
NIGHT NETWORK

Benefits for the cargo airlines

Basic courses for Eurocontrol ab initio students, common system rating training for CNS technicians, As part of the harmonisation of European airspace, shorter night routes are now being offered on 115 cross-border connections. These more environmentally friendly and cost-saving routes were made possible by FABEC (Functional Airspace Block Europe Central), where the air navigation service providers in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland are working on a joint airspace.

The goal of FABEC is to offer pilots in European airspace as many direct routes as possible. Today, FABEC has shortened 115 routes during the night which enables airlines to save 800,000 nautical miles per year, or approximately 1.481 million kilometres. This results in savings of 4,800 tonnes of kerosene and 16,000 tonnes of CO₂. It was possible to offer these shorter routes to the airlines due to the fact that air traffic decreases significantly at night and military training airspace is also mostly inactive at this time.

One example: Flights from Brussels to Bergamo crossing centres of Brussels, Maastricht, Reims, Zurich and Milan. The standard route filed has a length of 423 nautical miles. If the airlines dispatched a route of the night network (GTQ – BEGAR-ODINA) they could save 36.3 nautical miles (around 68 kilometres). Another example: In Germany, the primary routes that were improved were in upper airspace from and to the cargo hubs in Cologne and Leipzig as well as trans-European connections to the FABEC partners, to Poland, the United Kingdom and southern Europe. To be more specific: The routing from the south of France to Cologne was reduced by 36 nautical miles per flight.

The shorter routes are particularly beneficial to cargo aircraft, which often operate at night. Consultations with the airlines have shown that fuel consumption is only one criterion for their flight planning. In addition, some of them are reluctant to use conditional routes (CDR) to guarantee predictability. And, in fact, sometimes they prefer to obtain a direct routing during the flight.

The work of the FABEC Night Network Work Group commenced in January 2009. Given the objective to offer aircraft operators as many direct routings as possible between origin and destination, FABEC is contributing to the Flight Efficiency Plan (FEP) of IATA, EUROCONTROL and CANSO. In this context, FABEC paid particular attention to reducing the flight distance for traffic using the main FABEC night airports. The FABEC night network is composed of 189 proposals. 115 have already been implemented. The remaining 74 will be further assessed. Some important proposals especially for traffic to/from Scandinavia still require coordination with adjacent FABs.

In developing the night routes, FABEC disregarded FIR boundaries within FABEC and considered the network perspective in close coordination with adjacent FABs. The UK/Ireland Night Fuel Saving routing scheme for north Atlantic eastbound traffic into and flying over FABEC will be continued. Similarly, outstanding coordination was performed with similar activities in FABCE and BLUEMED FAB.

The FABEC partners view this first measurable success as confirmation of their intention to press ahead with the harmonisation of European airspace. Not only will this support better routings, but it will also make a significant contribution to protecting the environment.