

BELGOCONTROL

THE BELGIAN AIR TRAFFIC SERVICE PROVIDER



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For many years now BELGOCONTROL has been a pioneer for promoting the cooperation with other air traffic service providers in Europe. As one of the founding members of EUROCONTROL, Belgium welcomed the Organisation in Brussels when it was created in 1960. The Belgian State is also one of the cofounders of the first truly international and multinational air traffic control centre, and participates jointly with Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the management of the Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre, which has been operational since 1972 and covers the upper airspace (presently above 24,500 ft) of four European countries.

BELGOCONTROL is the air navigation service (ANS) provider of Belgium.

An autonomous public company owned for 100% by the Belgian Federal Government, BELGOCONTROL was set up as a part of the reorganisation of Belgian civil aviation in October 1998. Previously, the provision of air navigation services was combined with the airport management in the Régie des Voies Aériennes/Regie der Luchtwegen (RVA/RLW). Following the restructuring, the ANS was allocated to BELGOCONTROL. Brussels International Airport Company (BIAC) is dealing with the former airport activities of RVA/RLW at Brussels National. The other major civil public airports had already been transferred to the regional authorities in 1989.

The responsibilities, rights and obligations of BELGOCONTROL are set out in a management contract, concluded with the Belgian State. This contract was designed as a means of economic regulation. It gives the government the right to approve the five-year financial plan and the performance targets.

The Government assumes its safety regulatory responsibility through the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The Belgian

CAA legally charged BELGOCONTROL to implement the EATCHIP /EATMP programme. Members of the Executive Committee of BELGOCONTROL represent Belgium at the EUROCONTROL Provisional Council.

ORGANISATION

The Belgian Government appoints the BELGOCONTROL Board of Directors. The Board counts ten members, including the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who represents the staff.

The "Executive Committee" is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Jean-Claude Tintin, assisted by three Directors-General (Mr Bernard Alloo, DG Operations; Mr Jan Cottyn DG Equipement; Mr Raoul Verschueren, DG Administration and Finance). BELGOCONTROL has about 1,000 members of staff, working at 11 different locations in Belgium.

RESPONSIBILITIES

BELGOCONTROL is responsible for providing all air navigation services (ANS) in the Belgian civil airspace. The

upper airspace from FL245 onward is delegated to the Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (UAC). By delegation, BELGOCONTROL is also responsible for the provision of ATS in the Luxembourg airspace between FL135 and FL245.

There are other two-way delegations between Belgium and its neighbouring countries (such as the approach to Lille above Belgian territory), which are made for the sake of operational management efficiency.

BELGOCONTROL provides terminal ANS at the airports of Brussels, Ostend, Antwerp, Charleroi and Liège (only outside military operating hours). Approach to the airports of Brussels and Antwerp is handled by an Approach Control Unit colocated with the Brussels Area Control Centre (ACC).



Mr Jean-Claude Tintin,
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Additionally, BELGOCONTROL runs its own meteorological service and provides communication services to airlines and studies for regional airports.

Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) are provided under the supervision of the Belgian CAA.

THE BELGIAN SKY IN THE CORE AREA OF EUROPE

Located in the geographical centre of Europe, Belgium is at the crossroads of airways designed for the north-south and west-east traffic. As a result, the Belgian sky is one of the busiest and most complicated airspace in Europe.

In 2001, BELGOCONTROL controlled more than 1,000,000 aircraft movements. Brussels National airport handled 305,000 movements, the four civil regional airports (Antwerp, Charleroi, Liège and Ostend) more than 200,000



movements (among which 57,000 IFR¹) and CANAC (Computer Assisted National Air Traffic Control Centre) 570,000 en-route movements.

This is lower than the previous year, due to the economic slowdown, the dramatic event of September 11 and the disappearance of two home-based airlines – CityBird and Sabena. On a yearly basis, the drop in traffic was – 6.29% for Brussels airport (326,000 movements in 2000) and -3% for the en-route (588,000 en-route movements in 2000).

The most dramatic drop was in November 2001, with the Sabena bankruptcy and the consequent 27.7% drop in the number of movements at Brussels airport and 16.5% decrease in the en-route movements in the last two months of the year.

Increased frequencies and additional services by several foreign carriers as well as the arrival of Belgian newcomers like SN Brussels Airlines, Thomas Cook Airlines, Birdy Airlines and VG Airlines/Delsey are slowly filling the huge gap left by the disappearance of the two national carriers. As of July 2002, the drop in traffic at Brussels-National had been reduced to 17%.



This should not lead to complacency. BELGOCONTROL management clearly reaffirmed its commitment to ongoing programmes in order to provide additional capacities and improve punctuality.

Efforts are made in three main domains: recruitment, new technical means, air-space and airways remodelling.

Recruitment

There has been an overall stop in the recruitment of controllers between 1982 and 1988 because of Government budgetary constraints. This led to a shortage of controllers. The new management identified the problem, prioritised an intense recruiting effort and developed new training programmes. This and the temporary drop in traffic has currently led to an adequate staffing. The ongoing recruiting campaign should help BELGOCONTROL to maintain that adequate staffing.

The Air Traffic Service Training Centre is now equipped with simulators for control tower and radar control positions, all of the latest technology. Developed by Raytheon, the system has been adapted to the specific needs of BELGOCONTROL, whose instructors and technicians have been closely involved in the development process.

The simulator is composed of a radar simulator and of a three-dimensional tower simulator. It enables to train radar air traffic controllers for tower, approach and regional



area control functions. The complete environment of the airspace can be created and integrated in the simulation exercises.

CANAC upgrade

CANAC (Computer Assisted National Air Traffic Control Centre), operational since 1993, provides Belgium with an advanced air traffic control infrastructure. A modernisation programme, called "CANAC Upgrade" is being carried out.

Based on a phased approach and the use of common development (ARTAS² as RDP³; existing ODS⁴) to reduce risks, the CANAC Upgrade consists of independent steps that can be implemented in parallel.

During the first stage, a number of equipment will be upgraded and the performance will be improved by adding new safety facilities and a better system control. The present EDDs (Electronic Data Displays) will be replaced by intelligent ADDs (Autonomous Data Displays). The current monochromatic radar screens will be replaced by flat, 'intelligent' colour screens providing the air traffic controllers with more information.

¹ Instrument Flight Rule

² ATM Surveillance Tracker and Server System

³ Radar Data Processor

⁴ Operator Input and Display System

BELGOCONTROL (CONT'D)

The installation of an independent 'fall-back' radar system is an important safety measure that is used in the event problems would occur on the radar screens of the central system. The system will be installed at regional airports as well.

Stage 2 (2004-2006) includes the replacement of the hardware and the implementation of new system architecture. During stage 3, the new function will be integrated into the system with, among others, the implementation of an advanced flight plan management module that will meet the European standard that is now in the developing phase.

New control tower

Owing to the construction of a new passenger terminal, inaugurated in May 2002, visibility from the existing Brussels Airport control tower (built in 1958) is limited to the north, and thus necessitating (for obvious safety reasons) the use of a second (temporary) control tower. A totally new control

tower is being built near the CANAC Centre on the east side of the airport, and should be operational at the end of 2004. It will improve safety because of the panoramic vision of the whole airport area from the 65-metre high elegant new construction and it will regroup the management of all ground and runway operations at one single site.

The technical and operational project of the new BELGOCONTROL tower is based on the A-SMGCS concept (Advanced Surface Movement Guidance and Control System).

New technologies

In cooperation with EUROCONTROL, BELGOCONTROL plays an active role in the development and experimentation of new technologies such as CDM (Collaborative Decision-Making), ATC Air Ground Data Link DECABEL, etc.

Since October 2001, the departure clearance is transmitted by the "air-ground data link" system. Faster and

more efficient than the conventional radio procedure, it avoids errors of understanding and reduces the number of radio communication between the air traffic controller and the pilot, allowing for better punctuality. BELGOCONTROL has developed and implemented this system at Brussels National airport, which was indeed one of the first to be certified in Europe.

Electronic AIP

BELGOCONTROL took part in the pilot project of EUROCONTROL aiming at providing an electronic AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication). The BELGOCONTROL electronic version of the Belgian AIP was presented in March 2002.

An integrated computer system introducing and processing flight plans is operational since August 2001: pre-flight information's and flight plans can be transmitted through the Internet, as well as a daily summary of all Belgian NOTAMS⁵ in force. Furthermore, BELGOCONTROL has

⁵ Notices to Airmen



The future control tower at Brussels airport should be operational at the end of 2004



launched the project involving the publication at a later stage of all NOTAMs of a particular country or airport.

Airspace restructuring

In cooperation with neighbouring countries, BELGOCONTROL is trying to coordinate some of their actions with foreign adjacent APP⁶/ACC⁷ and UACs in order to achieve the objectives of the CIP (Convergence and Implementation Plans) Status Report. Letters of agreement are regularly updated.

BELGOCONTROL is intensively cooperating with the Maastricht UAC, as they are both partners in providing ATS in the Brussels FIR⁸/UIR⁹. The 6 States Working Group was established with a view of optimising the use of airspace and increase ATS capacity for the West of UK, northern France, western Germany and the Benelux States. Interface problems linked with the implementation of the V4/EAM04 airspace reorganisation over Germany resulted in some capacity reductions in Belgium. Real-time simulations are being carried out by the EUROCONTROL Experimental Centre, aimed at addressing the problems.

BELGOCONTROL is also involved in the EUROCONTROL 8-States Free Route Airspace project.

The new European airspace

BELGOCONTROL is actively involved in EUROCONTROL activities, be it at working group level or at higher decision level such as the Provisional Council. It also participates actively in the Safety Regulation Commission, and intends to introduce the various EUROCONTROL Safety Regulatory Requirements (ESARR) programmes at their earliest planned implementation dates.

The "Single European Sky" initiative of the European Commission will have an impact on all air navigation service providers. BELGOCONTROL will intensify the existing contacts with colleagues of the Belgian Air Force (better coordination between civil and military) as well as of other European countries. Whether it is a matter of efforts in the field of equipment standardisation, improvement of communication systems, division of controlled spaces or of standardisation of staff training, future challenges will only be taken up if and when a consensus is reached amongst the various partners.

The crisis which has recently hit the air transport industry places increasing pressure on the organisation of the air transport industry: the lobbying for the "Single European Sky" in this respect speaks volumes. BELGOCONTROL considers that we have to deal here with an acceleration of a movement that started already several years ago. Whereas some make use of this situation to double their action that is based on sheer ideological considerations, imbued with certain dogmatism, BELGOCONTROL, on the contrary, is concerned with the constant improvement of its services in a pragmatic and competent way.

BELGOCONTROL management defends the legitimate interests of the enterprise and its personnel, backed up by its unique experience of more than fifty years of safe and efficient air traffic control in the busy core area of Europe. The separation between regulatory functions and service provider, as well as the existing upper airspace organisation, already delegated as a functional block of airspace to EUROCONTROL Maastricht, already comply with two of the major objectives of the "Single European Sky" involving no major change for Belgium.

BELGOCONTROL remains vigilant towards the future evolution dealing with lower airspace, and will defend the interests of the enterprise and its customers, which include the Belgian airports. ■

⁶ Approach Centre Control

⁷ Area Control Centre

⁸ Flight Information Region

⁹ Upper (flight) Information Region