



DETERMINED TO GROW THE EVENT, EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC CONTENT TO COME - ZIGMARS VESTFALS ON RIGA AVIATION FORUM 2024

News / Airlines, Business aviation, Manufacturer



Organizing a conference is always a challenging process. A conference for aviation professionals needs to offer the right topics for discussion and the right speakers. The discovery of Riga Aviation Forum 2023 confirmed the fantastic quality of the Latvian Aviation Association's work. When an event comes to an end, it's time for the organizer to look back and start planning the next one. Today I have the pleasure to welcome board member of Latvian Aviation Association Zigmars Vestfals. I had the pleasure to live two days of Riga Aviation Forum 2023 as Media partner. I am still torturing people who were there with questions because two days of event, it was so quick and so full of information that even willing to do the best, we hadn't time to discuss with everyone.

T.O. First question, are you happy with a forum, first impressions after you had some time to see how it was and what was good, what you could do best for the next time?

Z.V. Yes, thank you for this question. I'm pretty happy about the Forum, about the conference we had in Riga. You already mentioned, those two days passed so fast! In my opinion two, there was

not enough time to speak to everyone. And there were lots and lots of colleagues from different aviation sectors. Colleagues from 3 Baltic countries met each other in person and were willing to discuss so many topics. We had peoples from Nordic countries, Germany, France, more than 225 participants in total. I would say one more day is what is needed, so for next event we are targeting 3 days conference. We are thinking about having educational and academical parts of conference as well. I would be happy to invite speakers and guests from Scandinavia. This would be next step for our growth. The event will keep Riga Aviation Forum name, but in fact people are invited from pretty much everywhere, globally all aviation professionals. Baltic countries are small, we know that, but we are very fast and open minded. This forum is a chance to meet new people, new professionals, gain new experience. Forum gives the opportunity to learn from each other, sharing best practices and experiences. So, I hope we will growth bigger, more participants, more days for diversified event.

T.O. From 50skyshades side I can assure you that we are working on bringing some colleagues and friends from aviation industry for the next Riga Aviation Forum. You are right, Baltic countries are small, but very well known for technology development and proactivity and proficiency. Recently I discussed this with Director of Aviation Department of Latvian Ministry of Transport. They are more than open minded to welcome all kinds of proposals and companies to see together what is possible to do in Latvia and in Baltic in general.

Tell me a bit in advance, will you still focus on sustainable aviation? Is it important for Baltic region to see multi-modality, to see new technology coming? We could say that Baltic countries, especially Latvia, is a perfect place for tests, trials, implementation of new technologies. New ways of moving around – eVTOLs, hybrid aircraft...What you would love to highlight for next event?

Z.V. Yes, of course sustainability will be a very large topic not only for next years, but I guess for next decades. Obviously it is on our agenda. New technologies are coming very fast. During last forum we saw novelties from Ascendance Flight Technologies and Embraer presentations. A lot of news is coming in next years. As you could see in Riga, we are proud to have our Latvian companies offering results of great ideas realization to aviation industry. Like for example aviation parts 3D printing, changing spare parts supplies. I would say some 10 years ago it was not even possible. Now, they are certified and are working with clients globally. So, new technologies, sustainability, safety would definitely be among our main topics. Organizing an event, the key part is to assure interesting, rich interesting agenda and speakers. So, we are preparing internally next Riga Aviation Forum already now to assure excellent content and attract even more participants.

T.O. You mentioned safety as one of main topics. My question is simple – do you plan to discuss not only safety of new technologies, but safety of flying in general. Latvia is a lucky country to have national airline – airBaltic. Many of RAF2023 participants came to Riga by airBaltic, who's doing a great job. Due to actual situation in the world safety of air travel becomes more than important topic. Do you plan to invite safety experts, maybe to offer training programs, including for passengers, crew members and airport's staff?

Z.V. Yes, thank you for this question. Latvian Aviation Association tries to unite and combine all possible stakeholders. You mentioned before you had some discussions with the aviation department of our Ministry of Transport. This is a very good example when the business is having a good connection with authorities. We are organizing think tank meetings, together with the Ministry of Transportation. It allows us to open some doors, explaining what the business wants, what are the issues, problems. It allows to manage better, to determine axes of necessary action. Regarding airlines, we are happy and proud to have our airBaltic here. We have SmartLynx

airlines as well, also a big company. We're planning to organize next think tank meeting with airlines, airport, and authorities to discuss air travel safety topic. As Association we are bringing all parties together, around the table to discuss and find solutions.

T.O. My last question is obvious one – what would you say to aviation professionals inviting them to come for Riga Aviation Forum 2024?

Z.V. I would say that everybody who wants to experience a wonderful city, wonderful, beautiful country in the Baltics, in Northern Europe and would like to see what is possible even if you are a small country – please join us next year! We will be very happy to meet you here! WE will have I guess a very interesting program, even more nations, even more cultures, and even more experiences to share.

So make sure you put the beginning of September 2024 in your diary for Riga Aviation Forum 2024 and join a constructive and inspiring event!

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