



FAB Europe Central fleshes out its strategy

Since the official launch, in November 2006, of the feasibility study into the creation of a Functional Airspace Block in the heart of Europe (FAB Europe Central, FAB EC), the project has been taking more concrete shape. For the first time in European ANS, six States, the civil and the military air navigation service providers (ANSPs) agreed in 2007 on a common strategy and a first set of common performance targets. 2008 is also set to make history: the feasibility study is due in the summer and a Declaration of Intent by the States is scheduled this year.

Common strategic guidelines for a «high performance» FAB EC

The FAB EC vision is becoming a reality, and its governance is to be based on a performance model. In 2007 the six States and the ANSPs involved in the project defined the common performance guidelines to follow irrespective of national boundaries within the joint FAB development in the heart of Europe. The concrete criteria and a concrete roadmap for the decisions they will have to make were developed as the result of a consultation process with the different stakeholders and customers, and presented to the public in December 2007.

Defined in six areas, the first set of FAB EC performance targets is ambitious and in line with SESAR principles and technical developments. The definition of performance targets and the evaluation of their fulfilment will be an ongoing, closely monitored process.

Promising first results of feasibility study

The intermediate results of the feasibility study are encouraging and have convinced the FAB EC partners that their project will lead to sustainable benefits.

The first deliverables of the seven Working Groups which will form the basis for the final study already show how much has been achieved by the cooperation at the level of information exchange and coordination. And the further closer cooperation that is planned in a future FAB EC presents many good opportunities, some of which can even be implemented in the short term. For example, the Operational Working Group has identified short-term (within five years) ATM capacity improvements in three high traffic density areas called «hot spots». As for the Technical Working Group, it has highlighted different areas of cooperation for the short and medium term, for example in CNS infrastructure.

Indeed, the first results of the feasibility study prove the success of the bottom-up approach, one major factor for the quality of the study having been the integration of the customers' various requirements and all the stakeholders' opinions.

Area	Performance targets
Safety	- to ensure an improved safety level, despite the growth in civil traffic
Environment	- to reduce the impact on the environment by improvements to routes, flight profiles and distances flown
Cost-effectiveness	- expected 50% increase in civil traffic by 2018 (Eurocontrol forecast) not to result in more than 25% increase in total cost based on current rules of cost recovery (leading to a 17% reduction of the real en-route unit cost) - to achieve a decrease in military ATM cost
Flight efficiency	- to help to improve flight efficiency by improvements to routes, flight profiles and distances flown - to reduce the average route extension per flight by two kilometres per annum by 2010, increasing to an accumulated total of 10 km by 2018
Capacity	- to meet the demand of increased civil air traffic in the range of 50% by 2018 - while taking into account the current agreed delay target of 1 minute per flight as well as military needs
Mission effectiveness	- to enable the improvement of military airspace use and avoid the cancellation of missions due to ATFCM

The role of the six States

The FAB EC is a joint project by the civil aviation and military authorities of the six States and the ANSPs. While the roles of the States and the ANSPs are closely interwoven, they are clearly defined. Whereas ANSPs are responsible for the management and the agenda setting for the working groups, the six States:

- define a general common approach to the project with the five following issues to be considered regarding the long-term development and implementation of the FAB EC:
 1. the performance of the FAB EC
 2. the organisation of the airspace
 3. the optimal model of cooperation between ANSPs
 4. the military requirements
 5. the future of MUAC as a part of the future FAB
- define objectives for each of the five issues to serve as guidance for the ANSPs
- provide, via their participation in the working groups, constant feedback/advice to the ANSPs, and, where appropriate, guidance on issues of specific interest
- after the feasibility study, decide on the implementation of the FAB EC.

What's next?

The feasibility study is scheduled for mid-2008. It will then be up to the States to decide whether the FAB EC will be established – on the basis of the SES criteria, of the study itself, and following common objectives and a realistic roadmap. To accelerate this process, a step-by-step approach has been chosen involving a political commitment within 12 months as the first step and a framework agreement as a second step.

In concrete terms, the States will have to sign a Declaration of Intent in the second half of the year in order to devote the necessary political commitment to the implementation of the FAB EC. A treaty, to be signed by the six States, should be ready for signature by 2009. The entry into force of the treaty is expected for 2011, after ratification in each of the six States.

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FAB EC in a few facts & figures

- an area of 1.7 million km²
- 6 million flights per year
- 55% of all European air traffic
- a traffic growth of 50% from 2005 until 2018
- 5,500 air traffic controllers concerned
- FAB EC project organisation reflects a joint approach: States, military and ANSPs in a High Level Policy Group, CAA representatives, equivalent military authorities and ANSPs in a Steering Group. Around 200 people in 7 expert working groups are active within the project
- a budget of € 3.5 million is allocated for the feasibility study financed by the ANSPs

Publications

- Brochure «FAB Europe Central – Redefining air traffic control in the heart of Europe» published in English, German, French and Dutch (March 2007)
- Newsletters: N° 1 in September 2007, n° 2 in December 2007, n° 3 in March 2008
- Website www.fab-europe-central.eu

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