



Cross-border airspace optimisation

FABEC control centres Karlsruhe and Maastricht reducing complexity in European core area

9 November 2020: Karlsruhe Upper Area Control Centre (DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung) and Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC) in cooperation with ACCs Bremen, Langen and Munich have seized the opportunity of the current traffic decrease to enhance their cooperation to shorten routes and improve flight profiles in Europe's busiest airspace. The Cooperative Optimisation of Boundaries, Routes and Airspace (COBRA) initiative is re-designing areas of delegated airspace and introducing new sector boundaries in order to simplify procedures in this complex area. By replacing coordination between multiple sectors with bilateral handovers and providing new route options, ANSPs are reducing complexity, decreasing workload for planners and providing more efficient traffic management.

The initiative aims to adapt the airspace in three main areas based on common understanding between centres and agreement at management and expert level. For example, shorter routes along the Karlsruhe UAC (KUAC) – Maastricht UAC (MUAC) boundary simplify connections between adjacent approach centres and improves vertical profiles for several arrivals and departures to core area hub airports. KUAC and MUAC are close to finalising the design framework of the COBRA West package and plan validation simulations in 1Q21, followed by controller training in late 2021/early 2022. DFS expects 9-12 months preparation time with work on the concept of operations already underway.

Discussions are also well advanced in the COBRA Central area where objectives include reducing the complexity of the delegated area, benefiting especially Frankfurt flights, and reducing coordination workload between all control centres involved. Meetings about the East sector package are due to start mid-November.

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