

Operations

Free route airspace in the core area of Europe moves closer – benefits of direct routings increase

8 September 2017 - The introduction of free route for both the implementation of Direct Routings and of Free Route Airspace (FRA) within FABEC airspace is continuously progressing. With the objective of ensuring a safe and smooth implementation, FABEC has opted for a stepwise approach for the new concept in the core area of continental Europe. FABEC expects to be compliant with the implementation of plannable Direct Routings by 2018 and FRA by 2022 as laid down in the EU Regulation on the establishment of Pilot Common Project (PCP).

On 7 December 2017, the Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre will implement Free Route Airspace at night (from 00:00 to 6:00 local time) throughout its entire multinational area of responsibility (the upper airspace, above 24,500 feet, of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and north-west Germany). DFS envisages availability of Free Route Airspace at night above 24,500 feet from 1 March 2018. In the less complex north-eastern part of Germany, free route will be offered around the clock above flight level 28,500 feet or 32,500 feet, to foster further improvements in flight efficiency. Work is also ongoing within DSN to implement FRA in the upper airspace of the western part of France by summer 2019, ensuring a sensible interface with FAB UK and FAB SW to optimise the southwest axis traffic flows. Further implementation steps – including measures to improve the interfaces to other functional airspace blocks – are scheduled for the upcoming years. Due to the complexity and density of FABEC airspace, a strong involvement of all participating parties – airspace users, CFSPs (Computer Flight Plan Software Providers) and the Network Manager – has been ensured from the beginning. The Network Manager confirmed that the operational concept complies with the European recommendations for the introduction of FRA.

With regard to the Direct Routings (DCTs), further progress has been made. In addition to the already implemented and used 1,600 direct routings, last year 120 additional direct routings were implemented. These new routings are spread across 10 out of the 14 area control centres in FABEC airspace and are located in upper and lower airspace. Some of them ensure connectivity to airports located in FABEC airspace. An analysis has shown that these new direct routings offer an additional potential saving of 351,000 NM per year, assuming airspace users fully utilise them. In 2017, further direct routings will be implemented, for instance in Swiss airspace.



For more information, please join the FABEC [youtube channel](#).

The airspace of the six FABEC States of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland is one of the busiest and most complex in the world. Most major European airports, major civil airways and military training areas are located in this area. FABEC airspace covers 1.7 million km² and handles about 5.8 million flights per year – 55% of European air traffic. The seven civil air navigation service providers are ANA (Luxembourg), Belgocontrol (Belgium), DFS (Germany), DSNA (France), LVNL (Netherlands), MUAC (EUROCONTROL), and skyguide (Switzerland).

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