



Romanian Airport Services operates a wide range of GSE, including the ATA tractor, of which Gadea is a big fan

Buyer's Assessment

In this Buyer's Assessment, we look at Romanian Airport Services and its use of, amongst much other GSE, the ATA tug

Romanian Airport Services forms part of Romania's RAS Group, along with sister aviation enterprises Regional Air Support and Regional Air Services. Romanian Airport Services is a 100% Romanian company and was formed more than 24 years ago as a joint venture between Bucharest Airports and private investor Dorin Ivascu. It provides a full range of ground and passenger services at all of the country's major airports, including Otopeni, Baneasa, Oradea, Satu Mare, Craiova, Sibiu and Suceava, while its core business lies at the Bucharest airports of Otopeni and Baneasa.

Radu Gadea, Romanian Airport Services' procurement and technical manager, explains that the company has grown rapidly in recent years: "We have new clients and we have greatly expanded our [GSE] fleet," he explains. In fact, the handler has purchased more than 100 items of GSE in just the last three years, including both new and second-hand equipment. The company has also established very good relations with important GSE suppliers, such as TCR, Aviaco,

TLD, ATA Modena, and others, Gadea informs.

When asked about his 'favourite' GSE, he says it is difficult to pick just the one type, because each type of GSE has its own favourites; however, he says: "I can put at the top of my list the ATA cargo tractor, the TLD JET 16 electric tractor, the TLD and Guinault GPUs, Vestergaard de-icers, the CLT 8 loader, Gemini heaters and the FMC Smartstep.

Asked to focus on the ATA Modena tug, Gadea explains: "We recently bought two ATA 5000 GSE cargo tractors and we are happy about the very good consumption rate, really nice design and spacious cabin. They are easy to operate with intuitive commands, have a very good turning radius, agile driving capacity and – most important – a powerful [drive] unit."

Furthermore: "We run our own maintenance works for all our GSE and, in this respect, I was happy to discover the easy maintenance schedule for these tractors."

Another point of value was that Romanian Airport Services was given operator manuals written in the Romanian language. "I will point out that also TLD has this 'good habit' to deliver operator manuals in the local language. I hope that this will become common practice for all manufacturers, and also include maintenance manuals."

As to the manufacturer: "We found that ATA Modena is a family company meticulously client-oriented, which tried throughout the procurement phase to understand our needs and fulfil them by means of determined efforts from its side and minimum expense from our side. At commissioning, we received very helpful training in respect of use and maintenance at the ATA factory."

Gadea continues: "The after-sales service is very active, with quick answering on all requests of information and clarifications. As a result of the above, we continued the partnership and placed another order for two more units during the recent GSE & Ramp Ops event" (organised as a sister event to this magazine, and held this year in Milan).

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All of Romanian Airport Services' equipment is fully owned. Gadea does not rule out the leasing option being taken up sometime in the future but, "So far, in Romania, there have been no suppliers for such services. I consider that some equipment is better to own but there is some which I would definitely rent – for example, buses, loaders and de-icers."

At Otopeni Airport, the handler operates no less than 328 pieces of GSE: at its other stations about 25 to 40 GSE items. But Gadea is sure that more units will be adding to the handler's growing fleet. "We are about to close a new order with TCR for several GSE units, including a CLT 8 loader (which is very good equipment!). We already have one, and we decided to go for the second, as it is one of my ramp colleagues' favourite items of GSE. Obviously, we will not stop here as we are constantly looking to improve and extend the fleet."

PROTECTING VALUABLE GSE ASSETS

Romanian Airport Services has come up with a very original solution to a problem faced by many handlers. Gadea observes: "One of my problems is that our GSE is often found damaged, perhaps scratched, a problem that immediately leads to corrosion. In very little time, bumpers and the sides of equipment turn into that 'nice copper colour', making



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I wanted a unique, clean look for my GSE, so I researched many coatings, including epoxy paints, industrial coatings and powder coating



One of Romanian Airport Services' TLD tugs which has received the special protective coating

necessary paint jobs at very regular intervals.

"Even after fresh painting, it will be only a maximum of a year to be back in this poor state," he says. "Everybody knows and feels that we are in the era of speed, and this sort of thing is one of its side effects.

"Our fleet is extremely important to us not only in terms of operational capability but also in terms of the image portrayed in front of our clients and passengers. RAS's technical department is constantly performing maintenance works, fully based on manufacturers' requirements and refurbishment works as required. But we have been continuously searching to discover the latest solution for keeping the fleet operational, plus 'nice and shiny'.

"We have already very good local partners, providing professional sand blasting and hot deep galvanising services that takes perfect care of GSE, which are mainly constructed

out of steel profiles. The problem still bothered us, however, that some GSE cannot be hot, deep galvanised – such as tractors, self-propelled belt loaders and so on.

"Everybody noticed how tractors are scratched by the carts and dollies, how the self-propelled belt loaders are scratched along the body. I wanted a unique, clean look for my GSE, so I researched many coatings, including epoxy paints, industrial





coatings and powder coating.

"We have just started to implement a new and innovative protective spray coating; Line-X," Gadea notes. "Line-X coating provides excellent levels of abrasion and impact resistance; its purpose is to protect the paintwork against damage and scratches.

"We have made a test on a TLD JST 30. The bottom half was sprayed with Line-X and the result is amazing: even in the most massive hits, there is no scratch! The next step for us will be to apply this protective coating for all our tractors and self-propelled belt loaders in order to avoid future scratches and corrosion. Cost-wise, I can confirm it is competitive, provided that the treatment is repeated at least every two years."

Gadea is by no means looking to keep this little secret to himself. "I think that it would be very convenient for handlers to share such engineering solutions they found along the way in order to help each other maintain their GSE," he concludes very unselfishly. ■



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