



## Background info on FABs





## THE FUNCTIONAL AIRSPACE BLOCKS IN THE SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY

Under regulation EC 551/04 on the organisation and use of airspace in the single European sky, the Member States of the European Community have committed themselves to reconfiguring the upper airspace into functional airspace blocks, with a view to achieving maximum capacity and efficiency of the air traffic management network. This reconfiguration aims at achieving more integrated management of the airspace. It is based on operational requirements, regardless of existing boundaries. This means, in particular, that the design of routes and the service provision should not be constrained by the national boundaries.

Functional airspace blocks must optimise the use of airspace taking into account air traffic flows. They must show their overall added value, including optimal use of technical and human resources, on the basis of cost-benefit analyses.

Functional airspace blocks are created by mutual agreement between the States concerned. The States have to consult interested parties, including the Commission and the other Member States, prior to entering their agreement. They have to jointly organise conditions for air traffic management including cross border services from the air navigation service providers within their airspace. Therefore, they need to conclude a FAB Agreement.

The creation of FABs is one of the most outstanding features of the single European sky regulations, as one of the main means to achieve operational improvements for airspace use. The “bottom-up approach”, that leaves the initiative to the field actors and their experts to co-operate, still appears the most pragmatic and efficient, if not the only way to proceed. The work to build up FABs also entails the search for various areas and kinds of co-operation between the air navigation service providers, for efficiency gains, including cost-efficiency.

In the last years, the following initiatives have been launched to create FABs in Europe:

- Northern UAC (Denmark-Sweden),
- North Eastern FAB (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, [Ireland] and Estonia),
- FAB United Kingdom-Ireland,
- FAB Spain-Portugal,





- South East Europe (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina),
- Blue Med (Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Malta),
- Danube (Bulgaria, Romania),
- Baltic FAB (Lithuania, Poland),
- FAB Europe Central.

With an airspace accounting for 55% of the whole air traffic in Europe, the FABEC project – FAB Europe Central – undertaken by Germany, Belgium, France, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, is by far the largest FAB project. Its location, crossed by many of the major air traffic flows, makes it a prominent piece in the future reorganisation of airspace and air traffic management in Europe. And its size offers opportunities for performance improvement overall among the air navigation service providers. According to the proposed regulation to modify the current Single Sky regulations from 2004, the target date for ending implementation of all FABs would be 2012.