

Eurocontrol agrees on central European unit

JULIAN MOXON/PARIS

EUROCONTROL has agreed on the basic details for the creation of a common centre for the control of upper airspace in Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and northern Italy.

Legal, operational and financial principles for the Central European Air Traffic Services (CEATS) centre have been settled, with final agreement expected this year. The agreement is a major step in the creation of CEATS, although important political details, such as which country will

host the centre, have to be settled.

Other difficulties also remain to be resolved. Some states are pressing for other neighbouring countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, to be included in CEATS. A further problem is Italy's continued non-membership of Eurocontrol, although this is expected to be resolved early in 1995. Spain, Slovenia and Romania have also been accepted for membership.

Air-traffic delays in the Eurocontrol area increased during 1994 by 7.8% over 1993, mainly because of the strikes of controllers in southern France during the summer. A 5% increase in

traffic put extra pressure on a system which Eurocontrol describes as "already hard-pressed".

The organisation says that the introduction of the central flow-management system in May 1995 "...will go a long way towards relieving the strain".

Progress with the European Air Traffic Control Harmonisation and Integration Programme (EATCHIP) was such that areas not covered by radar were reduced by more than 11% in 1994, leaving virtually no areas in Europe uncovered, while areas with more than single radar coverage have increased by 8%. □

Heathrow hopes for 80 million passengers

LONDON HEATHROW Airport is gearing up for a 60% passenger-traffic increase as its owner BAA fires the first shots in the political war for clearance to build a fifth terminal (T5).

The public inquiry into the case for T5 starts in May. If BAA's case is defeated, Heathrow's capacity will peak not far above the 51 million it was expected to handle in 1994.

By 2016, if the full development is cleared, the completed T5 will have added 30 million to the airport's passenger-handling capacity, says BAA.

BAA's projections show that, compared with the 393,000 passenger flights handled in 1993, Heathrow passenger-aircraft movements without T5 would grow to 417,000 by 2016 and with T5 would rise to 453,000. BAA contrasts the projected 60% rise in passengers handled with the 8% rise in the number of aircraft movements.

This goal would be achieved by an increase in the average size of aircraft being operated on the present runways.

■ The UK Department of Transport's (DTP's) present London

Heathrow Airport night-flying limitations hybrid system, combining a seasonal-movements maximum with a "noise points" system, approved in July 1993, has suffered a judicial setback.

The High Court, on a technicality, has ruled that the decision to proceed was illegal. The court has, however, ruled that the system may continue as planned for the UK winter season while an alternative is being sought.

The DTP is considering several courses of action, including a return to the consultative process. □



No rest for BAA, either

Estonian Air faces crisis

NEAR-BANKRUPT carrier Estonian Air's board of directors has been sacked by transport minister Andi Meister and replaced with a new board.

The carrier has made an operating profit of about 1 million Kroons (\$80,000) over the past ten months, but this amount is far short of the earnings needed to service its debts.

Managing director Anti Oidsalu has issued an ultimatum to the Government to declare its intentions toward the airline, stating that it would have to sack him before dissolving the company. □

Peña calls for safety summit

US TRANSPORTATION Secretary Federico Peña is promising an industry/Government safety summit and an airline-industry safety audit.

The yet-unscheduled meeting will be chaired by Federal Aviation Administrator David Hinson and will include senior airline management, chief pilots, aircraft manufacturers and FAA/DoT officials. □

See News Analysis, P21.

Carib Express nears launch

CARIBBEAN START-UP carrier Carib Express has received a ECU4 million (\$4.8 million) loan from the European Development Bank and plans to begin operations in February. It is negotiating with British Aerospace Asset Management Organisation for three BAe 146s.

Meanwhile, the Governments of St Kitts Nevis and Monserrat, have expressed interest in joining the five Caribbean governments backing the regional carrier.

Carib is 70.1%-owned by local financial group Trident; 19.9% by British Airways; and 10% by the Governments of Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St Vincent, and the Grenadines. □