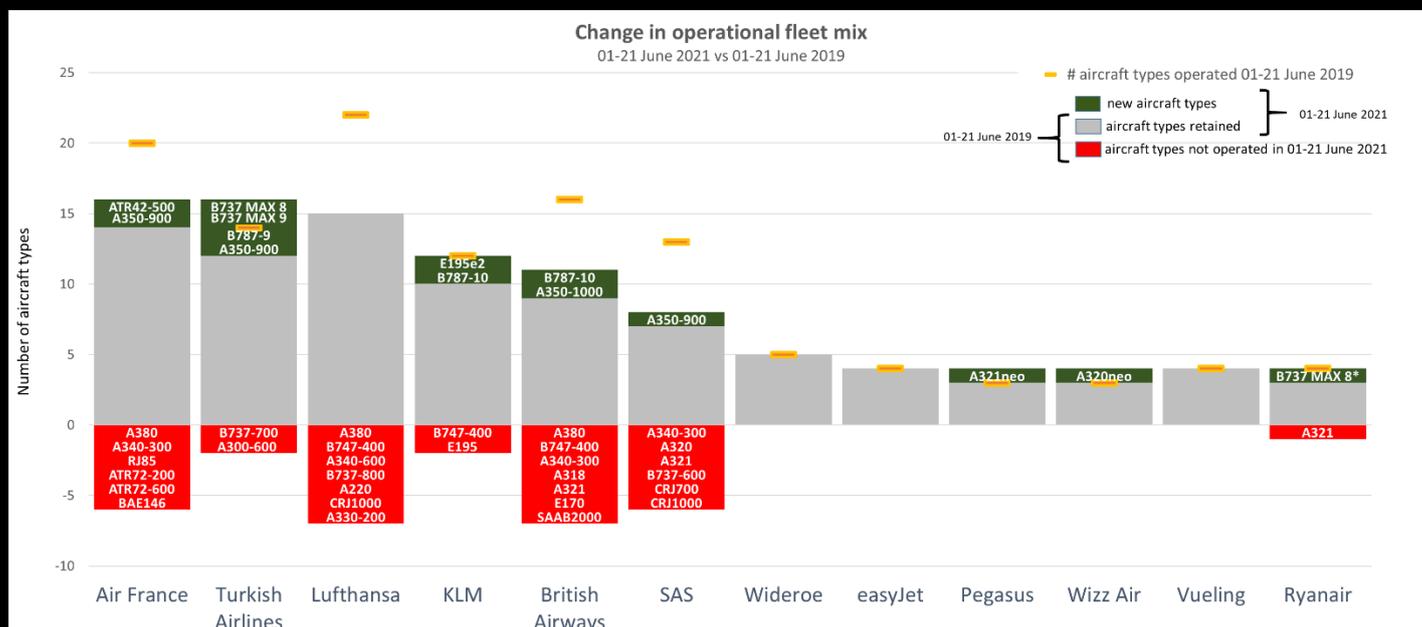


EUROCONTROL Data Snapshot

Airlines have reduced the complexity of their aircraft fleet mix in the last two years, yet introduced more fuel-efficient aircraft types



29 June 2021



Historically network airlines have operated a variety of aircraft types to cover their business needs. This ranges from smaller aircraft types on regional routes up to wide-body aircraft for their long-haul passenger and cargo operations. In contrast point-to-point and regional airlines use a more uniform fleet mix.

Comparing the first three weeks of June 2021 with the same period in 2019, notable differences in the aircraft fleet mix can be observed. In June 2021 European hub-and-spoke airlines largely ceased operating four-engined aircraft types (A380, B747, A340 & RJ85). In addition they didn't operate those aircraft types that were no longer aligned with the current market conditions except where cargo demand off-set the drop in passenger numbers (see [data snapshot #5](#) on passenger aircraft flown as cargo).

Zooming in on British Airways we can observe a significant reduction of aircraft types, a combination of aligning their long-haul operations to a drop in demand as well as the accelerated retirement of the Boeing 747 fleet. It also shows a move away from wet-lease operations and affiliated companies.

Low-cost carriers which already operated a fleet with a limited number of aircraft types saw their fleet consolidation limited to one aircraft type (e.g. Ryanair stopped flying the Laudamotion A321). Meanwhile Wizz Air and Pegasus introduced the more fuel-efficient Airbus A321neo aircraft. Network airlines have also made changes to their aircraft fleet mix by introducing more fuel-efficient aircraft types for their long-haul operations (e.g. A350 and B787).

While some of the grounded aircraft types might yet [re-appear as traffic recovers](#), the fleet mix rationalisation shown here looks like a combination of adjusting to permanently-changed market conditions as well as a move towards more sustainable operations. And as the summer recovery progresses, there are further improvements to come, for example as more B737 MAX arrive.

Technical Bits: The statistics shown are for flights in the EUROCONTROL Network Manager area, so Europe in a wide sense as well as some neighbouring States. The airline fleet mix is from an operational perspective and includes wet-leased aircraft types and affiliated companies.

