

# Operational safety in times of COVID-19

8 June 2020



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, ENAIRe has taken urgent measures in all its facilities intended to reduce the risk of contagion among its employees, thus safeguarding their health and the continuity of the service, as well as the safety of operations at all times.

Safety, Quality and Environmental Division

## Actions during the phases to contain the pandemic

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the public health emergency situation caused by COVID-19 an international pandemic. Three days later, on 14 March, the state of alert was declared across Spain through RD 463/2020 in order to manage the healthcare crisis.

Prior to this date, on 28 February, ENAIRe's Steering Committee agreed to form the Coronavirus Monitoring Committee, which a few days later approved the first version of **ENAIRe's Coronavirus Action Plan**, with health and safety measures aimed at employees, and the Service Continuity Plan against Coronavirus Contingencies.

In the area of the air traffic service (ATS), all the measures have been designed to minimise the interaction between controllers,

the number of turnovers, overlaps between watches and the staff present at the unit at any given time. This required a temporary modification to the aeronautical duty periods laid out in Royal Decree 1001/2010, for towers and control centres, which was requested by ENAIRe and approved by AESA.

The main measures in terms of shift scheduling were:

- Extend the duration of a continuous period of morning or night-time aeronautical activity.
- Extend the maximum duration of the continuous period of operational activity by a maximum of 4 hours.
- Extend to more than two the maximum number of stand-by periods that can be scheduled in a consecutive 6-day period.



Service Continuity Plan against Coronavirus Contingencies

In any case, these organisational measures may be implemented as long as certain limits regarding the extended rest periods and the unit's air traffic demand, both specified in the AESA decision, are guaranteed. This shall be conducted by implementing air traffic flow measures or any other measures as required in each case.

Operational measures aimed at **adjusting operations to the traffic conditions and minimising the risk of contagion** among controllers, for example, have also been taken in facilities where required:

- Single-position configurations.
- Operations without a distinct supervisor.
- Use of configurations with the minimum number of sectors.
- Use of statuses that allow working without changing sectors.

In addition, several airports have come into operation "on-demand" at Aena's request, affecting both ATS and CNS.

These operational measures make it difficult to comply with some of the requirements contained in our General Unit Readiness Plan (PCUG) and General Unit **Training** Plan (PFUG), approved before the pandemic declaration and the sudden reduction in traffic, and a series of exceptional flexibility and exemption measures to said plans had to be adopted with AESA's approval.

In terms of operational safety, the impact of all these measures (scheduling, operational, readiness and training) has been **mitigated primarily by the drop in air traffic**, in excess of 90% in every facility and at practically all times of day. Therefore, the amount, type and complexity of air traffic are much lower than usual.

In any case, all changes are **continuously monitored** to ensure they do not affect safety and so that additional mitigation measures can be established as needed.

## Safety plan for the gradual recovery of air navigation services

The gradual return to some semblance of normality requires structurally undoing previous changes in order to **resume the services in a safe and orderly fashion**, based on the forecasts for the recovery of air traffic, and in coordination with other European service providers and with our customers (airlines and airports).

To that end, in addition to coordinating operations with AESA, providing support to EASA in safety analyses and collaborating in ICAO forums, ENAIRE has been actively involved in the working groups set up by CANSO and EUROCONTROL.

The role of our safety experts in the SAFOPS group (EUROCONTROL) is noteworthy. It has conducted a threat analysis and defined a harmonised risk mitigation strategy at a European level, provided support to the Safety Team group (EUROCONTROL) and partaken in the design of the **European Network Operations Plan - 2020 Recovery Plan**. All the above ensures that safety measures are considered as a key pillar of the recovery.

ENAIRE has just approved the **COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Air Navigation Services**, which lays out various phases considering the expected air traffic demand as the main, but not only, reference point.

An essential part of this plan is the **Operational Safety Plan** designed for this purpose, which, in keeping with the Safety Team's criteria, identifies any threats and mitigation measures in each of the Recovery Plan's phases, focusing on the following sets of actions:

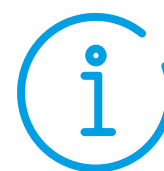
- ATS personnel
- CNS/ATM personnel
- Systems, equipment and facilities
- Operating procedures
- Risk analysis and mitigation processes
- Operational Safety personnel



*European Network Operations Plan - 2020 Recovery Plan (Eurocontrol)*



*COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Air Navigation Services (ENAIRE)*



**ENAIRE's COVID-19 Air Navigation Services Recovery Committee is the body that oversees the system's return to normality, enforcing the Safety recommendations aimed at mitigating the risks identified.**