

## Poland's Ruling Party Favors Constructing New Mega-Airport

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The leader of **Poland's** ruling party **PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński**, has come out strongly in favor of construction of a new mega-airport outside of **Warsaw**.

The new mega-airport proposal was initially vetted as part of Poland's plan for constructive development, announced by the Law & Justice Party when it won Poland's parliamentary elections and gained control of Parliament a year and half ago.



Despite strong support for the project by the

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management of LOT Polish Airlines, the proposal has been subject to much discussion and criticism as being uneconomic, too expensive and a waste of resources already invested in the two Warsaw airports, Chopin Okęcie and Modlin.

However, Mr. Kaczyński, when asked last week whether he supported the construction of a new regional airport in Podlaskie east of Warsaw, stated that he supported construction "of a major, international, global airport

somewhere close to Warsaw. We cannot accept the fact that we are the only country in which the airports are the beginning of the road to other major airports." He stressed that the airports in Vienna and Prague have a much larger network of connections than the largest airport in Poland, and that Poland is "a big European country, and we must strive to ensure that the country be in the whole sense of the word."

The Central Airport (Centralny Port Lotniczy or CPL), as the project is called, is referred to in Poland's Strategy for Responsible Development adopted by the Council of Ministers on February 14. The strategy calls for conducting detailed studies regarding CPL and deciding whether to proceed by the year 2020, all as part of a program to integrate various means of transport to promote Poland's development. Currently, all of Poland's airports serve a little over 30 million passengers a year. CPL alone would provide capacity for at least this number of passengers and preliminarily, would be designed for 50-60 million passengers. The proposed location that has been mooted is west of Warsaw on the way to Lodz, near the A2 motorway and along a high-speed rail line to be built between Warsaw and Lodz. The capacity of Warsaw's Chopin Airport is expected to be reached relatively soon, and further development is troublesome, as it is located inside the capital city.

Given the immense cost of the project (estimates range from PLN 30 billion to 50 billion (approximately US\$12.5 billion), financing will be a key driver. The European Commission closely monitors airport projects to ensure compliance with State aid rules (see the Guidelines at 2014/C99/03), and large airports must meet the private investor test. Because of the existing number of large hub airports in continental Europe, whether CPL could attract sufficient private investment is a key question. Obtaining support from EU funds is uncertain and financing from Chinese sources has been discussed. When Poland's Foreign Minister visited China, he received offers to support the CPL project, and Chinese investment in Polish infrastructure was discussed during the visit of

President Xi Jinping to Warsaw.

Given the strong support for CPL from Poland's governing party, the inclusion in the Development Strategy of further work on CPL, and the interest of leading Chinese entities in CPL, we expect further developments soon.

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