



Deployment of Free Route Airspace in the core area of Europe on the fast track

11 December 2017 – For immediate release

Air traffic controllers at EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC) have started operating user-preferred trajectories in the dense and complex airspace over Belgium, north-west Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands above FL245. This is the first of three phases to implement Free Route Airspace (FRA) in MUAC's area of responsibility.

The first phase makes Free Route Airspace available during night-time - from midnight to six in the morning, local time. Gradually, Free Route Airspace will be expanded over time in MUAC airspace. In the second phase of the project, planned to start on 6 December 2018, in addition to nights, Free Route Airspace will be available at weekends. The final phase will make Free Route Airspace available at all times throughout the week, and is planned to be implemented in spring 2020.

Free Route Airspace is a paradigm shift in that aircraft can plan a route within a specified airspace between defined entry and exit points, including intermediate waypoints, without reference to the fixed air traffic services (ATS) route network. This is a shift from route availability to airspace availability, a major air traffic management change forming an integral part of the Single European Sky.

Although MUAC has already been offering many direct routing options for some years, Free Route Airspace further improves demand predictability and flight efficiency through additional route options. It also helps increase the flexibility for balancing demand and capacity. Free Route Airspace will also bring significant benefits to the airlines as they will be able to fly more optimum profiles, using less fuel, hence reducing aviation's environmental footprint.

The Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC) Free Route Airspace project defines a stepped and gradual implementation approach, whereby FABEC area control centres, in cooperation with airlines and computerised flight planning service providers, will develop and implement cross-border free route airspace based on a single common FABEC concept of operations, which complies with standards defined by the Network Manager.

The next implementation step on the FABEC Free Route Airspace roadmap consists in the so-called FRA Solution1 of the Deutsche Flugsicherung (DFS) FRA project. As from 1 March 2018, this will offer Free Route Airspace at all times in north-eastern Germany and at night (22.30 – 04.00 UTC) in the area controlled by DFS above FL245.

Further plans include a cross-border Free Route Airspace area with the Danish-Swedish Functional Airspace Block. This means that Free Route operations offered by MUAC and DFS could be extended to the Free Route Airspace implemented by Denmark and Sweden, which is further connected to the Free Route Airspace operated by the North European Functional Airspace Block.





For further information please contact:

Mireille Roman, Tel: +31 43 366 1352 Email: muac.info@eurocontrol.int

Or check: <http://www.eurocontrol.int/free-route-airspace-maastricht-uac>

Roland Beran, FABEC Communications, + 49 6103 707 4190. Email: roland.beran@dfs.de

Note to Editors

About MUAC

Operated by EUROCONTROL on behalf of four States, EUROCONTROL MUAC provides control for the upper airspace (above 24,500 feet, i.e. approximately 7,500 metres) of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and north-west Germany. The international area of responsibility it covers is a perfect example of the simplification and harmonisation of airspace in Europe. MUAC is a model for cross-border projects in the spirit of the Single European Sky. Some 1.8 million flights pass through MUAC's area of responsibility each year, making it the third busiest air traffic control facility in Europe in terms of traffic volume. During the summer, peak days see close to 5,700 flights.

More information via the website: www.eurocontrol.int/muac

About FABEC

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. The majority of the 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.

www.fabec.eu