EUROCONTROL UPDATE

The Pan European Network Service is moving ahead
The Brussels-based European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation Organisation (EUROCONTROL) announced early in February that in the year since it was signed, PENS – the Pan European Network Services Services – initiative has achieved two major milestones.

EUROCONTROL has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs and respecting the environment.

PENS is the joint Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) /EUROCONTROL-led initiative which aims to provide a common interoperability programme (IP)-based network service across the European region for both voice and data communications for Air Traffic Management (ATM).

The first milestone, reached at the end of the first year of the PENS contract with air transport IT provider SITA, has seen all European Air Database (EAD) services migrated from a dedicated IP network to PENS. This involved migrating 29 customer sites, in addition to migrating the IT and operational sites (Vienna, Madrid and Frankfurt). Consequently PENS is now fully operational, carrying data for both Central Flow Management Unit (CFMU) and European AIS* Database (EAD) applications. The second important milestone achieved at the end of 2010 was the agreement to create a dedicated PENS infrastructure to support the validation of Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR).

The so-called SESAR VPN (Virtual Private Networks) will be part of the air navigation service providers’ backbone on PENS. It will be implemented during the first quarter of 2011 and has as its objective to validate the new applications currently developed by the SESAR partners. The initial use of this VPN will be for the work packages related to the System Wide Information Management (SWIM) infrastructure. In addition, several other SESAR work packages have identified the need to use the same validation infrastructure, thus providing not only economies of scale and cost effective solutions, but also a validation infrastructure identical to the one which will be used operationally.
“These steps emphasize the successful common work of air navigation service providers and EUROCONTROL, and demonstrate how serious we are about making PENS a true pan-European network which can become the central element in the future technical infrastructure for ATM in Europe: the SWIM backbone,” said Jacky Pouzet, Head of Communication and Frequency Co-ordination Unit of EUROCONTROL.

“PENS constitute a major achievement towards the modernisation and rationalisation of the European ATM infrastructure” said Mr Rafael de Reyna Zaballa, Head of International Cooperation and Chairman of the PENS Steering Group, underlining the benefit that PENS will bring to the ANSPs.

**Aviation in Europe takes off again**

In 2010, aviation in Europe pulled out of the economic downturn and began to climb again. The total number of flights in Europe in 2010 was 9.49 million, an increase of 0.8% compared to 2009. Growth was driven mainly by low-cost carriers, which saw an increase of 6.9% compared to 2009, though this slowed markedly at the end of the year.

Business aviation also contributed strongly to growth, bouncing back from 2009 with an increase of 5.5%. Flight growth was concentrated in a few States: Turkey, Italy, Ukraine and Germany were the States adding most traffic to the European network. The economic crisis and a series of general strikes reduced traffic in Greece overall; and the UK and Ireland both ended the year with fewer flights than the already reduced levels of 2009. Russia was a clear source of growth this year, and indeed for one month during the Summer passed the US as the main external partner for Europe.

In 2010, the delays increased from an average of 1.6 minutes per flight in 2009 to 2.7 minutes per flight in 2010. 2010 also saw significant flight cancellations as a result of weather, the ash clouds, strikes and capacity shortages. An estimated 175,000 scheduled flights were cancelled during the year. Even if the effects of the ash-cloud are removed, this is 2.5 times as many cancellations as in 2009.

“In 2010 we already saw the beginnings of growth and in 2011, we expect further increase of at least 3.6% in the number of flights across Europe. This
will come from the bounce-back from the ash-cloud, but also as airlines continue to search for the right level of capacity to meet the post-economic crisis demand”, said David Marsh, Head of Forecasting at EUROCONTROL. He concluded, “The upside and downside risks to the forecast are probably in balance across Europe as a whole, but between individual States, we will continue to see strong divergence.”

These forecasts are actively used to plan the necessary and most beneficial actions in supporting the network to reduce delays and improve the capacity to achieve the EU performance targets.

About EUROCONTROL
EUROCONTROL has 39 Member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

On 8th October 2002, the Member States and the European Community signed a Protocol on the Accession of the European Community to the revised EUROCONTROL Convention. Pending its entry into force after ratification by all Parties, certain provisions of the Protocol are already being provisionally applied.

*AIS = Aeronautical Information System*