News Release

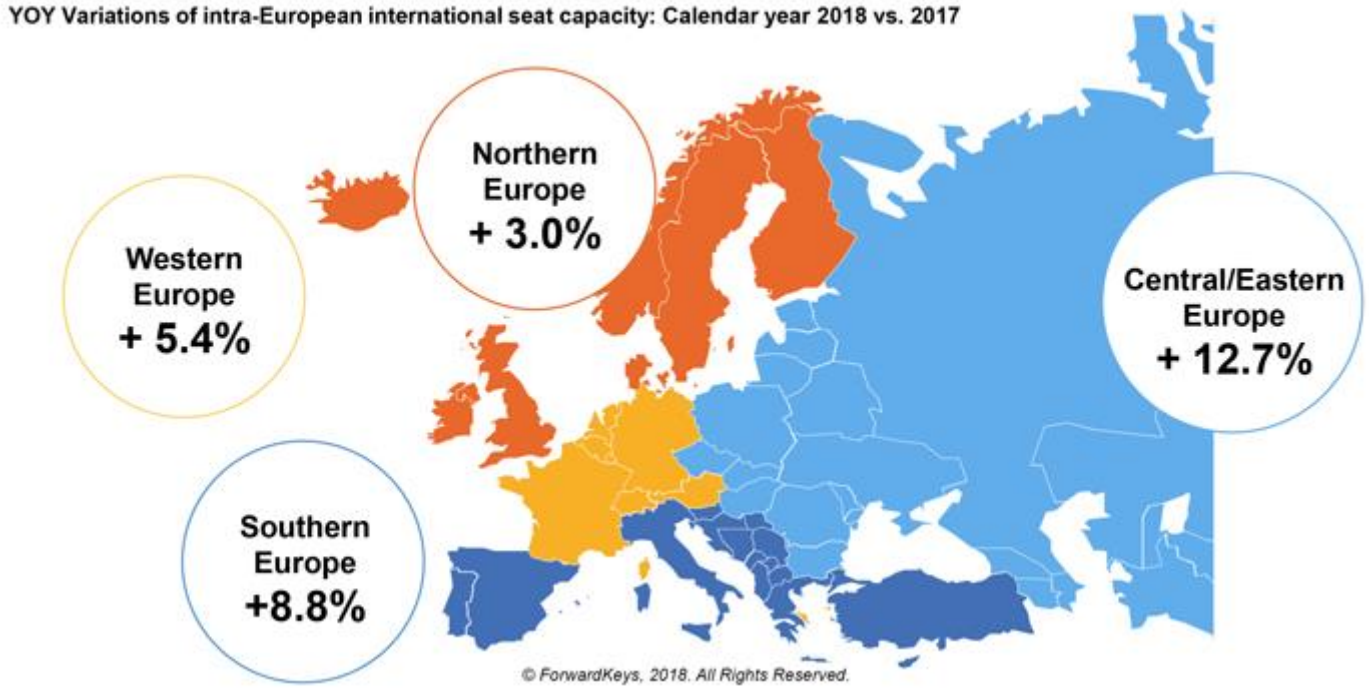
Europe's regional airports are taking off

Europe's regional airports are taking off in popularity according to latest findings from ForwardKeys, which predicts future travel patterns by analysing 17 million booking transactions a day.

Some of the boost can be attributed to specific events like the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, but other long-term factors are at play, like the growing popularity of travel, increasing pressure on the major airports, human curiosity to keep discovering new places and the success of low-cost airlines.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the direct economic contribution of European regional travel was up 3.8% in 2017. That is significantly faster than the overall GDP growth of the EU, which was only up 2.3%.

Encouragingly for the economy, ForwardKeys reveals that intra-European international seat capacity is growing fast, in the face of ever-increasing demand. In 2018, intra-European seat capacity is up 6.0% on last year. The growth has been strongest in Central/Eastern Europe, up 12.7%. In Southern Europe, it is up 8.8%; in Western Europe, it is up 5.4% and in Northern Europe, it is up 3.0%.



As well as Russia developing regional capacity for the World Cup, Georgia was up 23%, Ukraine 18%, Poland 17% and Latvia 16%. They were the top-growing countries this year. And in southern Europe, Turkey and Greece both bounced back.

Many regional airports across Europe showed significant growth in terms of intra-European capacity. Regional airports like Aarhus, Bordeaux, Ufa and Antalya are top performers within their respective sub-regions. Russia has ambitious expansion plans for its regional airports, taking advantage of the momentum from the World Cup.

Top 5 most growing airports per subcontinent in terms of intra-European capacity (among airports having 200k scheduled seats) in 2018

Northern Europe	
Aarhus (DK)	+100%
Aalborg (DK)	+38%
Southend (GB)	+34%
Stockholm Bromma (SE)	+18%
Helsinki (FI)	+13%

Central/Eastern Europe	
Ufa (RU)	+185%
Moscow Zhukovsky (RU)	+128%
Lviv (UA)	+59%
Kiev (UA)	+54%
Kutaisi (GE)	+44%

Western Europe	
Bordeaux (FR)	+24%
Memmingen (DE)	+23%
Dresden (DE)	+23%
Linz (AT)	+17%
Nantes (FR)	+16%

Southern Europe	
Antalya (TR)	+65%
Bodrum Milas (TR)	+65%
Thira (GR)	+45%
Mykonos (GR)	+44%
Dalaman (TR)	+42%

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In 2018, seat capacity to long-haul destinations from Europe is up even more – by 9.1%, although the seat volume of long-haul flights is substantially less than that on intra-regional flights. It was the smaller European airports where capacity grew quickest, with the ten largest European airports showing slower growth.

YOY Variation of total scheduled seats 2018 vs. 2017

	Intra-European international seat capacity	**Long-haul** international seat capacity
Europe	**+6.0%**	**+9.1%**
10 main European airports	+5.0%	+5.2%
The rest European airports	**+6.3%**	**+15.2%**

10 MAIN EUROPEAN AIRPORTS	
AMS	MUC
FRA	IST
LHR	MAD
CDG	ZRH
LGW	FCO

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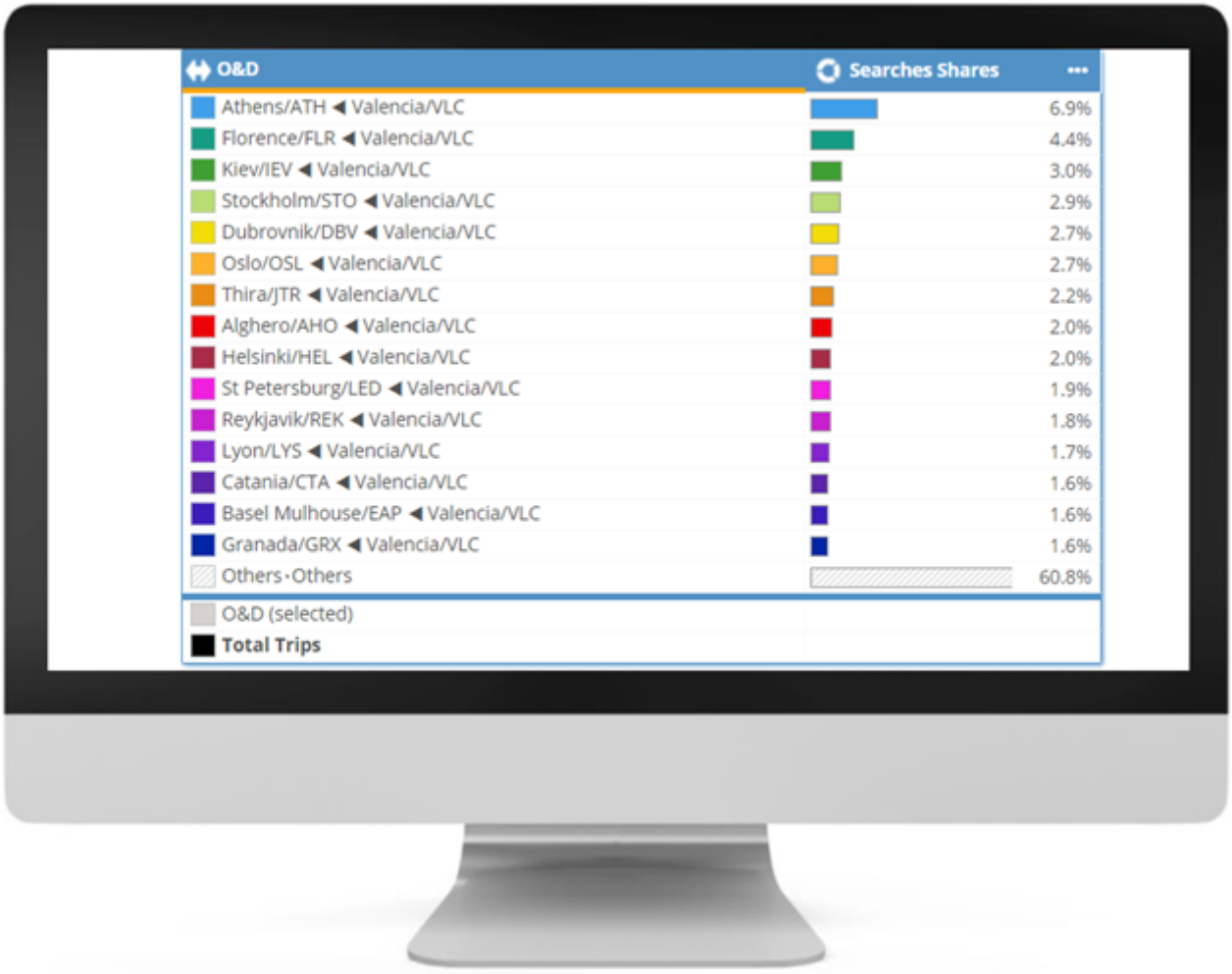
ForwardKeys CEO and co-founder, Olivier Jager, said: “Low-cost travel is constantly increasing its market share and driving a lot of regional and trans-Atlantic expansion, but demand is still going to outstrip capacity. The regional expansion trend seems irresistible and many European destinations are already facing the problems of “overtourism”, as seen in Barcelona and Dubrovnik. There needs to be combined efforts and vision from airports, airlines and destinations

simultaneously to capitalize on the economic benefits and manage the growth in a sustainable way."

One graphic example of the enthusiasm for travel comes from ForwardKeys' headquarters city, Valencia, showing residents' flight searches for destinations not yet served. Top of the list are, in order, Athens, Florence, Kiev and Stockholm. Olivier Jager concluded: "We have observed thousands of searches for each of these destinations this year. That shows how much people want to depart from their local airport and they are constantly seeking new destinations. It's both a challenge and business opportunity that needs to be met."

Flight searches done by Valencia residents for non operated European destinations: Jan to Sep 2018



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About ForwardKeys

ForwardKeys analyses more than 17m flight booking transactions a day, drawing data from all the major global air reservation systems and selected airlines and tour operators. This information is enhanced with further independent data sets, including flight search and official government statistics, plus data science to paint a picture of who is travelling where and when. ForwardKeys' analytics are used by travel marketers, retailers, hotels, destination marketing organisations (DMOs), financial institutions, car rental companies, tour operators, online travel agents (OTAs) and other traveller-focussed businesses worldwide to monitor and anticipate traveller arrivals from a particular origin market at a specific time. This analysis enables parties to anticipate the impact of

events, better manage their staffing levels, fine tune supply requirements, adjust and measure the effectiveness of their marketi ng efforts and anticipate future market trends.

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