



The Single European Sky regulatory framework, issued in order to obtain a more efficient, highly integrated and flexible management of the airspace has, as a relevant milestone, the implementation of Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs) by the EU Member States.

A Functional Airspace Block is a portion of airspace where the air traffic is managed regardless of existing national boundaries, with operational and technical requirements aimed at simplifying and harmonizing air traffic management limiting costs, improving operational capacity and at the same time, reducing the environmental impact of operations.

The BLUE MED FAB Project, promoted and coordinated by ENAV S.p.A. with the financial contribution of the European Commission, is one of the most significant FAB at European level and aims at the creation of a FAB over the central/south-eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, with the active involvement of non-EU states.

Partners of the project are the EU Member States of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, with the participation of Albania, Tunisia and Egypt. Part of the project are also the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Lebanon with an observer role, with additional expression of interest from non-EU countries. Project activities are developed for Italy thanks to the contribution of the Italian Air Force and ENAC, in accordance with the relevant guidelines from the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transports.

The BLUE MED initiative is a three phase Project:

The **"Feasibility Study"** (2007-2008), closed in 2008 with the Conference of the BLUE MED Ministers of Transport, allowed to identify potential benefits as well as the operational, technical and economic feasibility of the FAB.

The Feasibility Study allowed also to demonstrate the importance of the establishment of a FAB over the central/south-eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, a region with a continuous growth of traffic demand and a primary interest as a major interface of Europe from and towards Africa and the Middle-East.

The **"Definition Phase"** (2009-2011) is actually ongoing. All participating States are working on the new and optimal operational scenario to be progressively implemented within the BLUE MED FAB as well as on the identification of the technical, regulatory, safety/security details showing the expected economic results, thus proving how the FAB implementation will allow reduction of air navigation service charges, with relevant benefits for air transport operators.

Within the Definition Phase of BLUE MED detailed studies are being developed on air traffic flows identified over the BLUE MED area, for a continuous route network improvement and more efficient solutions tailored on the harmonization requirements from different actors involved in the Air Navigation environment.

A relevant aspect of the Definition Phase is the technical analysis aiming at identifying, in coordination with SESAR, new functional requirements of communication, navigation and surveillance systems, with focus on the interoperability requirements of ATM systems in use within the Area Control Centres of the involved countries for the establishment of the "Virtual Centre", an overall integrated system allowing to achieve FAB's objectives taking into consideration requirements from all the concerned partners.

The **"Implementation Phase"** (2012+) will start within 2012. This phase will progressively determine a paramount shift in the organization of air navigation services over the Mediterranean basin, bringing competition advantages in the area and benefits for the users in terms of an enhanced efficiency of the service, reduction of delays and cost containment, with a lower environmental impact of operations.



