Corsica broadens its horizons

Air Corsica recently inaugurated a new aircraft approach procedure by satellite guidance serving Ajaccio Airport. This innovative procedure was designed and validated by the services of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation in collaboration with the carrier. The ERA member airline shares an overview of the novel procedure.

In an era where satellite positioning is becoming widespread, the navigation methods of aircraft have come a long way in recent years. In application of these technological developments, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGAC) is closely studying possibilities in deploying new procedures to facilitate airport accessibility while securing traffic aerial.

Under study since 2016, it has created, in co-operation with Air Corsica and Ajaccio Napoléon Bonaparte Airport, the RNP AR instrument approach procedure, which means approach procedure based on navigation performance requiring approval.

Ajaccio Napoléon-Bonaparte airport is the first in mainland France to be equipped with a sophisticated satellite approach procedure. Considered a game-changer for operators serving the platform of Ajaccio, the procedure will facilitate greater access to the airport and ultimately contribute to greener aviation.

Certified last February by the DGAC, this new procedure was inaugurated by a commercial flight with one of Air Corsica's A320neo this April – with the approach to Ajaccio from Paris Orly. Eligibility for the RNP AR approach for airlines is strictly regulated. It involves devices specially equipped with the latest technologies compatible with RNP AR approaches; airlines previously approved for this procedure by the DGAC services; and trained airline pilots.

Clear benefits

The RNP AR procedure constitutes real progress in terms of air operations and environment. In terms of operation, it offers secure access and greater tracking precision by satellite guidance in regard to operations that have previously been difficult to operate in poor weather conditions. For example, management is facilitated for the air navigation services of the DGAC by better accessibility of the platform in conditions of strong southerly winds. The hazards and traffic disruptions that may result for passengers are thus reduced.

In environmental matters, the RNP AR procedure ensures a trajectory generating less noise and less pollution thanks to its shortening which represents four minutes of flight. Its deviation, which avoids flying over the city of Ajaccio, induces a reduction in fuel consumption, and therefore gas emissions. Equally, it provides a decrease in noise pollution for urban residents and less traffic disruption. The reduction in the risk of rerouting, inherent in the use of the RNP AR procedure, would also eliminate additional time flights to other airports, and would thus lead to an additional reduction in the effective flight time, fuel consumption, and carbon emissions, all benefiting the environment.

Island approach

Consequently, the flight tests carried out in collaboration with Air Corsica have demonstrated operational advantages for the environment, while increasing the level of safety. The implementation of this procedure in April allows Ajaccio Airport to broaden its horizons. Indeed, this technical advance, reducing the risk of diversion, flight cancellations and securing service, could well contribute to the dynamics of traffic or even attract new air operators in Ajaccio.

The outcome and success of this project, resulting from studies carried out at European level, will serve as reference to other European airports with a constrained environment, but also at regional level, including especially that of Calvi, a town on the northwest coast of Corsica.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Corsica (CCI of Corsica), is naturally heavily involved in the experimentation of the RNP AR procedure, carried out by the Ajaccio air traffic control body. Further to this, the CCI of Corsica has confirmed its major role in the economic development of the island, emphasised by the President of the CCI of Corsica who wished that all island platforms participate in this programme and that sustainable development and eco-responsibility become priorities in terms of development and modernisation. ■