

The CANSO column

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SES II – the outcome is positive

The European institutions, European Commission, European Parliament and Council of Ministers hope to reach a political agreement on the Single European Sky package at the end of March 2009.

I think that European ANSPs can be satisfied with the outcome. Indeed the European office of CANSO has been active, under the guidance of the European CANSO CEO Committee, to achieve a more balanced package. Another good outcome is that the regulation is of sufficiently high level to permit further detailed discussions on the Implementing Rules, leaving us with more room for flexibility.

This good result was due to the continued contacts of CANSO directly, and of CANSO members individually, with officials of the European Commission and members of the European Parliament on one side and with State officials on the other. Together we have shown that Air Navigation Service Providers can influence rulemaking if they are capable of explaining appropriately why they do not support certain specific proposals. The good thing about CANSO's work in Europe is that we always have joint delegations, with representatives of the trade association and the companies together. This is one of the strengths that has led to good results.

FABs – real progress and quick wins

ANSPs continually have to express to political decision-makers that implementation of FABs takes time because it requires major institutional agreements by States. This is sometimes interpreted as a way to slow down the process by ANSPs. However, the evidence is quite the opposite. Despite the difficult institutional environment, the ANSPs have used the discussions to launch a very important debate looking for synergies and even integrated activities in some cases. Quick wins are being searched for and found. For example:

- Introduction of shorter flights as soon as possible; this has been done in Scandinavia, in the Danube FAB, in the FAB Europe Central, and also in the Mediterranean area. This will permit increased flight efficiency, with environmental improvement (fuel burn, CO₂ etc) and direct cost savings for airspace users;
- Common route and airspace planning – some of the changes are possible in the short term, while others require international agreements to be implemented (for example when military cross-border activities are involved)
- Common strategy and network planning for the technical and operational systems; mainly this coordination has a long term effect, because existing systems have different life cycles and it would not be cost effective to replace them earlier than necessary. What is important is that the FAB discussions create convergence between ANSPs; this will finally end up in lower costs for airspace users.
- Major discussions are taking place for a single unit rate per FAB by aligning the economic subjects between the different ANSPs involved.

In such a reorganisation process some go quicker than others, some are more radical in their proceedings, but what is important is that the sector as a whole has fundamentally changed since the start of Single European Sky, becoming more performance-oriented and customer-focused organisations. Also, the whole ATM sector has become more obviously united and cooperative. This is probably the cultural change that the Single European Sky framework has delivered.