MINISTERIO
DE TRANSPORTES, MOVILIDAD
Y AGENDA URBANA

ENAIRE

PRESS RELEASE

ENAIRE starts a new phase in the Control Tower at the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport by digitising flight management

- The new automated operating system will enhance safety and help make the work of air traffic controllers more efficient
- The investment, valued at €5 million, will be used to implement this function in all Aena control towers operated by ENAIRE
- The control towers in Malaga, Palma and Barcelona already have this latest-generation technology

Madrid, 26 February 2021

ENAIRE, the national air navigation service provider, has begun a new phase in the Adolfo Suárez Madrid Barajas Airport Control Tower with the digitisation of flight management.

ENAIRE's Board of Directors, which met this Friday, has received detailed information on this improvement for air traffic management, which is consistent with the commitment to innovation that ENAIRE stands for.

This digitisation will bolster the efficiency of ENAIRE's air traffic controllers, since the new system relies on automating the information required to manage flights.
The new automated management feature has been deployed in the Air Traffic Control System (SACTA) of the Control Tower in Madrid by ENAIRE, in concert with Aena, and was previously implemented in the towers at the airports of Malaga-Costa del Sol, Palma and Josep Tarradelellas Barcelona-El Prat.

ENAIRE has invested 5 million euros to improve the air traffic management system (SACTA) that it uses and which it owns, and the project anticipates that it will be installed in all the control towers it manages.

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How ENAIRE's digital flight management works

The new operation automates the controllers' normal work flow thanks to a process that is supported by the system and which relies on digital flight progress strips. Including the necessary information in the system makes operations more predictable and improves the efficiency of air navigation management.

The system anticipates the controller by offering follow-up actions based on the phase of flight of the aircraft in question. It also automates the collection of essential information, freeing controllers from having to make unnecessary entries. It also allows them to instruct aircraft equally using a graphical environment or virtual flight progress strips, when used in combination with surface movement radars.

The project to automate and modernise the traffic control system in the control towers has been advancing gradually to encompass and standardise operations in different scenarios, an effort that required communicating and coordinating with the airport manager, Aena.

In conjunction with the launch of new operations in the control tower at the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, the system provides a new digital data link with aircraft, known technically as D-DCL (Data Link Departure Clearance), a feature that went into service as part of the 25 February aeronautical cycle (AIRAC).

Before an aeroplane departs, the pilot must receive the so-called "Air Traffic Control Services Clearance". The controller uses this clearance to provide the data needed for take-off and the initial phase of the flight. The Data Link Departure Clearance service provides a communications channel between the air traffic control system (SACTA) in the airport control tower and the on-board systems for the automatic exchange of messages related to this clearance, thus reducing workloads and alleviating congestion on the communication frequency.

Enhanced operational safety

This service eliminates the need to establish radio voice communications between the controller and pilot, resulting in improved operational safety, operational capacity and service quality.

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- It reduces workloads and the time that controllers and pilots must spend on the radio on the clearance delivery process.
- It provides for the accurate and concise exchange of information, avoiding the risk of misunderstandings and repetitions, resulting in better operational safety.

In conclusion, the technological advances in digital functionalities that ENAIRE, in concert with Aena, is implementing in its control towers are yielding the following advantages:

- Reduced frequency saturation for clearance delivery through the data link service with the aircraft.
- Reduced workload.
- Improved capacity of the air traffic control system.
- More efficient service with better quality for the users.

This project, as it furthers the goals of the Single European Sky, was also co-financed by the European Commission's cohesion funds.

About ENAIRE

ENAIRE is the air navigation service provider in Spain.

As a company of the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda, it provides en route control services for all flights and overflights from five control centres in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Gran Canaria and Palma, as well as approach services to every airport in the country.

In addition, 45 control towers receive ENAIRE's communication, navigation and surveillance services, and 21 airports, including the country's busiest, rely on its aerodrome control services.

ENAIRE is the fourth most important European air navigation service provider, and, in a clear commitment to the Single Sky initiative, belongs to international partnerships such as SESAR Joint Undertaking, SESAR Deployment Manager, A6 Alliance, iTEC, CANSO and ICAO.

ENAIRE is the official provider of aeronautical information in Spain.

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