

Operations

FABEC offers 234 new direct flight paths

10 September 2020: More than 230 new direct routes were made available to aircraft operators in the airspace managed by Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC) in the first half of 2020. Along with the implementation of H24 Free Route Airspace in the FABEC upper airspace, FABEC air navigation service providers (ANSPs) have helped airspace users increase horizontal flight efficiency Europe-wide from 96.93% in July 2019 to almost 97.41% a year later according to EUROCONTROL air navigation performance portal. The direct routes are part of a comprehensive package of measures that to date includes over 750 improvements and facilitations for airspace users.

“The rise in direct routes issued by FABEC controllers during the pandemic is contributing to more efficient, greener airline operations,” says Maurice Georges, FABEC Champion Operations and Director DSNA. “RAD measures are an important tool helping to meet the Commission’s sustainable aviation agenda while maintaining flight safety.”

Direct routes provide alternative, shorter, flight distances compared to the route network, but are only available in certain conditions, for example during the night, low traffic periods, or when military airspace is released. They are included in Route Availability Documents (RAD, Appendix 4) allowing airspace users to optimize their flight plans. They rely on controllers co-ordinating their implementation between adjacent sectors to deliver safe and efficient flight profiles. FABEC ANSPs expect to issue more direct routes in the coming months, enabling airspace users to take advantage of quieter skies and reduce fuel burn. In addition, they are an intermediate step for the implementation of the FABEC-wide free route implementation which is currently ongoing and allows airlines to flight-plan optimised trajectories.

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Note for editors: The Route Availability Document is a flight-planning document which integrates both structural and air traffic flow capacity management (ATFCM) requirements, geographically and vertically, following an appropriate collaborative decision-making process between the network manager and the operational stakeholders. It is a central source of airspace utilisation rules and availability defined and communicated by the ANSPs, 56 days before the start of the concerned Aeronautical Information Regulation and Control (AIRAC) cycle.



Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (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 km² and handles 2019 about 5.8 million flights per year – 55% of European air traffic.