

# Eurocontrol FL adherence days

## Background





Over the last few years, Eurocontrol has been working with industry partners on strategies to optimise the available capacity in its airspace and improve the constancy of capacity delivery across the network. In its analysis of capacity it has identified three factors as key “capacity consumers”:

- ▶ Vertical deviations (from the requested flight level – RFL)
- ▶ Time shift (departures outside EOB/CTOT tolerances)
- ▶ Horizontal deviations (from the planned trajectory)




In order to assess the impact that restricting deviations from RFL would have on traffic flow rates, Eurocontrol carried out local trials in the areas controlled by the Karlsruhe and Maastricht UACs in 2009 and January of this year. Eurocontrol now plans to extend this to a system wide test on the 29th & 30th of September. According to Eurocontrol its *Flight Level Adherence Days* will help to optimise available capacity and reduce system overloads. While the trial is being operated ATC centres are being told not to allocate cruise altitudes other than that which has been entered as the RFL within field 15 of the ICAO flight plan form. Furthermore crews are asked not to request flight levels other than the RFL except in the event of weather avoidance or as part of an emergency procedure.

*IFALPA's view is that the programme is designed primarily as a capacity enhancement exercise and reminds all concerned, particularly Pilots in command, operating in the designated airspace during the trial that safety and operational considerations must override airspace management goals.*

## What to expect

-  The *Flight Level Adherence Days* will take place between 00:00 on 29 September and 23:59 on 30 September.
-  Confirmation of the trial will be issued via NOTAM and or Temporary Operating Instructions (TOI) or both (according to Eurocontrol 78% of ANSPs in the States covered by the trial have issued either NOTAMs or TOIs relating to the trial).
-  When leaving a radar controlled environment and entering an area where procedural control is used (for example the North Atlantic tracks). ACCs may still adjust FLs prior to entry in order to achieve the optimum flight profile and use of capacity.
-  No new phraseology is required for the trial.

## What not to expect

-  The ACC should not request your RFL on first contact.
-  The ACC should not offer a FL that is not in your Flight Plan.
-  The ACC will not grant requests for a higher FL than your RFL (unless weather or other circumstances make a FL change a necessity).

If you do have to deviate from the RFL you should not expect to be re-cleared to return to the RFL unless capacity constraints down route require it.

## Recommendations

If your company routinely depends on the crew to define the optimum speed and level requests and does not file a specific flight plan for every flight (the so called “canned flight plan”) it is imperative to be aware of contingencies and carry the appropriate fuel. This trial is primarily designed to enhance capacity and crews should remember that safety and operational considerations must take precedence over the trial’s goals. Make sure the Pilot perspective is heard. If you have any problems during the trial be sure to report your findings before 7 October via the Eurocontrol website: [www.adherencedays.eu](http://www.adherencedays.eu)

*IFALPA provides this data for information only, In all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures.*

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