

FAB CE / FABEC – Expansion of cross-border free route airspace for climate-friendly air traffic

March 2022; - In a joint initiative, the functional airspace blocks Central Europe (FAB CE) and Europe Central (FABEC) are expanding free route airspace (FRA) to optimise important south-east/north-west routes in Europe.

FAB CE and FABEC have now agreed to introduce cross-border operations for free route airspace. This follows the signing of a joint declaration in summer 2021 to deepen the cooperation between the functional airspace blocks. Free route airspace will enable airspace users to plan optimal routes across large areas of European airspace. It is precisely this possibility of being able to plan the shortest, most economical and thus potentially also the most climate-friendly route in advance that is the greatest advantage of free route airspace. Aircraft can fly through airspace on a direct path, without detours, using the shortest route. This saves fuel and reduces emissions. The larger these airspaces are, the greater and more sustainable their effect. Furthermore, cross-border free route options allow airlines to freely plan a routing between defined entry and exit points on different sides of national airspace boundaries. This will enable them to reduce flight miles in the future, take advantage of favourable wind conditions or optimise flight paths around military training areas.

The new cross-border interface will be established between the Karlsruhe SÜD Free Route Airspace in Germany and the SECSI FRA (Southeast Europe Common Sky Initiative Free Route Airspace) on the border with Austria. Implementation will begin in stages from 24 March 2022. Cross-border free route operations between Austria and Germany are to be started gradually. All initiatives will allow airspace users to use more climate-friendly flight profiles.

"Austro Control and the members of FAB CE have done pioneering work in Europe with the implementation of free route airspaces, which extend from Austria to North Macedonia and to the Black Sea. With the agreement signed today, we as FAB CE and FABEC are pursuing a clear common goal. We want air traffic to be as climate-friendly as possible in an airspace that enables flights on the shortest route, regardless of national borders, and can thus contribute to a sustainable reduction in emissions. With the connection of these two free route airspaces, we have once again come a step closer to this goal", said Valerie Hackl, Managing Director of Austro Control, the Austrian air navigation service provider (ANSP).

Arndt Schoenemann, CEO of DFS, the German ANSP, emphasised: "FABEC and FAB CE controllers manage one of the busiest airspaces in Europe. The introduction of the cross-border free route concept is an important regional solution. This will support major air traffic corridors and meet the requirements of pan-European network management. The current measures are the latest in a series of initiatives to reduce aviation's environmental footprint, for which FABEC had already received the ATM 2020 Environment Award in 2020."

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2021/116 provides for cross-border free route airspaces above flight level 305 (approx. 9,000m) by European air navigation service providers by the end of 2025.

An animation demonstrating the dimension of this step can be found [here](#).





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DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH, the German air navigation service provider, is a State-owned company under private law with 5,600 employees as at 31 December 2021. DFS ensures the safe and punctual flow of air traffic over Germany. Around 2,200 air traffic controllers guide more than three million flights through German airspace in peak years, up to 10,000 every day. The company operates control centres in Bremen, Karlsruhe, Langen and Munich as well as control towers at the 15 designated international airports in Germany. The subsidiary DFS Aviation Services GmbH markets and sells products and services related to air navigation services, and provides air traffic control at nine regional airports in Germany and at London Gatwick Airport and Edinburgh Airport in the UK. DFS is working on the integration of drones into air traffic and has set up a joint venture, Droniq GmbH, with Deutsche Telekom. Other subsidiaries include R. Eisenschmidt GmbH, which markets publications and products for general aviation, and Kaufbeuren ATM Training GmbH (KAT), which provides training for military air traffic services personnel. The joint venture FCS Flight Calibration Services GmbH offers flight inspection services. www.dfs.de

FAB CE (Functional Airspace Block Central Europe) is a joint initiative of seven States and Air navigation service providers (ANSPs) from Central Europe - Austria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia – sitting in the heart of Europe and managing critical air traffic flows across the continent, covering an area of more than 529,000 km².

Austro Control is responsible for the safe, punctual and environmentally friendly flow of air traffic in Austrian airspace. Air traffic controllers at the area control centre and in the air traffic control units at all Austrian airports guide aircraft safely and efficiently through the airspace. Beyond air traffic management, Austro Control's tasks include engineering and meteorological services, airworthiness and certification, search and rescue operations as well as pilots licensing, the supervision of flight schools and the authorization of drones.

FABEC

The airspace of the six FABEC states Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland is one of the busiest and most complex in the world. The majority of Europe's major airports, major civil airways and military training areas are located in this area. FABEC airspace covers 1.7 million km² and handles the majority of European air traffic.



