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# Meeting the Objectives<sup>1</sup>



To meet the objectives of balancing demand and capacity, keeping delays to a minimum and avoiding congestion, bottlenecks and overload, the CFMU undertakes flow management in three phases. Each flight will usually have been subjected to these phases, prior to being handled operationally by ATC.

- ✍ **Strategic ATFCM** activity takes place during the period from several months until a few days before a flight. During this phase, comparison is made between the expected air traffic demand and the potential ATC capacity. Objectives are set for each ATC unit in order for them to provide the required capacity. These objectives are monthly reviewed in order to minimise the impact of the missing capacity on the airspace users. In parallel, an assessment of the number and routings of flights, which aircraft operators are planning, enables the CFMU to prepare a routing scheme, which is a structure of mandatory European air routes balancing the air traffic flows in order to ensure maximum use of the airspace and minimise delays.
- ✍ **Pre-tactical ATFCM** is action taken during the few days before the day of operation. Based on the traffic forecasts, the information received from the Flow Management positions at every ATC centre in Europe and the CFMU statistical data, the ATFM Notification Message (ANM) for the next day is prepared. The ANM defines the tactical plan for the next (operational) day and informs Aircraft Operators (AOs) and ATC units about the ATFCM measures that will be in force in European airspace on the following day. The purpose of these measures is not to restrict but to manage the flow of traffic in a way that minimises delay and maximises the use of the entire airspace.
- ✍ **Tactical ATFCM** is the work carried out on the current operational day. Flights taking place on that day receive the benefit of ATFCM, which includes the allocation of individual aircraft departure times, re-routings to avoid bottlenecks and alternative flight profiles to maximise efficiency.

As with any other commodity, airspace is a valuable resource, particularly when subject to high traffic demand. Since airspace is a fixed volume, its management is a vital activity to satisfy the needs of the aircraft operators in the most efficient and equitable manner. However, the ebb and flow of economic activity and the surge in traffic demand

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<sup>1</sup> Adaptado de [http://www.cfm.eurocontrol.be/cfmu/public/standard\\_page/about\\_meetobjectives.html](http://www.cfm.eurocontrol.be/cfmu/public/standard_page/about_meetobjectives.html)

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during certain periods, mean that the available Air Traffic Control (ATC) capacity needs a smoothing mechanism to avoid overloads and to maximise the use of the airspace. This 'mechanism' is know as Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFCM) and the dual objectives - to avoid overloads and to ensure that capacity is fully exploited, represent the core ATFCM activities. Air Traffic Flow and Capacity Management is provided within Europe by the Central Flow Management Unit (CFMU) which is operated by EUROCONTROL for the benefit of all airspace users, including of course, the travelling public.