

MAKS-2011 groundbreaking for Russia's civil aviation industry

The MAKS-2011 International Aviation & Space Salon, which was held on 16-21 August in Zhukovsky near Moscow, has brought contracts worth at least US\$10 billion. For the first time in the show's 18-year history, these contracts are primarily related to new Russian passenger aircraft, totalling US\$7.5 billion of all the contracts. Information about more potential buyers of the Sukhoi Superjet 100 (SSJ-100) and the Irkut MS-21 suggests that the civilian part of the Russian aviation industry is gradually emerging from the collapse in which it found itself after the break-up of the USSR. It is noteworthy that contracts for supplies to the Russian army were absent from the occasion's agenda for the first time (the army's participation in MAKS-2011 was mostly for show), and also that the western aviation giants Airbus and Boeing were humiliated in terms of prestige.

The MAKS-2011 show should be regarded as an exception regarding the contracts' value and customers. It is true that the contracts concluded during the previous MAKS-2009 salon reached US\$10 billion in value, but nearly half of those orders were accounted for by the military. In turn, the Western companies Airbus and Boeing predominated in their offers for the CIS's civilian market. During MAKS-2011, Russian producers managed to collect orders for over 120 aircraft (78 MS-21s and 46 SSJ-100s), as well as options for the delivery of 230 aircraft, while their Western competitors managed to sign only one contract, for eight aircraft (the Airbus A320).

The planes offered by the Russian manufacturers are new constructions; work on the MS-21 is *de facto* still in the prototype phase (the so-called 'hard contract' of US\$6 billion signed during MAKS-2011 should be considered as a guarantee that the project's completion will be trouble-free and that mass production of the plane will be started), and the SSJ-100's first commercial flight took place in April. From the beginning, both aircraft were built in cooperation with Western enterprises (mainly French and German), a major element of which was the transfer of modern technologies to Russia (further agreements of this kind were signed during MAKS-2011). We should recall that this cooperation is being developed despite the potential competition which the MS-21 poses to one of Europe's flagship products, the Airbus A320, as well as the American Boeing 737; it is decidedly more modern in design than the latter.

It should be noted that the existing customers of the new Russian aircraft include not only carriers from the CIS (mainly Russia), Asia and Latin America, but also the renowned Italian airline Alitalia; the Italian carrier commissioned eight SSJ-8 100s in June, as part of the Blue Panorama Airlines consortium, with an option for four more. Given that Russia's western competitors have not yet caught up with their successors, it cannot be excluded that the SSJ-100 and MS-21 will become increasingly popular on the market for narrow-body, mid-range airliners. <will>