



A FABEC BRIEFING PAPER FROM FABEC STATES

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FABEC AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO EUROPE'S AVIATION RECOVERY – AND BEYOND



The COVID-19 crisis has once again shown that the aviation industry is a complex eco-system. Stakeholders – manufacturers, airlines, airports, air navigation service providers (ANSPs) – understand that it is only by working together that the industry will be able to create a safe, scalable pan-European aviation network in which passengers will have the confidence to return once again to the skies.

FABEC States are convinced that Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs), which provide critical infrastructure to enable safe and environmentally responsible flights, have a pivotal role in this European ATM network. FABs are crossroads, where high-level European Union ATM policies are translated into national and regional daily operations for all airspace users – commercial, business and military. FABEC has become – due to its geographical location in the heart of Europe – a catalyst for strong and sustainable operational cooperation across national borders guided by common performance targets compiled in one common FABEC Performance Plan.

Since its establishment in 2012, FABEC has relied on strong and effective governance and working

structures at the levels of States, ANSPs and together. Its work platform has proved its effectiveness in times of volatile and unexpected traffic growth and steep traffic decline, following crises such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the 2010 volcanic ash crisis. Hence, FABEC has become a highly respected and recognized partner – both at a European level (Network Manager, interFAB cooperation, social dialogue etc.) and worldwide (winning the ATCA David J. Hurley Award, CANSO Safety Award, ATM Award on environment).

The FABEC partners believe now, more than ever, that the importance of FABs within the European aviation network, especially in the core area, needs to be recognised and supported – especially as aviation’s successful recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is critical to the economic and social wellbeing of the continent’s citizens. FABEC is a tried and tested regional collaboration platform which will enable the recovery in a safe, environmentally responsible and cost-effective way. By fostering regional cross border cooperation, it is a pivotal layer to ensuring the successful recovery within the framework and principles of the Single European Sky and the European Commission’s Green Deal.

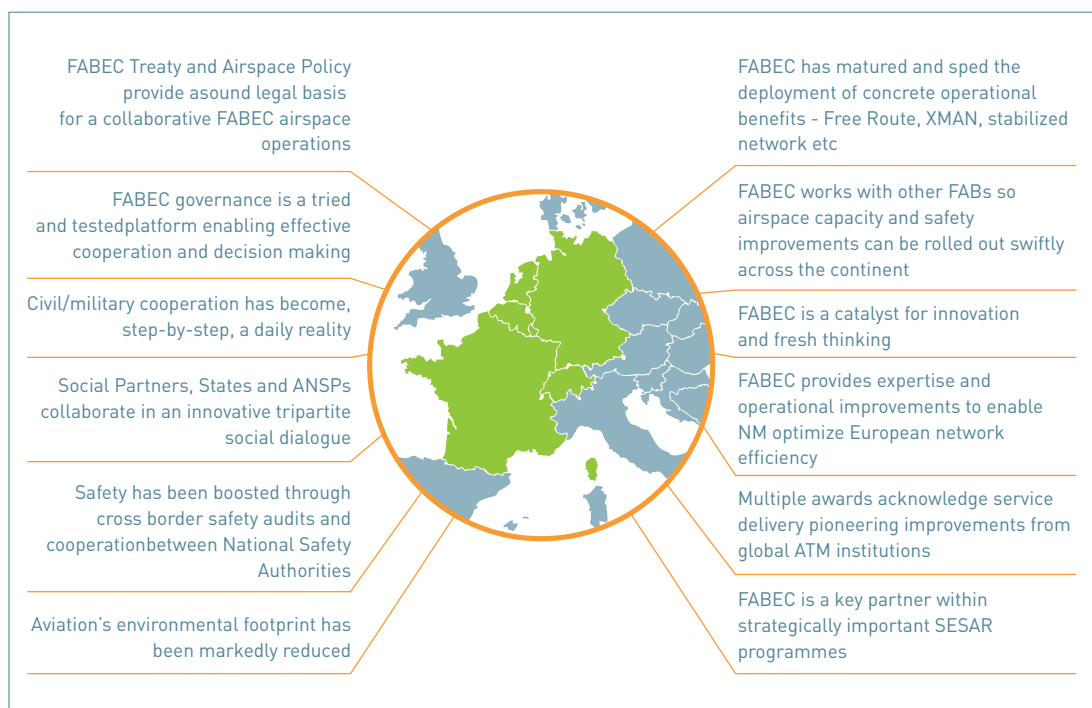


In Single European Sky regulations, the opportunity for States to present a single performance plan for a FAB – at the same time incorporating specific national targets for economic performance – is strategically important. A FAB-level plan requires a joint, operational performance approach towards optimising airspace management operations which goes beyond any individual national performance. Any update of the existing SES regulations should preserve this opportunity and maintain the possibility of FAB agreements as of today.

The following table provides a brief overview of what FABEC has achieved over the last few years. It shows a transformation of ATM service delivery has taken place and that FABEC is a vital strategic resource on which the entire industry can rely for recovery planning and future growth. The transformation has involved FABEC – internally and with external partners – developing new working practices to respond to increasingly unpredictable fluctuations in demand while ensuring the high-level targets of safety and environmental performance are met or exceeded. Over the last decade the world has entered a new era of volatility. FABEC States and ANSPs are ready to accept this challenge.

The benefits of FABEC

Close cooperation between FABEC ANSPs is a key enabler to the resilience of the entire European aviation network. Despite unpredicted short-term extreme fluctuations in demand, safety standards have remained at the target performance level – or increased. Delays and costs to airlines are reducing. All airspace users can now choose the most fuel-efficient and environmentally responsible routes across even the most congested airspace areas of the continent. A new culture of collaboration has been established within and among FABs which is transforming the performance of Europe's ATM system.

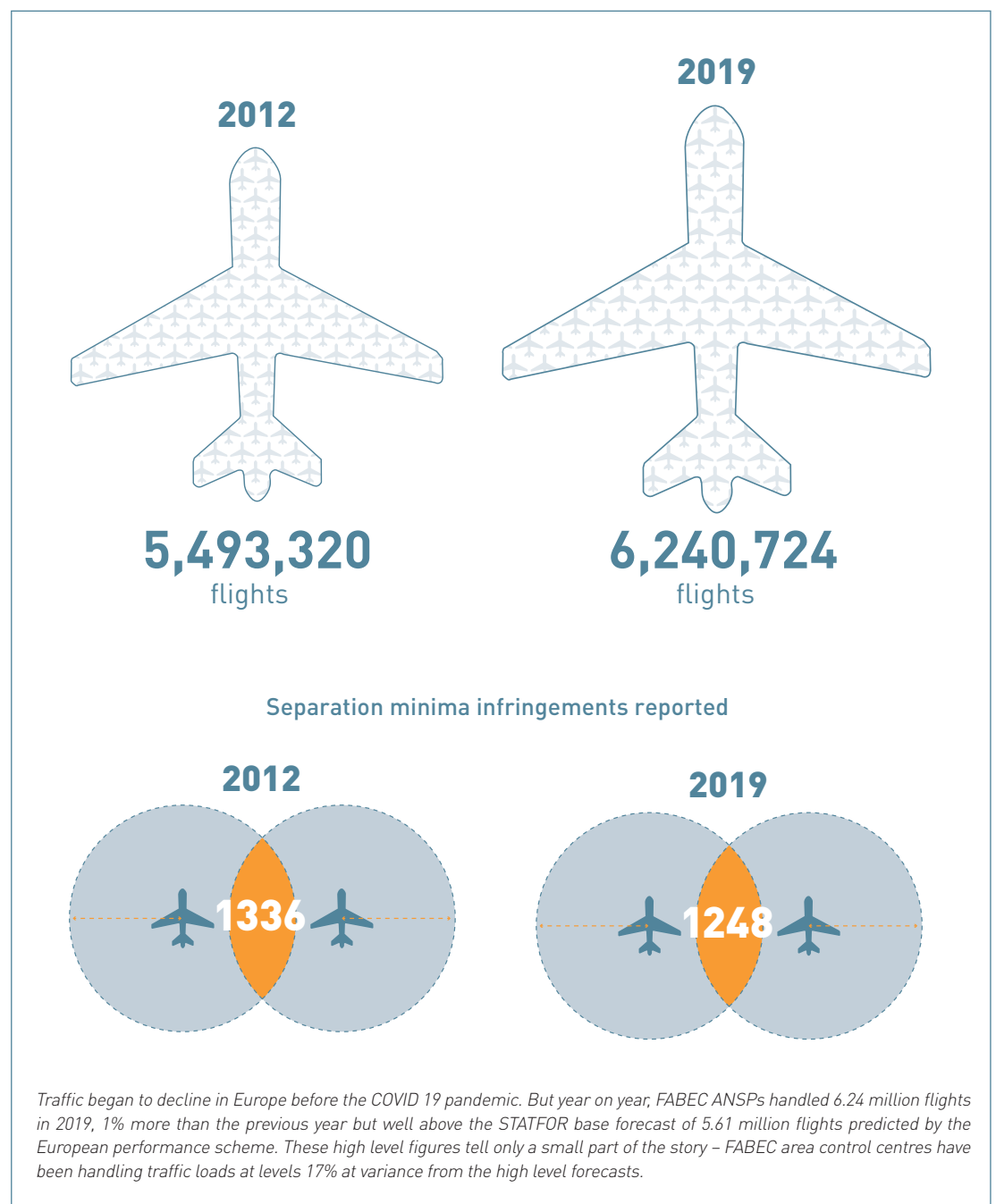


ATM performance improvements by FABEC – the facts



Safety – Flying is becoming safer

Traffic is handled with an extremely high level of safety and all safety targets were met during the first and the second reference periods. In 2019, the last full year where records are available, there were with no reported ATM attributed accidents and separation minima infringements and runway incursion incidents were within the target levels.





Punctuality – In 2019 traffic increased but delays reduced

In 2019 airlines reported that 78.6 percent of aircraft arrived at their destination on time, with less than 15 minutes delay, or in some case ahead of schedule – a 1.6 percent improvement over 2018.



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27%
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of en route ATM
responsibility

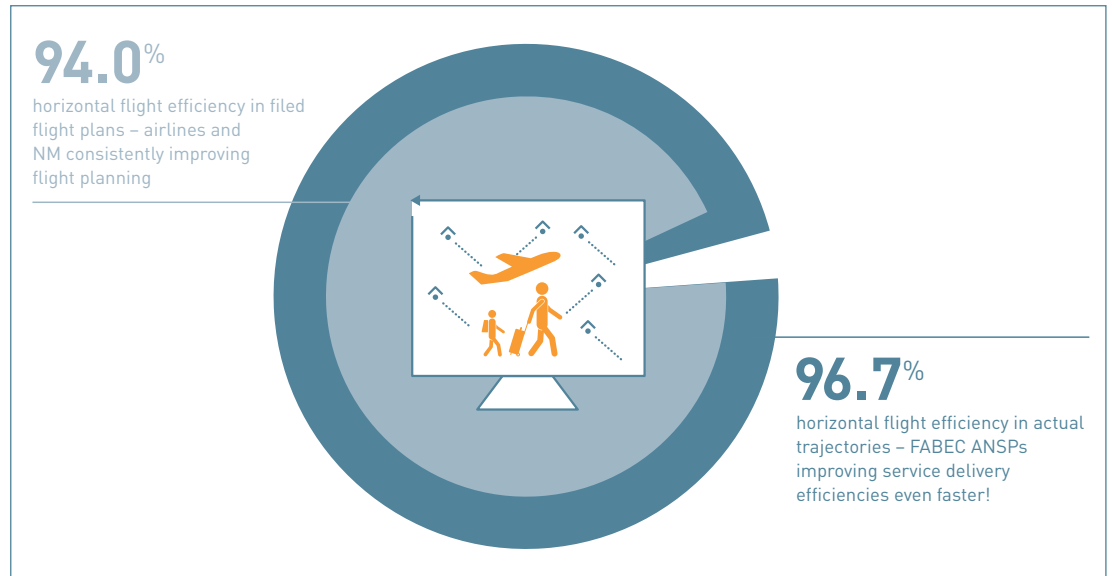


Since 2014 more than 95 percent of all flights have operated with 15 minutes or less air traffic flow management (ATFM) delay.
Source: PRU.



Flight efficiency – FABEC is doing better

FABs have been the vital enabler to transforming upper airspace operations throughout Europe, accelerating the introduction of free route airspace which when fully implemented will reduce flight lengths by 500,000 nautical miles/day, reduce fuel burn by 3,000 tonnes of fuel/day, emit 10,000 fewer CO₂ tonnes/day and save airlines EUR3 million in costs.¹ FABs have already delivered the technically challenging goal of optimal horizontal trajectories.

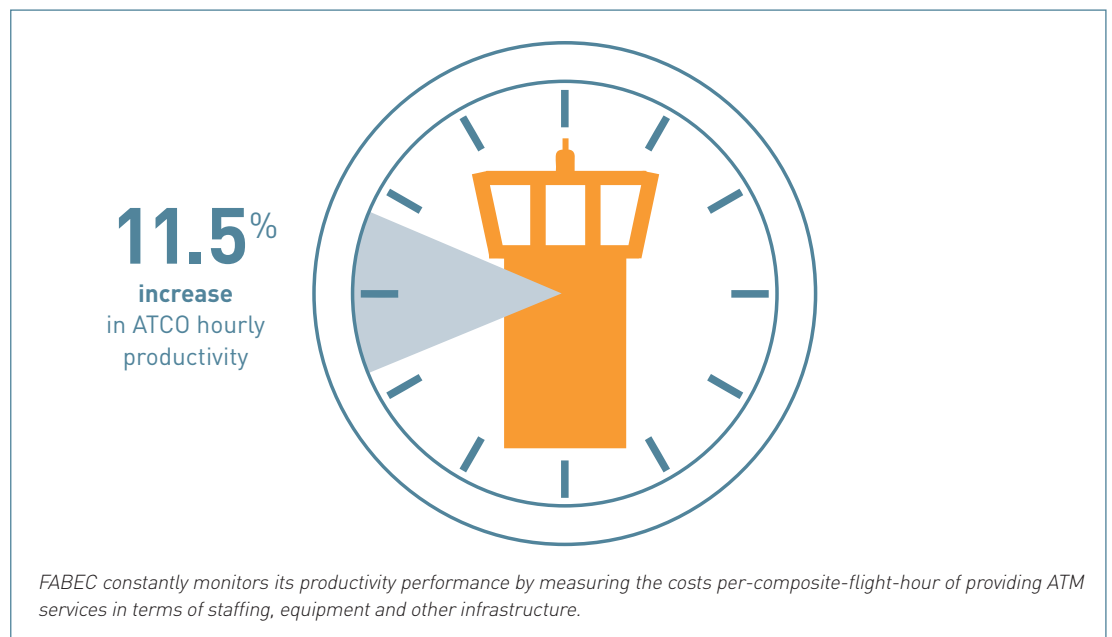


¹ <https://www.eurocontrol.int/concept/free-route-airspace#:~:text=Benefits,design%20and%20ATM%20operational%20concepts>.



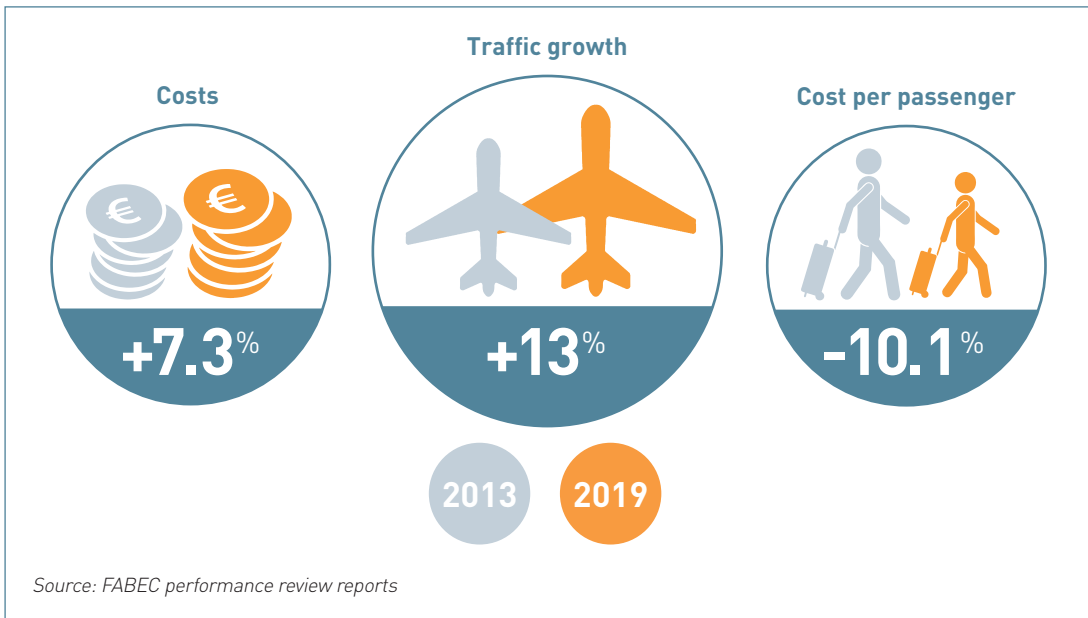
Productivity – FABEC controllers are handling more flights an hour

Since its launch in 2013 FABEC has handled increasing traffic demand with greater levels of efficiency and productivity. ATCO hour productivity has increased by 11.5%.



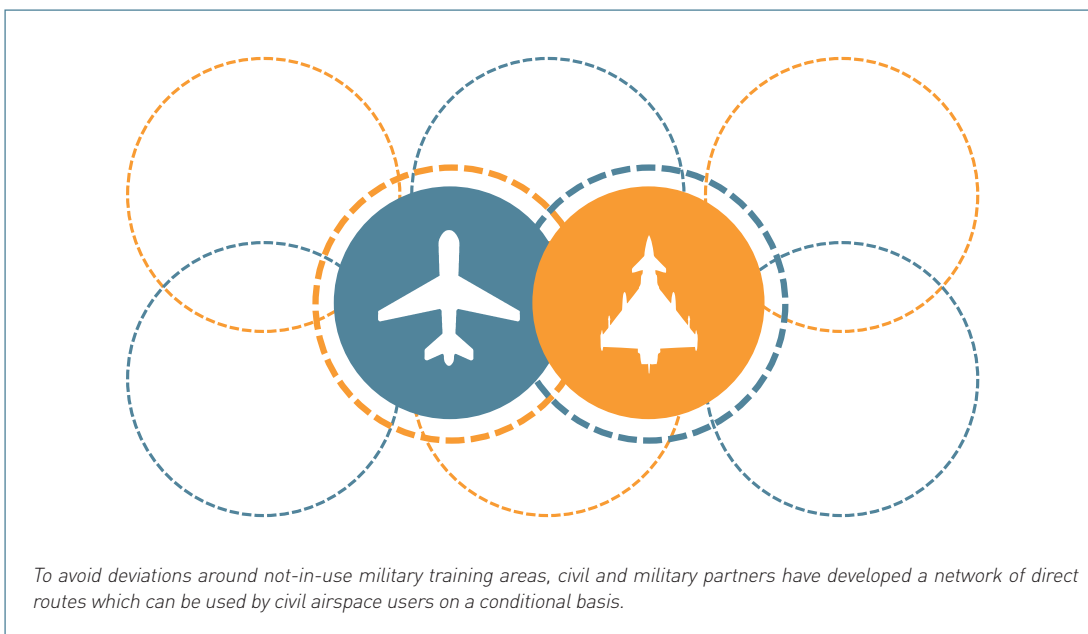
Cost efficiency – FABEC is reducing its costs and increasing its productivity

Between 2013 and peak levels of demand in 2019 traffic grew at 13% but costs have increased just 7.3%. The average cost per passenger has dropped by 10.1% over the same period.



Civil-military cooperation – Military and civil partners work together in FABEC

Both civil and military organisations are equivalent partners in the FABEC programme. In Belgium, France and the Netherlands civil and military air traffic controllers share the same workspace while in Germany and Switzerland civil and military en route control has been integrated. Belgium and the Netherlands intend to integrate their civil military operations in the coming years.



Overall value – FABs provide clear added value benefits to Europe’s ATM system

