OPINION: HOW SUPERJET CAN STAY IN THE GAME

News / Manufacturer



In many ways the **Sukhoi Superjet** has achieved what its creators set out to do. It is a five-abreast, 100-seat aircraft with reasonable economics that stands apart from rivals in terms of cabin width and comfort. It is also something unique: Russia's first Western airliner.

What it has not done is sold in sufficient numbers to be counted a success. Although 100 have been produced, until a few weeks ago, just one Western airline had committed in six years, and Moscow has had to financially bail out Sukhoi Civil Aircraft.

With a feeble rouble, paying for that European and North American equipment has become pricier. The relationship between Sukhoi and Alenia Aermacchi was also strained before the outbreak of wider political tensions between Russia and Europe over Ukraine.

CityJet's 15-aircraft order will not rescue the programme in itself, but the Irish airline's deal represents a breakthrough. SuperJet International sees huge potential in Europe and CityJet's endorsement could give other wavering carriers confidence to commit.

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The lull before Embraer’s E-Jet E2 raises the performance bar is key. Sukhoi must resist temptation to cut costs by replacing Western suppliers with Russian ones. That would kill at a stroke prospects in the West. Instead, the partners must focus on developing a larger variant and boosting engine performance. Only that way can the Superjet remain a serious contender.

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Coming to Europe

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