

18 March 2009

EUROCONTROL UNVEILS ITS NEW AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM

Maastricht, the Netherlands – **at 3 p.m. on Monday 23 March 2009**, EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Control Centre will unveil its new air traffic control system in the presence of official representatives from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, and the Director General of EUROCONTROL.

The Netherlands Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Mr Camiel Eurlings, will be permanently shutting down the old system, which dates back to the early 1970s. Air traffic control over Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and north-west Germany will thereafter be exclusively provided via the new flight data processing system.

You are cordially invited to attend this event, which will be held at EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre.

Horsterweg 11

6199 AC Maastricht Airport, The Netherlands

[Directions to the site](#) are available online.

Event schedule

3 p.m. to 4 p.m. on 23 March 2009

Language: English

Speech by Mr David McMillan, Director General EUROCONTROL

Speech by Mr Camiel Eurlings, Netherlands Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Final shut-down of the old flight data processing system by the Minister

European
Organisation for the
Safety of
Air Navigation

Journalists will be authorised to visit the control room.

Organisation
européenne pour la
sécurité de la
navigation aérienne

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More detailed information is available at the following website:
www.eurocontrol.int/muac

General information

The new flight data processing system, which was recently awarded a prize at the ATC Global exhibition in Amsterdam, is at the cutting edge of technology. It makes possible the safe, efficient and environmentally-friendly management of air traffic; in spite of the current financial crisis, experts predict that air traffic in Europe will double by 2030, increasing from the current level of 10 million flights per year to 20.4 million flights per year in 2030.

This flight data processing system is the first of its kind in Europe to be developed in accordance with European standards on interoperability between systems. It is therefore entirely consistent with the philosophy behind the Single European Sky, an initiative launched in 2004 by the European Commission to reorganise air traffic management in Europe into a flexible, harmonised and homogenous network, independent of national borders and built up of functional airspace blocks (FABs).

More precisely, the system in place in Maastricht makes it possible to reduce flight distances by calculating the most direct air routes possible, thus helping to reduce fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

State-of-the-art technological functions also allow for more efficient, dynamic and accurate air traffic management, reducing delays and costs. Aircraft trajectories are thus calculated automatically in real time using radar data, information entered by the controllers and flight plan data. The controllers thus have at their disposal the most comprehensive and accurate information on the air traffic situation, which allows them to anticipate and organise traffic safely and efficiently. Moreover, the configuration of air traffic control sectors can easily be adapted to better respond to changing air traffic flows, to atmospheric conditions and to the zones reserved for military exercises.

Thanks to its advanced technology and cutting-edge tools, the new system will finally provide more efficient support to the controllers as they carry out their main task: ensuring the safety of air navigation. Given the increase in air traffic expected for the coming years in one of the most complex and congested regions in the world, it is crucial that effective technological solutions are in place to assist controllers in their safety mission.

The Maastricht Control Centre, managed by EUROCONTROL on behalf of the four States, provides control for the upper airspace (above 24,500 feet, i.e. approximately 7,500 metres) of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and north-west Germany. The lower airspace is managed by the national providers, Belgocontrol, *Luchtverkeersleiding Nederland* (LVNL) and *Deutsche Flugsicherung* (DFS) respectively.

Since 1972, the Maastricht Centre has provided a concrete example of the political commitment entered into by Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg to provide joint air traffic services. The international area of responsibility it covers is a perfect example of the simplification and harmonisation of airspace in Europe. The advantages of this kind of international cooperation are now undeniable. The Maastricht Centre can be seen as a model for cross-border projects in the spirit of the Single European

COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

Sky.

In order to respond to the needs and future challenges of the air transport industry, the Maastricht Centre and its partners are currently working on the creation of a functional airspace block, "FAB Europe Central" (FABEC), which aims to implement multinational management of the airspace of six countries (Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland).

Some 1.5 million flights pass through the Maastricht Centre's area of responsibility each year, making it the second busiest air traffic control centre in terms of traffic volume after London. During the summer, there can be as many as 5,000 flights per day. Over the past ten years, air traffic has increased by 55%. 250 air traffic controllers work at the Maastricht Centre.