

Analyses

Single European Sky: Achieving breakthrough on second attempt

Costly patronage

The sample route between Rome and Amsterdam shows that fragmentation of airspace and lack of flexibility between military and civilian aviation cause absurd detours.



Source: DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung

Positive pressure to act

Everyone wins with implementation of the Single European Sky:

- Climate: Carbon emissions resulting from EU air traffic drops by up to 12 per cent.
- Passengers: Your travel time is cut by an average by up to 14 minutes on each route. That's true consumer protection.
- Airlines: Lufthansa alone will save 500,000 litres of jet fuel daily.

The Commission report of June 2008 can be downloaded at:

www.ec.europa.eu/transport/air_portal/traffic_management

Until now, most national governments of the EU have lacked the political will to eliminate serious weaknesses in air navigation services. They are thus shouldering passengers and the aviation industry with costs totalling over €4 billion and allowing 16 million tons of carbon emissions to be placed into the environment every year! Member states and the EU Parliament are urgently called on to approve the second package of measures put forth by the EU Commission on the Single European Sky by the end of the year.

Costly patchwork of air navigation services

The skies over Europe currently consist of a patchwork of 27 national air navigation services and over 60 air traffic control centres. They are inefficient in terms of size and co-ordination among them is complex and costly. Airlines are seldom able to fly optimal routes in cross-border EU air traffic. Moreover, expanded and often restricted military zones also impede the smooth flow of air traffic. According to the EU Commission, this outdated system compels airlines to fly detours of 49 kilometres on average per flight.

Create blocks of airspace

For over four years, the EU member states have been obliged to create what are known as Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs). The Benelux countries, Germany, France, and Switzerland, for example, are discussing merging their airspace and forming one air navigation service, which would be subject to strict performance goals. Yet all too little has been done in the past and action must finally be taken.

Use cutting-edge technology

This fragmentation of airspace has also created a situation where air navigation services work with often incompatible operating systems. Any efficient coordination of airspace is impossible under these conditions. Adoption of the SESAR Master Plan, which will advance technological modernisation and Europe-wide standardisation, is urgently needed.

Offer uniform safety

Safety is top priority in aviation. To further improve the already very high level of safety in Europe, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) should in future press for harmonisation of safety regulations in airport operations and airspace management. To this end, the Single European Sky needs a central point of contact for all safety issues. At the same time, unnecessary bureaucracy must absolutely be avoided in the implementation of this effort.