

Skyguide's 2015: consistently high punctuality despite traffic levels boosted by low oil prices and a stronger Eurozone economy

Geneva, 11 February 2016. Skyguide, Switzerland's air navigation services provider, saw a 1.8% rise last year in its annual air traffic volumes. En-route traffic witnessed 2.7% growth, while the traffic to and from Switzerland's airports grew by a more modest 0.4%. Skyguide handled a total of 1.18 million flights in 2015, some 21,000 more than the previous year. En-route punctuality was further improved, with a 19% decline in delays to an average of just four seconds per flight. Delays to arriving and departing traffic increased by 13%.

The higher traffic volumes were attributable to two economic factors: oil prices, which reached historic lows in the course of the year (a trend that offset the strength of the US dollar), and the economic growth in the Eurozone, which was stronger than expected. This boosted passenger demand, and compensated for the less favourable effects of a weaker Chinese economy.

Punctuality maintained at very high levels

Once again, skyguide achieved very high punctuality levels for the year. Some 96.8% of all flights were handled without delays, a 0.1-percentage-point improvement on 2014.

The average delay to en-route flights was just 0.07 minutes or four seconds per flight. The delays that did occur were attributable primarily to short-term capacity shortages (43%), adverse weather conditions (36%), the adoption of the Stripless Step 3 system (10%), unforeseeable temporary personnel shortages (8%) and system maintenance work (3%).

Increased delays at Zurich and Geneva

Skyguide also delivered a strong punctuality performance at Switzerland's main international airports. Delays did increase overall at Geneva, by 23.3%. But the delays influenceable by skyguide here averaged only 0.13 minutes (just under eight seconds) per flight. Most of the Geneva delays were attributable to adverse weather (65%), insufficient runway capacity (21%), personnel shortages (9%), inadequate approach capacity (3%) and an accident in the airport's vicinity (1%).

Delays at Zurich Airport were up 10.6%. Here too, though, only a very small proportion of them were attributable to skyguide. These averaged 0.08 minutes or just under five seconds per flight. The delays at Zurich were largely the result of adverse weather conditions (44%), insufficient runway capacity (36%), environmental constraints (14%), inadequate approach capacity (4%), a malfunction of the instrument landing system (1%) and the introduction of new systems (1%).

Much higher cargo volumes but a slump in charter traffic

The monthly volumes of instrument flight rules (IFR) traffic handled by skyguide generally rose by between 1.5% and 2.0% throughout the year, with a particular peak in January (+2.3%) and a pronounced growth dip in March (+1.1%). Annual IFR traffic volume was 1.8% up on 2014, exceeding the February 2015 STATFOR projection of +1.4%.

While air cargo traffic volumes were weak in Europe as a whole, cargo flight numbers for Switzerland saw an increase of 6.5%. The low-cost carriers continued to grow, with their flight volumes for the year up 3.0%, while the traditional airlines raised their flight numbers by 1.5%. The charter sector, by contrast, suffered a steep 12.7% decline; and business aviation volumes were also down 2.5%.

Instrument flight rules¹ flights handled in 2015:

	2015	2014	Change
Total IFR flights	1 177 365	1 156 583	+1.8%
of which en-route traffic	703 037	684 372	+2.7%

Skyguide handled an average of 3 225 flights a day in 2015. The peak traffic day was 28 August, with 4,041 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.)

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Skyguide is responsible for providing air navigation services in Switzerland and in certain adjacent parts of neighbouring countries. With its workforce of some 1 500 employees who are active at 14 locations in Switzerland, skyguide safely and reliably guides some 1.2 million civil and military flights a year through the busiest and most complex airspace in Europe.

Skyguide is well integrated into the international air navigation services community and, with its innovative and customer-minded solutions, helps enhance Switzerland's appeal as a place to live, work and do business. The company is majority-owned by the Swiss Confederation, and is headquartered in Geneva.

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