

## **Skyguide's 2013: very high punctuality against a further decline in air traffic volumes**

**Geneva, 28 January 2014.** Skyguide again achieved very high punctuality levels last year. Switzerland's air navigation services provider handled 96.5% of all the year's flights without delays. The total volume of air traffic using the airspace managed by skyguide in 2013 was 2.5% down on the prior-year period. Geneva Airport saw a 1.6% fall in its traffic volume, while traffic at Zurich Airport was down 2.4%. The declines are attributable to the difficult economic situation, high oil prices and increased seat load factors.

### **Punctuality consistently high**

With 96.5% of all flights handled without delays, skyguide kept its punctuality performance consistently high throughout 2013. Despite the adverse weather conditions experienced, punctuality for the year was only 0.2 percentage points below its 2012 equivalent. For the en-route traffic handled by skyguide in 2013 (i.e. flights using Swiss airspace but not taking off or landing in Switzerland), the average delay per flight amounted to a mere 0.13 minutes.

The delays which were incurred were attributable to short-term capacity shortages (60%), weather conditions (23%), unforeseeable temporary personnel shortages (8%), maintenance work (5%), the adoption of new procedures (3%) and military activities (1%).

The level of the delays incurred by the en-route traffic handled by skyguide in 2013 was well below the benchmark set by Eurocontrol for achieving FABEC's performance objectives. This satisfying development is also due to the introduction of new technical control systems which enabled skyguide to increase its air traffic control capacity.

### **Weather and capacities cause airport delays**

Geneva Airport saw a substantial 53.2% increase in its delays in 2013, but the delays attributable to the air navigation services amounted to only an average of 0.37 minutes per flight.

Delays at Zurich Airport were also up on 2012, but only by 2.4%. The delays attributable to skyguide amounted to an average of 0.01 minutes per flight.

### **Lower traffic volumes: sizeable growth only in the low-cost segment**

Once again, Europe's weak economy depressed annual air traffic volumes. Skyguide handled 1.14 million IFR<sup>1</sup> flights in 2013, a 2.5% decline on the 1.17 million of the prior-year period. En-route traffic volumes declined by 2.6%. The low-cost-carrier segment posted a tangible 7.0% increase in its flight volumes, while the traditional airlines, business flyers, charter services and the cargo sector all saw their flight numbers decline, substantially so in some cases (by 5.7%, 1.3%, 12.1% and 3.6% respectively).

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

### IFR flights handled in 2013:

	2013	2012	Change
Total IFR flights	1,141,729	1,171,556	- 2.5%
of which en-route traffic	672,165	690,253	- 2.6%

Skyguide handled an average of 3,128 flights a day in 2013. The peak traffic day was 28 June, with 3,900 flights. (By comparison, skyguide's busiest year in traffic volume terms was 2008, with an average of 3,387 flights a day, while its busiest-ever day was 27 June 2008 with 4,153 flights.)

### Recent traffic trends differ strongly from EC projections

Skyguide's traffic figures for 2013 confirm a longer-term downward trend in Europe as a whole and particularly within Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC), of which Switzerland is a member. The lower traffic volumes recorded last year are not a temporary dip: they are part of a constant decline which has prevailed since 2007.

It is against this general traffic trend that the 29 January "Action Day" called for by ATCEUC (Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination) should be seen. In taking this action, which may also extend to strikes in some of the countries involved, the unions are protesting against the performance targets specified under the Single European Sky (SES) programme. The unions' key issue here is that the targets concerned are based on traffic projections dating from 2005. These projections envisaged air traffic volumes increasing by 50% between then and 2018. But the reality has been the opposite in the intervening years.

In view of this, skyguide urges the European Commission to revise its now-outdated traffic growth projections and realign its SES performance targets to recent traffic trends. At the same time, the opportunity should also be taken to balance these targets more, and to ensure that they pay due regard to Europe's regional peculiarities.

Switzerland's air traffic controllers will not be striking on 29 January. They will be performing their work in due accordance with their mandate and responsibilities, to ensure the safe and efficient management of the air traffic in their care. So the flights handled by skyguide should not be subject to any restrictions, and should be able to operate as scheduled.

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Skyguide is responsible for providing air navigation services in Switzerland and in certain parts of neighbouring countries. With its workforce of 1,400 employees who are active at 14 locations in Switzerland, skyguide safely and reliably guides over 3,100 civil and military flights a day – or 1.1 million a year – through the busiest and most complex airspace in Europe. Skyguide is committed to continuous improvement, targeted innovation and creative collaboration. Together with its partner organizations in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, skyguide is a member of the FABEC alliance to manage Central European airspace. Skyguide is a non-profit limited company, the majority of whose shares are held by the Swiss Confederation. Its head office is in Geneva.

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