating licenses, service costs, and market trends. General Aviation Service Commercial Director Luis Hurtado Barrutia was the right person to share with us some details and results of this event.

T.O. During annual Spanish Business Aviation Association event you were discussing the situation and opportunities on Spanish market. Share all the secret information you can.

L.H.B. It was a time to sit down together, to seek the right way for business aviation and aviation companies in general to cooperate. A time to share our ideas and concerns, to speak openly and seek ways to improve life in the industry and move it forward together.

What works best in Spain, what we see as being very successful. What are the areas for improvement and what we need to work on together. It was actually like Business aviation sector in Spain passing on an X-ray.

We're realizing what works best in the industry and what we are missing. Like aircraft sharing models Netjet's way, for example. Sometimes, instead of seeking cohesion and cooperation within Spain, we immediately look abroad. Perhaps it's in our mentality.

T.O. What's the difference of mentality?

L.H.B. I think it can be difficult to collaborate on certain projects with other local companies. Because it can sometimes be perceived as a sign of weakness. It's a question of attitude. When someone is more successful than you, advice comes flying in from all sides. And these kinds of problems in our current management style, which are currently affecting younger generations, are most likely evolving.

There is still a long way to go, because we sometimes look abroad. What's more, this mindset prevents us from taking advantage of the opportunities that are actually available to us. We felt that even if we couldn't collaborate immediately on all issues, we could try to work together on certain points, particularly negotiating equipment purchases in order to reduce costs. We all have rules to follow. The truth is that we have the most dynamic general aviation sector in Europe. There is no denying that it is booming and that we have opportunities. That is what has been said as well.

T.O. It's quite banal to say that you could be stronger together. And everyone in Europe outside of Spain is saying that you're growing. Naturally, the rates and conditions will alter significantly when there are a number of companies involved, say two, three, five, or ten. I want to know if you think that coworkers, or should I say rivals, would be willing to go together. Or perhaps—but not this year and not next year?

L.H.B. That is obviously what we need to start looking for. And it is true that many of us recognize that there may be numerous opportunities for synergy and that we should not get too confused. However, we can negotiate with them collectively, which can be beneficial to us. That is, of course, the first step.

The next step is to strengthen our cooperation so that we can jointly request better infrastructure or participate in the planning of future general aviation infrastructure in Spain, or perhaps in the development of future plans to create a strategy for FBOs, which are improving year on year but also becoming increasingly expensive. So there is a lot to do.

Since we know that this will not change in the near future... we are currently engaged in a fierce price war, where we are all competing on rates. Operators, who care hardly about safety, demand ever lower costs. And, as you know, times are tough.

T.O. We discuss the future of FBOs and how they will develop into a sort of mini-city inside the airport city during events. AENA is well-known. "What do general aviation needs as the as future infrastructure?" is a question they ask you. They should to reach out you now to get ideas of future FBO infrastructure in five to ten years. Is it taking place?

L.H.B. In fact, they don't ask as many questions nowadays. It's true that things have improved

since we were essentially overlooked in the past. And now that we're there, they have to address it. This subject also came up at the occasion. Ultimately, we should not close our minds because sometimes it's okay.

Saying something along the lines of, "Okay, why I'm going to fight with AENA because it's time-consuming to, to tell them," we could construct a terminal that we would design and optimize ourselves, and then use an area of the airport where nothing is located. Naturally, though, they begin to notice a lot more issues.

They say, for the moment being, "Oh, our system of FBO works." We'll see. Five years from now, we'll see. We'll see who can visit the FBOs with the most costly and sophisticated invoices—I'm referring to incomes. The revenue from these investments is really insane.

Consumers are evolving. They want new things, secure things, private things, and things that are a little bit apart, but also things that can develop into something like the e-VTOLS, as you mentioned. All of this is done in order to create a plan for the future and say, "Perhaps we have a project here of the FBO with electric automobiles in 20 years, and electric planes will be there." As a result, you will arrive at the airport separately from the others or whatever.

T.O. From what I see and the progress eVTOLS are making and we have to be ready, they will be certified next year. Spain is a very well-liked vacation destination. They will come to you as handlers, and you will have to deal with it. What will you do when eVTOLS arrive in Spain ?

L.H.B. We try to use drones, which we believe are very safe, dynamic, and well-regulated, but we end up wasting a lot of time building them. So I think we lose momentum and pace. We often arrive a little late. Unless large companies find it interesting and try to keep up with it.

I'm working on electrifying our fleet. It promises to be challenging. There is a big difference between what needs to be done to follow regulations on time and real field situation. Simple example : new regulations on helicopters flying over Spanish cities. Why can't anyone fly when all the buildings are equipped with helipads?

T.O. The future is already here, which is one of the reasons I am asking these kinds of questions. There are few rules in place, but there will be many more. Actually, you are having a lot of problems with all the electrification, for example, and other things. They will knock on your door the day after tomorrow and say, "Hey, we're flying," all at once. Would you kindly allow us to become your customers?

L.H.B. That's exactly what happens. The same applies today to new European requirements for maintenance, training, and material handlers. If you've never been part of a standard and now you have to start from scratch while dealing with all these issues that are currently arising... It's extremely complex. We missed the boat when we tried to make our point, because no one consulted us, and now we have to deal with the consequences.

T.O. However, if we discuss the Spanish market specifically, the structure of FBO in Spain differs significantly from that of other European nations. Do you believe that these significant reforms and regulations will have an effect? Perhaps only major players will remain in the market, and others who are merely there to make quick money will eventually leave and give up. Because they will find it extremely difficult to complain.

L.H.B. It's true that things are undoubtedly going to get a lot more complicated. Everyone who

starts in this industry struggles to comply with regulations, which are becoming more complex every day. So that's the key point. Some of newcomers are thinking : “Well, now that we've started, we just have to see it through and that's it. » It is important to understand that we want to improve the sector. If you ask me, I could tell you some things that could also improve it, perhaps in a slightly different way.

First, I would try to understand this industry and set aside any preconceptions you may have, because every airport is unique. Some of airport employees are truly passionate, knowledgeable, and eager to help you. Others, however, dislike and misunderstand business aviation because of the problems you cause at the airport.

They understand that you are not the main thing here, nor the one who will change the way the airport operates, but they still don't understand. They are completely mistaken in thinking that this is simply a luxury traveling.

Consumers are changing. We want things that are new, safe, private, and a little different, but we also want things that can evolve into something like e-VTOLs, as you mentioned. The development should be done thinking for decades of future installations that would fit the demand of reality.

I'll give you an example – strategy for an FBO project in 20 years with electric cars and electric planes.

Today, it's simply a matter of saying, “Oh, electric aircraft are making their appearance in general aviation, and we have to provide them with the power plug.” That's their reasoning. But who's going to take the initiative to provide them with a plug? Long way to go still...

T.O. Spain needs to be prepared because the future is approaching—or, perhaps more accurately, is approaching—at a rapid pace.

L.H.B. As you said... After our meeting and the discussions that took place throughout the event, it is clear that we need to change our perspective. We have to look for ways to strengthen our unity and work together on issues. How can we bring new issues to the AENA, resolve them quickly and efficiently, and strengthen business aviation in Spain compared to the current situation. I have no doubt that this is feasible.

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