

White spot cleared on Europe's map of aviation

Hungarian Air Navigation Services provide air navigation services in the upper airspace over Kosovo

Air traffic in the re-opened airspace over Kosovo after 15 years has significantly changed the traffic flow in the European airspace. Supported by HungaroControl's multiple cross border, remote operations on NATO mandate, the airspace has reached its full capacity. Hungarian and international participants of the re-opening project celebrated the success of the project with a gala event at the Budapest headquarters of the Hungarian air navigation services provider, technical implementer of the project and inaugurated the Kosovo Park.

HungaroControl provides services from a distance of approximately 700kms away from the upper airspace over Kosovo¹, from its world class air traffic control centre in Budapest. In the coordination of NATO and the support of EUROCONTROL a wide international cooperation of regional stakeholders was developed in order to elaborate all the operational and technological elements of remote control. Multiple cross border operations were realised with the introduction of unique and innovative solutions between non-neighbouring countries. The first flight, SWR257 (Tel-Aviv-Zurich) left the re-opened airspace at 6:53AM on 3rd April, 2014 using one of the designated routes.

As the host of the inauguration of the Kosovo Park commemorating this significant event of European air traffic, **Mr Miklós Seszták**, Minister of National Development emphasised that *"re-opening the upper airspace over Kosovo represents both a success in diplomacy and a major professional and technical achievement. It is unprecedented in the history of European civil aviation that a country endeavours to control air traffic over a non-adjacent area. Thanks to the re-opening of this airspace, aviation has become faster, less expensive and more environmentally friendly in the region and thus in Europe as well. Hungary plays an active role in making air traffic in Europe more efficient - the accessibility of the five air routes may result in a perceptible improvement in the entire network. Also, the Kosovo project has demonstrated that the state can be a good owner and thus state-owned companies can also operate at a world-class level, earning international recognition."*

Mr Csaba Hende, Minister of Defence stressed, *"Let's not forget that security – just like aviation – cannot just be the concern for a single nation, it is the common cause for several nations. It is a common cause, in which everybody needs to fulfil their own task, do their own part to ensure that the result is for the common benefit. I want you to know that everybody can count on Hungary in matters of peace and security: our allies, our old friends and every well-meaning person."*

"Multinational regional cooperation has been a key success factor for this project. I was quite impressed with the constructive approach and professionalism displayed by HungaroControl, all the neighbouring nations and air navigation service providers who have contributed toward the successful re-opening of the airspace over Kosovo." – stated **Mr Patrick Auroy**, NATO Assistant Secretary General.

1. In the altitude of FL (Flight Level) 205-660

„EUROCONTROL worked from the very beginning with NATO in establishing the appropriate steps towards the opening of the KFOR sector. A list of actions required was identified and followed together with all the partners involved. The opening of the KFOR sector represents a major step towards the normalisation of the European network in areas where long standing issues were still present. EUROCONTROL expects that the airspace users will fully make use of this change that makes routes between North-West Europe and South-East Europe much shorter.” – highlighted **Mr Joe Sultana**, Director Network Management in EUROCONTROL.

“As long haul flights are especially sensitive to Jetstream patterns, having greater access to airspace gives airlines the option to plan flights along the most efficient path. This has a positive impact on reducing fuel burn and reducing the impact on our environment. Improved flexibility in the use of airspace is advantageous to all. This reduces artificial constraints on air traffic flows which, in turn, has a positive effect on efficiency, capacity and safety. We look forward to similar increased access to upper airspace in other parts of the world and encourage States and ANSPs to follow this example set by the North Atlantic Council and HungaroControl.” – said **Ms Anca Apahidean**, IATA Area Manager Eastern Europe.

“Re-opening the upper airspace over Kosovo may significantly reduce operating costs for airlines. This is a major achievement at a time when the European Commission is actively working on making air traffic control more cost-effective. I hope that more and more airlines will take advantage of cost savings due to shorter routes. This project also proves that a comparatively small air navigation service provider active in technological innovation may be just as valuable and efficient a partner as its larger peers. And it also proves the significance of unceasing development in infrastructure and technical standards, innovation and training, as well as operational efficiency. All the things HungaroControl has focused on during the past four years.” – emphasised **Mr Kornél Szepessy**, CEO of HungaroControl in his speech at the gala event.

The re-opening of the airspace will lead to shorter flight routes in the region and thus generate significant savings for airspace users in terms of flight efficiency. It is estimated that HungaroControl shall provide services to some 180,000 flights annually that will fly 370,000 less nautical miles (ca. 685,000 km), resulting in reduced operating costs of € 18 million annually, approximately 24,000 tons less fuel burned and CO₂ emissions reduced by 75,000 tons based on EUROCONTROL data. Beyond these benefits, the project provides excellent opportunities for operational and technological experience, better utilisation of capacities and their international synchronization and facilitates the realisation of Single Sky Europe (SES) program.