

2010 first-half traffic results: first signs of an upturn, despite a slight overall volume decline

Geneva, 6 August 2010. Skyguide managed and monitored 555 603 civil flights in its airspace in the first six months of 2010, some 1.0% fewer than in the same period last year. June brought clear signs of an upturn in traffic levels. The volumes handled showed differing developments in the various airspace sectors. As a result, despite the overall fall in traffic volumes, skyguide suffered a deterioration in its punctuality performance.

First-half traffic trends

After further declines in traffic volumes in January and February 2010, March brought the first year-on-year increase in monthly traffic, with a rise of 2.2%. April and May flight volumes were severely reduced by the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland. All in all, some 16 400 IFR flights¹ were cancelled or rerouted around Swiss airspace because of the resulting ash cloud. For June skyguide posted a 3.7% increase in total traffic volumes compared to the same month last year – a sign that a recovery in the air transport sector is slowly getting under way.

IFR flights handled in the first half of 2010:

	January-June 2010	January-June 2009	Change
IFR flights	555 603	561 379	- 1.0%
of which en-route	333 653	342 008	- 2.4%

The volume of en-route traffic using skyguide's airspace in the first half of 2010 was a 2.4% decline on the prior-year period. The reduction is attributable primarily to adverse weather conditions, strike actions and the volcanic ash cloud. For its approach and departure activities, by contrast, skyguide reports a 1.2% increase in its first-half traffic volumes.

The peak day of 2010 to date was 25 June, when 3 854 flights were handled. This is substantially more than the peak day in the prior-year period: 29 May 2009, when 3 737 flights were handled.

Stronger peak-time demand

Traffic volumes showed differing trends in the various airspace sectors under skyguide's control. In certain sectors demand sometimes exceeded the capacity available at peak times, with a corresponding effect on punctuality². All in all, 19.3%

¹ IFR or "instrument flight rules" flights are performed in controlled airspace and require air traffic management services to ensure their safe and efficient operation.

² To ensure safe traffic handling, a maximum number of flights per hour is assigned to each airspace sector. If the number of flights expected to use a particular sector exceeds the capacity assigned to it, the departure times of certain of these flights will be deferred, in consultation with Eurocontrol's Central Flow Management Unit. It is this deferment that causes a delay.

more flights suffered delays in the first six months of 2010 than had done so in the prior-year period.

The situation was exacerbated by unusually poor weather conditions which occasionally prompted further capacity reductions, and by the adoption in June of a new upper airspace structure for Eastern Switzerland. As is customary with any major new developments in the air traffic services field, capacity was initially reduced here as a safety precaution, and was only gradually restored. In the medium term, however, as a result of the new upper airspace structure, skyguide will be able to offer more capacity, and will thus be better equipped to accommodate future traffic growth without resulting delays. First positive signs are already visible.

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Skyguide is responsible for providing air navigation services within Swiss airspace and in the airspace of certain adjoining regions in neighbouring countries. The company guides the civil and military aircraft entrusted to its care – around 3 150 flights a day or 1.15 million a year – through some of the busiest and most complex airspace in Europe. Skyguide is a non-profit limited company which has its head office in Geneva. The majority of its shares are held by the Swiss Confederation. The company generated annual operating revenue of over CHF 362 million for 2009, and employs some 1 400 people at 14 locations in Switzerland. Skyguide is also a member, together with its sister organisations in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, of the FABEC initiative to create a common functional airspace block that will bring greater efficiency to Central Europe's air traffic management services and activities.
