

EBACE 2017 - "full of energy and excitement for the future"

This year's EBACE (European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition) demonstrated an optimism that the industry is turning a corner in Europe – manufacturers debuted new aircraft models at a full-capacity static display, attendance appeared on the upswing, and the exhibit floor exceeded expectations

Based at the Palexpo site adjacent to Geneva airport from 22 to 24 May, the event featured some 400 exhibitors from over 40 countries. Visitor numbers matched those of 2016 (at over 13,000) and the newly relocated static aircraft display featured 56 aircraft. The event showcased business aviation's sustainability with jets such as Bombardier's entire fleet flying to Geneva using biofuel.

A major new programme announcement was the launch by Airbus of the VVIP version of its A330neo long-range airliner, which will be able to fly 25 passengers non-stop between Europe and Australia. Meanwhile, taking pride of place in the static were several aircraft making their EBACE debuts. Gulfstream brought its first fully outfitted test vehicle G500 twin, which is scheduled to receive FAA certification later this year. Textron Aviation's Citation Longitude, which is also set for service entry by year-end, made its first European appearance. At the smaller end of the market, the Cirrus Vision SF50, Piper M600 and Nextant G90XT were all on display for the first time.

The week kicked off with an inspiring Opening General Session address by solar aviation pioneer, Dr. Bertrand Piccard. As the first pilot to fly around the world entirely on solar power, Piccard predicted innovation would lead aviation toward a more sustainable future. The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) and National Business Aviation Association (NBAA), joint organisers of EBACE, sought to emphasise the enduring role of corporate aviation as a job creator and its role in environmental protection, education and humanitarian projects.

"An incredible show, from start to finish" was the verdict of EBAA's new CEO Brandon Mitchener. "Anyone who spent the last week at EBACE can see the passion and professionalism that define this industry. This show was full of energy and excitement for the future, with amazing technology on display, in-depth policy discussions and more than a few deals closed" he said.



Brexit casts long shadow at EBACE

It was standing room only for the EBACE panel discussion on "Brexit and its implications on Air Transport in Europe", which only served to underscore the uncertainty surrounding the changes. Luxaviation UK CEO Patrick Margetson-Rushmore, one of the four panellists, said: "Whether we like it or not, Brexit is clearly happening. And it's not going to only affect the UK but also the remaining member states."

He said that his ideal outcome would be retaining the "status quo" and that he hoped other EU countries would agree and work together to put pressure on local governments. Trade organisations such as the EBAA and NBAA would be able to make a significant contribution to this crucial lobbying. One thing all panellists agreed on was that if the European business aviation industry is to find a way ahead, emotion needs to be put aside.

Airbus floats new helicopter brand

Airbus Helicopters used the platform of EBACE to launch a new dedicated brand aimed specifically at business owners and operators and high net worth individuals. Airbus Corporate Helicopters (ACH) has brought together a number of teams within Airbus Helicopters and will channel their offering under a single brand. Frederic Lemos, head of ACH, said: "We want to provide customers with an ownership experience that raises the bar. We want to provide them with the highest level of proposals from end to end: from getting in contact with us, negotiating a helicopter, getting delivery, being supported, even in the re-sale of the aircraft after the time of ownership."

Learjet passes two milestones

On 2 June, Bombardier marked two historic milestones for its iconic Learjet. The delivery of the 100th Learjet 75 to Missouri-based manufacturer Leggett & Platt also marked the production of the 3,000th Learjet. Learjet's first aircraft, a Learjet 23, made its debut flight on 7 October 1963. The design was the brainchild of Bill Lear and production began from the Lear Jet Corporation's facility in Wichita, Kansas. The original Learjet lays claim to the title of the world's first purpose built corporate jet. After a number of corporate name changes and a growing stable of larger and more sophisticated models, Canadian manufacturer Bombardier Aerospace bought the company in 1990. The Learjet 75 was first introduced as a successor to the model 45. The first example was handed over in 2013.

RANA SERVICE CENTRE: Aviation finance

Despite the economic downturn, the new and used corporate aircraft market continues to function and buyers continue to seek finance for these transactions, with growing demand in some sectors and geographical areas. RANA has built up relationships with a number of banks, finance houses, leasing companies and groups of individual investors that have demonstrated an appetite for investment in the corporate aviation sector.

Lenders will look at a number of different factors and each has its own criteria for acceptance, in addition to loan to value ratios and the length of term of any potential deal. These criteria may include: the maximum age of the aircraft; whether it is new or pre-owned; the book value of the aircraft; the jurisdiction of the aircraft's registration; the proposed operational plan for the aircraft or the type and nationality of the client. Any such financing is of course viewed on a strictly case-by-case basis with tailored terms and conditions.

European traffic on the rise again

There are positive signs of growth in levels of European business aviation traffic according to the latest edition of the Business Aviation Monitor published by specialist analyst WINGX Advance. In May 2017 there were 77,068 business aviation departures in Europe. This represents a 17% increase on the previous month and a 3.3% overall increase on May 2016. In terms of the year to date (YTD) figures, flight numbers are up by some 3.2% (9,592 departures). WINGX Advance Managing Director Richard Koe said: "Following last month's blip, May-17 resumed the growth trend in business aviation activity in Europe this year, evident mainly in the largest markets France, Germany and UK. Activity growth from the UK is notable, with London's light jet departures growing 10% YoY. Trends at Farnborough, Biggin Hill and Stansted partly reflect some migration from Northolt, but also London's overall increase in business aviation activity, visible during this month's calendar events such as the Monaco Grand Prix and Cannes Film Festival."

Textron ends Mustang production

On 11 May, Textron Aviation announced that the final production Cessna Citation Mustang had rolled off the production line. The termination of the Mustang production line leaves the seven-seat Citation M2 as the company's entry-level corporate jet. The Mustang first flew in April 2005 and received FAA certification in September 2006. A total of just over 470 aircraft were produced until production ceased. Industry analysts believe that competition from the M2 was at the root of the manufacturer's decision to end the production line. Sales of the twin had dipped significantly since the M2 was introduced in 2013.

US ATC privatisation generates vocal opposition

US President Trump's first budget included proposals to privatise the country's air traffic control system, which have stirred up a chorus of opposition from the general and corporate aviation sectors. In the face of support from a majority of US commercial airlines, industry lobbyists including the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) have voiced their anxiety in the strongest terms. NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen said: "For several years, NBAA has said the public airspace belongs to the American public and should serve all Americans. The president's budget takes the public's elected representatives out of the equation and leaves it to a private board to ensure the public's interest is being well served. We are troubled and concerned by this proposal and will review it closely as the legislative process moves forward." In particular, the NBAA is concerned that private airline involvement in the ATC service could lead to restrictions being placed on corporate and general aviation operations.

Corporate aircraft news

Pilatus Aircraft has begun production of the innovative PC-24 twinjet at its plant at Stans in Switzerland. The aircraft is expected to receive regulator certification later in the year, with delivery to the first customer expected shortly after. US fractional ownership specialist PlaneSense has been identified as the launch customer for the aircraft. The three PC-24 prototypes have so far accumulated some 1,525 hours over 950 test flights. Final performance data will be published prior to certification and is expected to demonstrate improvements over initial runway performance, speed and range benchmarks.

On 4 May, Brazilian manufacturer Embraer confirmed that it had delivered its 1,100th business jet. The aircraft in question, a Phenom 300, was handed over to specialist fractional operator NetJets. The company delivered its first corporate jet in 2002.

Gulfstream confirmed that it has added a third test vehicle to its G600 programme and that the new twin looks set to enter service in 2018. The company has also delivered the first flagship G650ER to a Chinese customer. The aircraft has been registered in China, after the Civil Aviation Administration of China granted type certificate validation in February.

Piper Aircraft announced at EBACE that EASA has granted certification to its M600 turboprop single. The aircraft made its EBACE debut as part of a European demonstration tour. The M600 received FAA certification in June last year and three were handed over in the latest quarter.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Cirrus Vision SF50



CATEGORY

Very light jet

MANUFACTURER

Cirrus Aircraft, USA

ENGINE

1 x Williams FJ33-5A turbofan

LENGTH

9.42 m

WINGSPAN

11.79 m

RANGE

2,037 km

MAX. SPEED

556 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

6

NO. OF CREW

1

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

2,727 kg

DESCRIPTION

It was announced at EBACE 2017 that the Cirrus Vision SF50 had received EASA certification, opening the way for deliveries to European customers. The FAA had finally given the Vision SF50 the nod on 28 October 2016 – almost exactly ten years after the aircraft was first launched – and deliveries began in December.

Those ten years have seen both technical delays and several hiatuses caused by financial issues and change of ownership for the Minnesota-based manufacturer. The aircraft made its first flight back in July 2008 with the first production unit taking to the skies some six years later. The programme received \$100 million in additional investment from CAIGA (China Aviation Industry General Aviation), which acquired Cirrus for US\$210 million in 2011.

The Vision SF50 is a pressurized seven-seat single engine jet made from composite materials. It features a Garmin G3000 cockpit and also offers an emergency parachute system.