

Research Workshop

Climate change and the role of air traffic control – turning new scientific evidence into policies, rules and operations

27 September 2021; Around 100 participants from Europe attended the research workshop “Climate change and the role of air traffic control” co-organized by Baltic FAB, FABEC and the German Aviation Research Society (GARS), hosted by the Vilnius Technical University in Lithuania. The event brought together high-level representatives of academic research institutes, air navigation service providers, regulators and other key stakeholders to discuss climate change and its impact on air traffic control (ATC) and, in parallel, ATC’s role in reducing aviation’s impact on global warming.

The event was opened by Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, who underlined the Commission’s commitment to reaching the target of a climate neutral European Union by 2050. Then the results of new scientific research into aviation-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) and non-CO₂ emissions were outlined and discussed. Senior representatives from research agencies such as the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) and the Royal Netherlands Aerospace Centre (NLR), along with experts from Eurocontrol, Hungarocontrol, DFS and national governments who presented different stakeholder views on how to align scientific evidence with policies, regulations and operational procedures. Other important contributions came from representatives of the EC, PRB, economic and industrial think-tanks, academic institutes and consultancy companies.

It became clear from the discussions that new tools would be needed to more fully understand the impact of aircraft operations on greenhouse-gas formation and the most effective mitigation methods. New artificial intelligence and machine learning based analysis will give us a clearer picture of the impact of aviation operations on the environment – but the effectiveness of mitigation methods would depend on further research and all stakeholders working more closely together.

The airspace of the six FABEC States of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland is one of the busiest and most complex in the world. The majority of major European airports, major civil airways and military training areas are located in this area. FABEC airspace covers 1.7 million km² and handles over 55% of European air traffic. In 2020, FABEC won the ATM Environment Award for the second consecutive year.

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