



Birmingham 16th December 2004 - The Institute of Transport Management's contribution to the development of best practice in the European Airport Sector is achieved by setting standards through benchmarking for others to follow. After completing a twelve month long research programme The Institute is pleased to announce Athens International Airport as 'European airport of the year 2004'.

The origin for Athens International Airport was an innovative one in that it broke new ground in the area of public private co-operation. AIA was the first major Greenfield airport constructed with the participation of the private sector. Building work was completed in September 2000 and this was followed by a five month trial period before the airport was officially opened in March 2001. The airport is state of the art, in terms of technology and equipment and has been developed with a focus on safety, user-friendliness and service excellence. Athens airport caters for a throughput of up to 16 million passengers and 220,000 million tonnes of freight each year.

Commenting on the award, Patrick Sheedy, Media & PR Director for the ITM said: "Our preliminary research findings predict that worldwide demand for air transport will continue to grow strongly, with passenger traffic growing at an average annual rate of 5%. This trend is set to continue over the next 20 years. To meet this demand the world's airports will require strong political commitment and leadership and considerable investment and upgrading of facilities. In recognition of this, the Award's Committee recognised the enormous steps that AIA has made in preparing for such developments, while securing itself a position as one of the best airports in the world. Special mention was also made of the fact that Athens airport has achieved much in such a short time since its inauguration, due to the hard work of all members of the airport community and the close working relationship between the Greek state and the private sector.

"What is also apparent from our research is that passengers want hassle free travel; airlines want to offer better service to their customers; airports want better and more efficient use of their facilities; customs and immigration want improved controls and more efficient use of their resources; and governments want an efficient transport system and protection of the public – all this whilst trying to maintain their operating margins. The Award's Committee was satisfied that AIA was found to have the knowledge, investment and infrastructure in place to satisfy all these variables and to take the air industry into the next decade and beyond.

Concluding, Mr Sheedy says: "Down through the years other accreditees of the Institute Of Transport Management Award of Excellence include some of the world's leading port authorities, airlines, shipping lines, vehicle manufacturers, airlines and airports. It is our experiences that that there has been a gratifying rise in standards amongst members since we began our work in 1978. We are of the opinion that the competition for accreditation created by the awards has had beneficial effects right across the industry spectrum. On behalf of everyone at the Institute of Transport Management, I would like to congratulate AIA on becoming a recipient of such an award and hope that it will serve as a benchmark to others aspiring to success in the airport sector."