

Berlin airport to open in 2020 after nine-year delay

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Berlin's future international airport is now expected to open nine years behind schedule and more than three times over budget

Berlin's new international airport is set to open on October 31, 2020, its operating company said Friday, after an embarrassing nine-year delay owing to structural problems and corruption.

"The date is set," said Engelbert Luetke-Daldrup, chief executive of the Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg (FBB) group.

"We still have 11 months of hard work ahead of us," he added during a press conference.

If all goes well, companies including low-cost carrier EasyJet are to transfer their operations to the new site, known by its international initials BER, on October 31, with a second wave of airlines to follow on November 3-4.

Mismanagement of the project in the Brandenburg region that surrounds Berlin has dented Germany's pride in its engineering prowess and reputation for honesty in business.

The airport was planned in the 1990s and construction began in 2006.

It was originally to open in 2011 but the date has been repeatedly pushed back over a series of issues, including fire safety.

In 2016, a former manager was jailed for accepting a bribe.

Meanwhile, the airport's initial budget of 1.7 billion euros (\$1.9 billion) has swollen to around 6.5 billion as the delay dragged on.

Brandenburg regional chief Dietmar Woidke hailed Friday's announcement, saying "this time it's going to work".

Green leader Anton Hofreiter was more cautious, saying: "The date announced is very ambitious if you consider the problems that must still be resolved."

The airport is intended to replace Berlin's two existing

airports—Schoenefeld and Tegel.

But, in a referendum in 2017, Berliners voted to keep Tegel, arguing that with the growing number of arrivals the new airport may already be too small when it opens.

Berlin officials nonetheless maintain that BER will be at term the capital's only [airport](#).

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