

## MUAC implements H24 free route airspace

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EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC) is now offering H24 free route airspace operations in its area of responsibility – Belgium, north-west Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands above FL245 – including cross-border options with Germany and with the Danish-Swedish functional airspace block. This development is part of the common Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC) concept of operations, which complies with standards defined by the Network Manager.

“Free route airspace offers optimised routings and fuel savings, and contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The environmental benefits in our airspace alone are expected to be significant – an estimated 40 tonnes of fuel and 150 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved per day, provided all flights make the most of it. Free route airspace also allows airlines to plan shorter routes, and take on the exact amount of fuel required. It also improves demand predictability and helps increase flexibility to better balance capacity and demand”, says John Santurbano, Director of MUAC.

With the introduction of H24 free route airspace, several air traffic service (ATS) routes in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany are no longer required. They are therefore being withdrawn from the aeronautical information publications (AIPs). This change emphasises the flight planning evolution towards free route airspace options, which are more efficient than the legacy ATS route network. The remaining ATS route network is also being optimised to provide vertical connectivity between the free route airspace zone and the subjacent airspace.

New free route airspace points improve flight-planning options and efficiency, mainly when military training areas are active and must be circumnavigated.

The MUAC free route airspace was implemented incrementally, in full cooperation with various stakeholders: the aircraft operators, the EUROCONTROL Network Manager, FABEC and the neighbouring air navigation service providers, the Belgian, Dutch and German air forces and the main computer flight planning service providers. In December 2017, free route airspace became operational at night only, one year later at night and at weekends, and now on a permanent basis. Given the density and complexity of traffic over this central cross-border area, a gradual roll-out of the concept was essential.

To unlock the full benefits, aircraft need to access free routing along the full length of their flight path. FABEC has therefore established a stepped and gradual implementation, whereby the different FABEC air navigation service providers develop and implement cross-border free route airspace on the basis of a common concept of operations. The next developments in the FABEC area include the H24 extension of the existing DFS free route airspace in the west and the south of Germany in fall 2020; this will be completed by the end of 2021. Also by end 2021 implementations of free route airspace are planned by skyguide and DSNA in the Swiss and the French airspaces respectively.





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More information is also available via the [EUROCONTROL website](#).

## **Note to Editors**

### **About MUAC**

Operated by EUROCONTROL on behalf of four States, EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC) provides civil and military cross-border air traffic control in the upper airspace of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and north-west Germany (from 7.5 km or 24,500 feet). Some 1.9 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 over 5,700 flights. MUAC's international area of responsibility is a perfect example of the simplification and harmonisation of airspace in Europe and is fully in line with the objectives of the Single European Sky.

More information via the website: [www.eurocontrol.int/muac](http://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 km<sup>2</sup> and handles about 5.8 million flights per year – 55% of European air traffic.

[www.fabec.eu](http://www.fabec.eu)