Performance 2017

New record in safely handled traffic – volatility leads to capacity issues

2 July 2018: In 2017, FABEC has delivered a high level of service quality in terms of safety, capacity/punctuality and flight efficiency. This is in a nutshell the message provided by the seven FABEC air navigation service providers ANA (Luxembourg), Belgocontrol (Belgium), DFS (Germany), DSNA (France), LVNL (Netherlands), MUAC (EUROCONTROL), and skyguide (Switzerland) in their annual performance report 2017. The report provides factual and detailed information about performance trends in FABEC air traffic management. It highlights that the growing traffic volatility which leads to unexpected shifts of traffic flows and impacts performance can only be solved by a coordinated effort of the entire aviation value chain.

New time high, unevenly distributed

In 2017 traffic continued to increase to the all-time high of 5.99 million flights (+ 3.4 percent compared to 2016). This was the fourth consecutive year of an overarching positive trend in the aviation market. Amsterdam Schiphol, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Frankfurt are now the busiest airports, in terms of aircraft movements, in Europe. Despite this overall trend there are significant variations between the traffic levels at control centres and individual sectors. Traffic demand has become volatile and the bandwidth of monthly growth for FABEC ANSPs varied between -0.9 and +7.7 percent. Some sectors – especially in the core area – have become saturated and are no longer able to cope with additional unpredicted demand.

Excellent safety record

The prime concern of ATM is safety. In 2017 the FABEC safety record was excellent. There were once again no fatal accidents of civil aircraft caused by air navigation services in FABEC airspace. The level of safety was consistently high as proven by data on separation minima infringements and runway incursions. The number of separation minima infringements with ATM contribution continued to decline (from 970 in 2016 to 888 in 2017). Runway incursions with ATM contribution slightly increased from 116 (2016) to 129 (2017). Even so, we know we cannot take safety for granted. To stay safe in the air and on the ground a continuous cycle of excellence in safety performance is required.

Passengers are arriving on time

After safety, punctuality is the most important indicator of how well the ATM sector is performing. The most reliable information on delay metrics is provided by the Central Office of Delay Analysis (CODA). The recent growth

of air traffic proves that people choose to fly because they know the system is safe and they are confident in getting from point A to point B quickly and within the schedule published by the airline of their choice.
92.9 percent of all flights conducted in 2017 were punctual meaning that they experienced no ATFM en-route delays (94.1 percent in 2016). 97.4 percent arrived at their destination airports within 15 minutes of their scheduled time. Consequently, the overall delay minutes caused by flow management measures increased by 11.5 percent (2017: 69 seconds per flight; 2016: 64 seconds per flight). FABEC missed the target of 25 seconds per flight.

The principal causes of ATC delays are shortages in capacity (42.3 percent) and staffing (15.7 percent) – both mainly due to a mismatch between unpredicted traffic and long-term staff and capacity planning. Furthermore, the impact of climate change is increasing and becoming more visible for passengers in terms of thunderstorms or airport closures as a result of snow on the runways. In 2017, 22.9 percent of all delays were caused by adverse weather.

Environmental impact: Horizontal flight efficiency close to the optimum
In 2017, the average en-route distance per flight in FABEC airspace was 513 km, 9 km longer (1.7 percent) than the average direct route. Analysis of radar data shows that FABEC ANSPs have consistently provided almost optimal horizontal flight profiles to airspace users. In 2017, horizontal flight profiles were close to the optimum as actual trajectories converged at 96.77 percent (2016: 96.45 percent) of the great circle distance. This is an excellent value, which allows for only marginal improvements in the future. Controllers have been providing the shortest routings on average to airspace users since the start of the second reference period in 2014.

The report is available under www.fabec.eu or here.

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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