



ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

PLENARY

Agenda Item 7: Annual Reports of the Council to the Assembly for 2001, 2002 and 2003

TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY

(Presented by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Community and its Member States²)

SUMMARY

In order to prepare the way for the expected doubling of air traffic movements by 2020 and to enable improvements to air traffic safety, the European Commission has proposed the implementation of “The Single European Sky” Initiative.

The set of four regulations that comprise the Single European Sky package were approved earlier this year. The European Commission is now preparing for their application, in particular through a series of implementation measures.

This paper will address the issue of how to move towards the implementation of the Single European Sky, how this exercise relates to ICAO rules and what organisational measures are required for the liaison with ICAO.

The 35th Assembly is invited to note the progress in the implementation process and to take appropriate measures to support it where this is needed for the transposition into ICAO documentation and for possible use in similar homogeneous areas of the world.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The liberalisation of air transport and the appearance of low cost airlines have increased the number of flights and destinations offered to the air transport passenger. The sustained growth of air transport in the 1990s highlighted the mismatch between the internal market and the traditional organisation of the European network of national air traffic control systems. This network exhibits significant fragmentation reflecting the historical evolution of air traffic control.

¹ English, French and Spanish versions provided by the European Community and its Member States.

² The European Community comprises the following states: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom

- 1.2 The consequence of this fragmentation is the increase in congestion and delays, and reduced flight and cost efficiency. Inefficient use of airspace and the expected doubling of air traffic movements by 2020 are real constraints to the economic growth and to the international competitiveness of the European Air Transport system.

2. THE NEED FOR A SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY

- 2.1 The need to reduce the fragmentation of the European system is at the origin of the Single European Sky initiative, launched in 2000. A High Level Group, bringing together the civil and military air traffic control authorities, was created to devise a new approach for regulatory, institutional and technical aspects of Air Traffic Management (ATM) in Europe.
- 2.2. In October 2001 the European Commission proposed a comprehensive set of legislative and co-operative actions to give effect to the Single European Sky. These build on existing international standards of ICAO and Eurocontrol. They will therefore be consistent with the development of global and regional ATM policies and operational concepts.
- 2.3. The final goal of this initiative is to improve safety, to create additional capacity and to increase the overall efficiency of the ATM network in Europe.

To achieve this goal the legislative proposals set the conditions for:

- improving the administrative and organisational processes in the area of decision-making and enforcement in ATM;
- achieving a more effective and integrated ATM network, ensuring that this network is based on demand-driven service provision.

3. THE SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The package of legislation agreed between the European Parliament and the Council has opened the path to the implementation of rules and regulations that will govern the Single European Sky. This event represents a major step in the integration of the European Air Transport System and will open up the way to allocating an increase of aircraft movement in the skies.
- 3.2 Improve safety. Air traffic control in Europe is amongst the safest in the world, but it needs to be harmonised in every State. In response to traffic growth, a more systematic, more binding approach must be developed.
- 3.3 Reduce fragmentation of air traffic control. Today each State organises air traffic control over its territory. Disparities in the rules and organisational arrangements create inconsistencies which have knock-on effects on traffic flow and regularity.
- 3.4 Ensure closer co-operation and involvement of the military sector in the organisation of air traffic control and in rule-making.

4. TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY

- 4.1 Many of the actions to be pursued in the context of the Single European Sky relate to the organisation and use of airspace, for which there is a need to secure the support of ICAO and for consistency with the ICAO framework, in particular:

- establishment³ of the European upper flight information region (EUIR);
- establishment of Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs) and associated common general principles;
- development of rules on flexible use of airspace (FUA);
- development of rules on airspace classification;
- development of rules on airspace design (route and sector design);
- development of rules on air traffic flow management.

In many of these tasks binding rules and relevant material such, as standards, will be developed, most of which will be drafted by Eurocontrol based on a mandate from the European Commission.

- 4.2 Functional Airspace Blocks will be established through a bottom-up approach. These “Blocks” will be based on operational requirements reflecting the need to ensure more integrated management of airspace regardless of existing boundaries.
- 4.3 Member States and their Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) will be initiating the process concerning their respective airspace. Should there be a dispute between Member States on FABs, they may consult the Single Sky Committee for advice, which they should take into account in their attempts to find a solution.

5. ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY

- 5.1 The European Community and its Member States call upon the Assembly to:
- (a) note the intention of the Member States of the European Union to implement the Single European Sky;
 - (b) invite the ICAO Council to take the necessary steps to support the introduction of the Single European Sky and to promote the necessary measures to integrate this implementation with the bordering regions;
 - (c) invite the ICAO to consider this initiative for possible implementation in other, similar regions worldwide.

– END –

³ To be noted that some cross-border agreements are already in place, such as the Eurocontrol agreement under which the centre in Maastricht is in charge of air traffic control services for the upper airspace of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and parts of Germany, whilst other, comparable cross-border agreements are currently being developed, such as the Central European Air Traffic Services agreement (CEATS, Vienna) involving Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Slovak Republic and Slovenia, and the Nordic Upper Area Control Centre (NUAC, Malmö) involving Denmark and Sweden and potentially also Finland and Norway.