

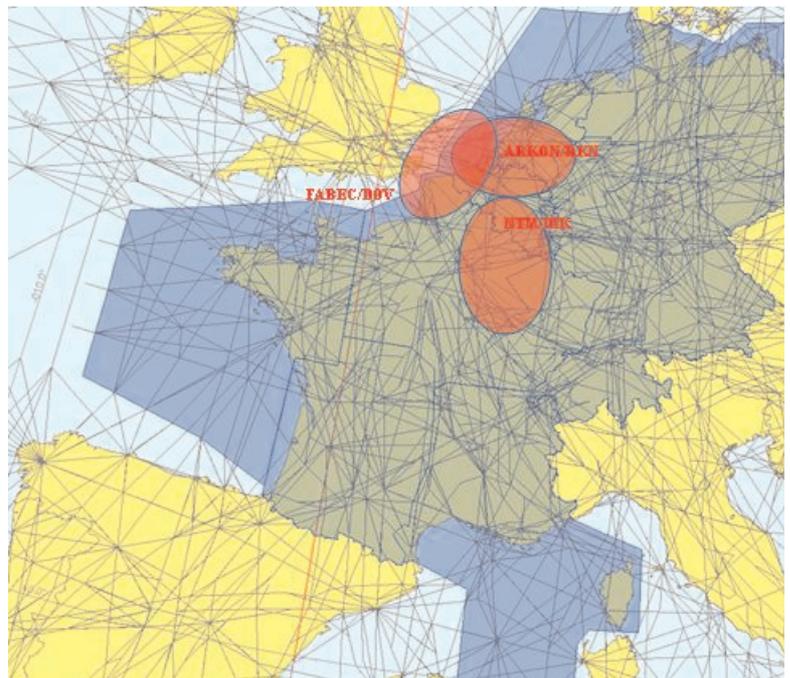
New focus on airspace design

The Hot Spots task force which was set up to implement the changes in the airspace structure at the internal FABEC boundaries has already broadened the scope of its work. First of all, three early implementation packages will be put into place. Reacting to specific requirements from the airspace users, the experts will investigate the most penalised city pairs and find solutions to reduce fuel costs by reducing flight length. This benefit will be interlinked with a reduction in emissions. In addition, a night network will be developed, reflecting the fact that during the night and at weekends, traffic density is lower than during the working day. This being the case, consideration is being given, on the basis of initial experiments, for example at Karlsruhe Upper Area Control Centre, to restructuring air routes during the night. Depending on the city pairs concerned, this initiative will also focus on costs, flight length and the impact on the environment. The third early implementation package is based on the work which has already done by Luchtverkeersleiding Nederlands, DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung and Maastricht UAC. Based on a real-time simulation, a new airspace design between Amsterdam, Maastricht UAC's Ruhr Sector and Frankfurt (AMRUFRA) should be implemented. Since this area is one of the densest in Europe, the new airspace structure will increase the capacity provided. Klaus-Dieter Schütte (DFS), Chairman of the Hot Spots task force, had the following to say: "With these three early implementation packages, we have identified potential which will lead to benefits for users by 2009/2010."

In parallel, the hot spot areas investigated have been redefined. One such hot spot at Trasadingen, located on the boundary between Switzerland, Germany and France, will be partially integrated into the Nattenheim hot spot (Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg). There are two reasons for this decision. Firstly, certain air routes between Zürich and Munich are to be optimised in summer 2009. Secondly, the integration of the remaining changes proposed in the Feasibility Study Report will streamline the working processes.

One major challenge to beneficial implementation of a new airspace design in the FABEC area is efficient management of the interface between the southern airspace of England and FABEC. Consequently, the task force included another hot spot area which will cover the airspace over the Channel. Here, unlike in the case of the other work packages, the work will start from scratch. "During the feasibility phase we had already identified this new hot spot", explained Hervé Grange of the DSNA, Deputy Chairman of the Hot Spot task force, "but owing to the immense workload, we decided in 2008 to concentrate on the hot spots within FABEC. Nevertheless, everybody is aware that we have to tackle the Channel airspace."

Major milestones are the real-time simulations of the new airspace design at the internal FABEC boundaries during winter 2009/2010 and winter 2010/2011. "We have to do the work in winter, because the lower traffic figures in this period allow us to allocate the controllers needed", explained Klaus-Dieter Schütte.



Steps towards technical cooperation

In order to “keep the momentum”, on the basis of this principle, four technical task forces were launched in autumn 2008. Experts from various technical domains started work on specified tasks in the area of communication, surveillance and data management. On the basis of the results from the Feasibility Study Report, task forces were launched on:

- common data services;
- enhanced On-Line Data Interchange (OLDI);
- Air-Ground Data-Link Services (AGDL);
- Voice Communication System (VCS) specification.

A common understanding of the required data and infrastructure is one enabler for the implementation of a common operational concept. The Common Data Services task force therefore aims to deliver prototypes of selected data domains as well as prototypes of a FABEC data and information infrastructure. The work which has already started is following the SWIM (System Wide Information Management) concept launched by SESAR.

The Enhanced OLDI task force is aiming to improve the interoperability of flight data processing systems. By September 2009, the task force will deliver specific plans and guidelines for the coordinated and synchronised implementation of selected OLDI messages and flight message transfer protocols. Following the SES regulation, this will lead to considerable enhancements for coordination within FABEC and the transfer of flights between ATC units.

The third task force aims to propose and implement a business model for the insourcing or outsourcing of Air-Ground Data-Link services, to be implemented by end-2009 (for airports) and 2013 (for the upper airspace) in the FABEC airspace. The experts are therefore developing various options which will be validated from the cost and quality-of-service perspectives. The overall effort and cost involved in establishing the required infrastructure should be reduced. In addition, there is an opportunity to reduce operational costs.

Given the need to procure a new VCS for the Maastricht UAC, the fourth task force is developing a common specification which will be used initially for Maastricht. Afterwards, this specification will be used by the other partners, where new systems need to be procured.

FABEC cancels participation in ATC Global 2009

Owing to the financial crisis and the impact on the aviation industry, the CEOs of the seven ANSPs decided to cancel FABEC’s participation in ATC Global 2009 at short notice. In January 2009 the traffic figures inside the FABEC area dropped down in the range between -9 to -16 per cent compared to January 2008.

“This situation requires unusual measures. We have to respect the financial situation of our customers and the ongoing cost-cutting programmes within some of the air navigation service providers”, said Daniel Weder, CEO Skyguide and Chairman of the ANSP Strategic Board. “This is a signal which should not be misinterpreted - FABEC implementation will proceed at the same pace”, he added.

Joint representation of all civil and military partners had initially been planned, with a modern FABEC stand. The objective was to speak to the various stakeholders and inform them about the implementation of FABEC, which was formally launched in November 2008 at the aviation summit in Bordeaux.

In addition, the DSNA also decided to cancel its own stand. DFS will keep its stand, which will focus on its consultancy business and the DFS subsidiaries.

FABEC is picking up speed

The implementation phase of FABEC was announced at the aviation summit in Bordeaux. Now, four months later, it is time for an initial reflection. We asked Hermann Theobald, Chairman of the FABEC Project Steering Group, for his views.

Four months ago, the ceremonies for the signature of the States' Declaration of Intent and the ANSP Cooperation Agreement took place at the aviation summit in Bordeaux. Where is FABEC now?

“FABEC is becoming more and more of a reality. In the autumn, we kept up the momentum after completion of the Feasibility Study by establishing seven initial task forces. For most of our staff, however, FABEC was a distant project. Things are changing now, because FABEC is picking up speed and a large number of initiatives have been launched, such as further task forces and a detailed working plan.”

The Feasibility Study was based on the assumption that there will be a huge increase in traffic by 2018. Now the aviation industry is in deep crisis. What impact will this have?

“You are right. Things have changed dramatically for the time being. Nevertheless, we have to consider three factors. First of all, we are convinced that in the short or medium term, air traffic will start growing again. Secondly, the crisis is an opportunity to speed up the project, because we can use resources which would normally have been harder to get hold of. Thirdly, we are working on early implementation packages. To give you an example, our experts are working on shorter city pair routes. This will bring immediate benefits in terms of reduced fuel costs for the airlines and lower emissions for the environment.”

From your perspective as Chairman of the FABEC Project Steering Group, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the FABEC Implementation Project?

“For me, the major strength of FABEC is its common approach. For the first time, experts from the Ministries of Transport, the military and the air navigation service providers of the six States are working together in one project with a common goal - to achieve the FABEC performance targets and thus provide more efficient airspace management in the heart of Europe. This is absolutely new, and it is sustainable. The major challenge is the complexity and diversity of the FABEC project. The changes we are working on are fundamental and need time to be implemented. We are therefore also focusing on delivering early benefits to our airspace users.”

This sounds a little bit cautious.

“No, it is not. We have a very positive spirit inside FABEC. States and ANSPs alike want to act as one, and we are proud of this. Now it is our job to translate this ambition into reality, in a realistic and positive manner.”



Hermann Theobald: “For me, the major strength of FABEC is its common approach.”

Three new task forces

On 14 January 2009, the ANSP Strategic Board (ASB) decided to set up three additional task forces on the optimisation of the communication infrastructure, the optimisation of the surveillance infrastructure, and common ARTAS tracker services. The objective of the first two task forces is to optimise the ground infrastructure for the communication and surveillance services needed by ATC units in the FABEC States. The common ARTAS tracker services task force will look into the possibility of rationalising ARTAS for fallback purposes. Specifically, the air situation picture which at present is generated locally would subsequently be generated remotely and delivered over a redundant network. Specific working plans will be drawn up in the coming weeks. The task forces will be staffed by civil and military staff.

List of abbreviations:

AGDL	=	Air-Ground Data-Link
AMRUFRA		
	=	Amsterdam, Ruhr, Frankfurt
ANA	=	Administration de la Navigation Aérienne
ANSP	=	Air Navigation Service Provider
ARTAS	=	Air Traffic Management Surveillance Tracker and Server
ASB	=	ANSP Strategic Board
ATC	=	Air Traffic Control
CEO	=	Chief Executive Officer
DFS	=	Deutsche Flugsicherung
DSNA	=	Direction des Services de la Navigation Aérienne
FABEC	=	Functional Airspace Block Europe Central
IFR	=	Instrument Flight Rules
LVNL	=	Air Traffic Control the Netherlands
MUAC	=	Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre
OLDI	=	On-Line Data Interchange
SES	=	Single European Sky
SESAR	=	SES Air Traffic Management Research
SWIM	=	System Wide Information Management
UAC	=	Upper Area Control Centre
VCS	=	Voice Communication System

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