

Flight efficiency

Seasonably flexible airspace management reduces fuel burn and saves CO₂ emissions

30 July 2018; Almost 13,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions and 4,200 tonnes of fuel have been saved thanks to seasonal arrangements between air navigation service providers in charge of the FABEC airspace. The intensity of air traffic varies throughout the year. Traditionally there is a smaller volume of air traffic during the winter months. This gives individual FABEC air traffic control centres the opportunity to use seasonably improved flight profiles with their neighbouring units. The direct beneficiaries of these seasonal agreements are the airlines – with reduced fuel cost – and the environment with less gaseous emissions. Overall, air navigation service providers have improved over 111 flight profiles and identified another 42 for possible implementation.

Just three examples:

- Traffic from Italy to Madrid via waypoint BALEN is a seasonal horizontal improvement resulting in 282 tons of fuel saved per year.
- Traffic from Barcelona via Marseilles over waypoint LUMAS is a seasonal departure arrangement resulting in 271 tons of fuel saved per year.
- Traffic inbound Marseilles airport via waypoint LERGA is a seasonal arrival arrangement resulting in 237 tons of fuel saved per year.

Flexible airspace management has increased considerably in the FABEC airspace with daily improved international cooperation. The gains these flexible agreements brought about mainly target defined city pairs and connections to airports. The air traffic control centres in Aix-en-Provence, Bordeaux, Brest, Brussels, Geneva, Karlsruhe, Langen, Maastricht, Marseilles, Paris, Reims, and Zurich have participated in developing these flexible procedures.

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 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.

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