

FIRST TO INTRODUCE THE VIRTUAL CENTRE MODEL HANDLE THE GROWING AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC WITH HIGHER EFFICIENCY

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Switzerland's Virtual Centre Programme (VCP) is currently at stage 2 – or tranche 2 (VCT2). VCP is driven by the ambition of the European Commission to create a Single European Sky (SES). This will bring greater efficiency in managing the European airspace, one of the busiest and most complex in the world. The development and implementation of the SES initiative is currently addressed through the SESAR programme. VCP is Switzerland's pioneering contribution to SESAR. VCT2 is focusing on 4D Trajectories and Free Route Airspace (FRA) with the corresponding Flight Data Management (FDM) as the basis to modernize and simplify the current system landscape. A lot of knowledge gathered or experienced since last year will be crucial for defining the way ahead. James Stucki, former air traffic controller for 12 years, is able to judge procedures and installations not only from a theoretical, but also from a practical point of view.

SKYGUIDE What is new in VCT2 and which priorities have been set?

JAMES STUCKI The new route handling concept has the top priority. We want to deploy it first in the Eastern Area Control Centre (ACC) and then later in the Western ACC. This concept is needed because in European airspace, it has been decided to introduce a more open way to proceed: Free Route Airspace (FRA) is the aim. It is necessary to handle the growing amount of traffic with more flexibility for airline customers.

Why do you intend to deploy the route handling concept first in the East and then in the West?

JS Because FDP-Z (flight data processing system in Zurich, introduced in 2007) is much easier to split into different services. This allows us to iteratively re-use parts of the existing system instead of having to deploy the new one in one block and with one big bang.

We understand that the involvement of Operations (OPS) in VCT2 creates some difficulties. What are the operational challenges?

JS The involvement of OPS personnel in VCT2 is constrained by the fact that we first have to guarantee safe and smooth operations each and every day before getting involved in other activities. But thanks to Scaled Agile framework and the regularity of Programme Increment (PI), events communication between the various development teams is improving and we get a better overview on how to organize OPS experts: we now plan to create a new OPS Core Team which will drive the needs for VCT2 from an OPS point of view.

Why do OPS bring so many new features to VCT2?

JS We need to update some features but also to bring some new ones in order to be able to keep or even improve the capacity when working with Direct Route Airspace (DRA, the first step towards FRA) and FRA and also with combined ACC sectors LM67 (38'000 feet and above). Otherwise, with bigger sectors and new coordination points, the capacity would decrease by putting us in a situation we have not experienced before.



PROJECT FTE (FULL TIME EQUIVALENT) OPS

“ We will gather a lot of knowledge, which in turn will help us to position ourselves in the European landscape ”

In the corridors of skyguide, one can often hear that VC is crucial for the survival of the company, which is under financial pressure. What does VC signify for skyguide's future?

■ By being the first Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) to introduce the Virtual Centre, we prove that combining centres into one is not the only way to bring efficiency. Additionally, we will gather a lot of knowledge, which in turn will help us to position ourselves in the European landscape, and maybe one day be able to sell our knowledge to other providers. ■

