



Single European Sky  
FAB Europe Central  
Redefining air traffic control in the heart of Europe



## FAB Europe Central: Feasibility study – cleared for take-off

Six States – Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland – have joined to conduct a detailed feasibility study into the creation of a functional airspace block (FAB) in the heart of Europe: «FAB Europe Central». This is a concrete action towards the implementation of the European Commission's Single European Sky (SES). The study is a joint project of Civil Aviation and Military Authorities and seven air navigation service providers:

- Belgocontrol, Belgium
- Direction des Services de la Navigation Aérienne (DSNA), France
- Deutsche Flugsicherung (DFS), Germany
- Eurocontrol Maastricht UAC (MUAC), Maastricht
- Administration de l'Aéroport de Luxembourg (LAA), Luxembourg
- Luchtverkeersleiding Nederland (LVNL), the Netherlands
- skyguide, Switzerland.

## Optimise air traffic management

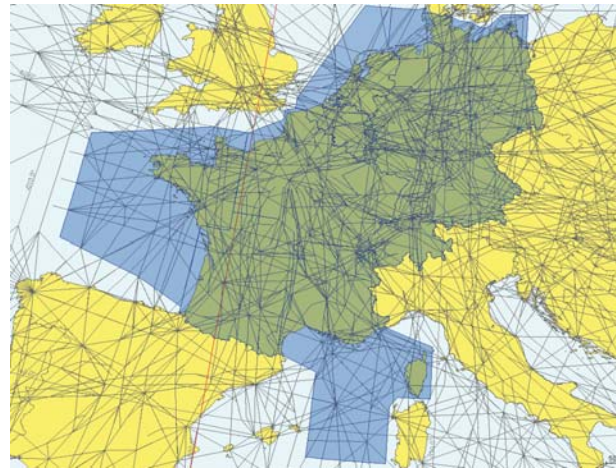
To meet the future needs and challenges of a growing air travel and transport industry, the European Commission launched the Single European Sky initiative. This will redesign European Air Traffic Management (ATM) as a flexible, harmonised and seamless network, independent of national boundaries within so-called functional airspace blocks (FABs). The SES aims to optimise airspace usage and capacity, in order to minimise restrictions related to air traffic control and maximise airport throughput.

Additionally, the SES will address a wide range of shortcomings in the ATM industry. While some of these shortcomings may be resolved with incremental improvements to existing operations, others will require more fundamental changes, and even paradigm shifts. The ultimate objective here is to fulfil the expectations within the ATM industry beyond 2020.

## FAB Europe Central: a cornerstone of the SES

Functional airspace blocks are a key component of the implementation of the Single European Sky. The European Commission's vision for FABs is now enshrined in legislation, with EC regulation No. 551/2004, the so-called Airspace Regulation. This establishes conditions for the organisation and use of airspace in the SES. Those contracted to the regulation – EU Member States plus Switzerland and Norway – are mandated to create functional airspace blocks above flight level 285 (28,500 ft) by 2009. In practice, the thinking on FABs has outpaced the legislation, as most States are now intending them to cover both upper and lower airspace. The European Commission is monitoring the progress of its Single Sky reforms and will formally report on progress.

FAB Europe Central has the commitment of seven air navigation service providers in six countries to increase ATM performance: safety, capacity and cost effectiveness – to meet the challenges of a growing industry and its concerns for the environment and sustainability.



*FAB Europe Central for high-performing air traffic control in the heart of Europe.*

## Seven ANSPs in six States with a FAB vision

The core area of Europe has one of the highest traffic densities in the world. The FAB Europe Central airspace, which covers Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland (totalling 1,713,442 km<sup>2</sup>\*) is characterised by closely interlaced civil and military traffic routes.

The area includes most of the busiest European airports, and its civil and military airports are in close proximity with one another. All this results in dense terminal and en-route air traffic, constrained to flow between military training areas.

The seven air navigation service providers of the six States share a common vision:

Achieve common performance-oriented solutions irrespective of national boundaries as the result of a joint functional airspace block development encompassing the complex airspace of these six States.

The gold standard here is that FAB development shall be based on intensive and close cooperation between the involved ANSPs, together with enhanced civil-military cooperation, and as a jointly developed and operated FAB. The FAB must also account for its interface to neighbouring States – for the benefit of the entire European ATM network.

## The benefits

The FAB Europe Central promises to be a cornerstone of the Single European Sky and, while its benefits must be validated by the feasibility study, its impact is likely to be significant, as it should lead to:

- full accommodation of forecast traffic growth
- optimal use of airspace in consideration of air traffic flows
- optimal use of technical and human resources
- seamless compatibility between lower and upper airspace
- cost-effective level of service
- enhanced civil-military cooperation.

\*Source: ANSP fact sheets «ATM Cost Effectiveness (ACE) 2004 Benchmarking Report»

## First step: Feasibility study

Launched in 2006, the detailed feasibility study will be the basis for the six States to decide whether to establish the FAB Europe Central. The study will propose an implementation plan with a step-by-step approach for the realisation of the FAB Europe Central. It will also recommend the regulations to be laid down in a six-States FAB agreement to be ratified by parliaments. The feasibility study is only the first phase. Pending its outcome, the six States and the seven ANSPs will commit to a FAB Masterplan Phase and a FAB Implementation Phase.

## The basis for a «yes» decision

The main criteria for the final decision to implement the FAB Europe Central will be:

- increased safety, efficiency and capacity
- realistic institutional roadmap
- compliance with States' decisions
- compliance with EC regulations
- socially acceptable implementation plan
- environmental impact
- step-by-step FAB Masterplan acceptable to neighbours.



The core area of Europe – one of the highest traffic densities in the world.

## Managing the risks

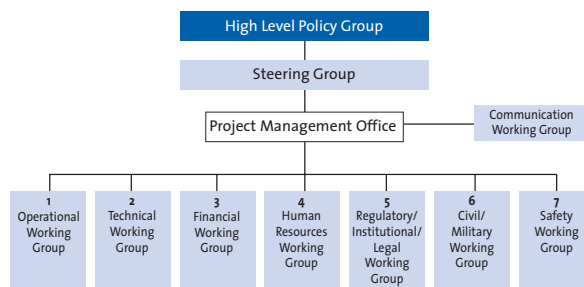
FAB Europe Central is a large and complex project with associated risks; it encompasses several States, various cultures, many operational and technical systems and different political mindsets. All partners need to work together with the principles of transparency, cooperation and common understanding. The risks for FAB Europe Central are being monitored and evaluated, particularly with regard to the following:

- achieving a seamless interface with the rest of the European network
- reaching agreement on an acceptable solution for civil and military airspace users
- overcoming institutional barriers
- dealing with social impact
- realising a solid Cost Benefit Analysis
- reaching agreement on the charging regime
- reaching agreement on a common regulatory framework.

## A multicultural project

Directorate Generals of Civil Aviation (DGCAs), Military Authorities and CEOs of the ANSPs are represented in a High Level Policy Group, whereas representatives of Civil Aviation Authorities as well as military and civil ANSPs oversee the project as part of a Steering Group.

The project itself is managed through a Project Management Office comprising a consultant Project Manager and the heads of the various Working Groups.



The FAB Europe Central organisation.

## The operational ambition: the airspace of six States as a continuum

FAB Europe Central is guided by a joint ambition of the six States involved in the project. Fundamentally, the airspace will be a continuum; horizontally and vertically. With its operations oriented on performance, it will be focused on airspace users' requirements and will have a seamless interface with the rest of the European ATM network – thus realising the vision of the Single European Sky. Safety, cost efficiency and sustainable development are the drivers for all actions.

Strong cooperation between the civil and military is vital to the FAB Europe Central. To extend the current flexible use of airspace into the FAB, the study partners will seek to define a single harmonised airspace design with one set of civil and military air navigation rules.

This may include, as far as practicable, the redesign of military and civil airspace regardless of national boundaries.

## A unified concept

Airspace users expect a safe, expeditious and cost-effective service. Achieving this will require the seven ANSPs' operational performance to be unified and ATM procedures that allow maximum use of the available airspace for civil and military users. To this end, a performance-oriented operational ATM concept is envisaged. This concept will, among other things:

- support the Eurocontrol DMEAN (Dynamic Management of the European Airspace Network) framework
- satisfy the specific needs of the core area of Europe by 2020 within the Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR) framework
- combine safety expertise of the seven ANSPs to deliver further improvements to the current high standards
- take special care of the interface with neighbouring countries and other FABs
- lead to the progressive implementation of common functions, interoperable technical systems and common services through a coherent technical roadmap.

## The cooperative ambition

FAB Europe Central will be realised through a substantial degree of cooperation, across the full range of ANSP activities: operations, technical systems and services, training and human resource management, management and development of new activities.

Cooperation shall be based on the principles of equality, fairness, resource sharing, transparency, know-how transfer, best practice sharing and bundling of expertise. It will be supported by a common performance management framework, with a strong focus on users' expectations. It will discuss well in advance, through a joint customer consultation scheme, changes to procedures, systems and air navigation services.

A proactive social dialogue will be established in line with the 2004 Palermo Conference conclusions, which were adopted at European level.

The feasibility study also has to define how or in which possible way cooperation within the FAB Europe Central should be



realised. Bilateral or multilateral steps between some of the partners are possible, but only if these steps are in line with the foreseen FAB developments.

### Impressum

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