

Press release

Thursday, 31 October 2019

Genève Aéroport, easyJet and SWISS, commit to reduce unscheduled take-offs after 22:00

Genève Aéroport, easyJet and SWISS want to reduce unscheduled take-offs from the platform after 22:00, the most sensitive time for local residents. On Thursday 31 October, they signed for the first time a joint declaration as part of a common approach in the combat against noise.

The noise of air traffic is one of the major concerns of Genève Aéroport and its partners. Conscious of its urban character, the airport strives to contain the noise impact of airport activities. On 14 November 2018, the Sectoral Aviation Infrastructure Plan (SAIP) was adopted by the Federal Council and in May 2019, the Objectives Agreement was signed with the Council of State. These two documents set the framework for stabilising and then reducing noise by 2030.

The airport's operating regulations, currently in public consultation, will enable concrete action to be taken. Genève Aéroport has indeed proposed to the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) to set up a quota system. Each airline will be entitled to a number of unscheduled departures after 22:00. When their quota is exhausted, they will have to pay a dissuasive fee. This mechanism will favour the quieter aircraft.

Pending the adoption of these operating regulations, Genève Aéroport and the two airlines that account for most of the traffic on the site (57%) took the lead by signing a joint declaration. This collaborative approach, an innovation proposed as a preventive measure by the airport, aims to engage the platform's stakeholders in a noise control approach.

In this document, Genève Aéroport, easyJet and SWISS undertake to prepare and put in place measures to reduce flight delays after 22:00. These movements are indeed the most sensitive regarding noise emissions, their impact being considered ten times higher than daytime flights. Currently, take-offs of scheduled flights are allowed in Geneva between 6:00 and 22:00. No departure slots are allocated beyond this period, except potentially for three intercontinental flights. However, during unforeseen events such as bad weather conditions, technical or operational difficulties, the maintenance of planned schedules may be impacted. « Late » planes take off after this hour. In 2018, 1'836 aircraft departed after 22:00. The first measures have already made it possible to reduce the number of delays by 4.4%, in 2019.

In particular, the airport's partners undertake to implement the following measures: inclusion of reserves in the planning, prioritisation of delayed flights, noise quotas for flights delayed after 22:00 and monitoring of measurements.



A joint commitment

easyJet responds to the environmental challenge and in particular noise nuisance by regularly renewing its fleet, with an average age of 6.5 years old in Switzerland, by applying specific operational procedures and by adapting its flight schedule. The issue of nocturnal noise is primarily related to the punctuality of flights whether based in Geneva or not.

In order to address this global problem, easyJet has been investing for several years in its operational resilience programme, which has been reinforced this year with a doubling of reserve aircraft, the implementation of analytical tools to understand delays and the introduction of measures to streamline boarding. These measures are bearing fruit and this summer, easyJet recorded a 40% decrease in cancellations and 24% decrease in delays of more than three hours. In Geneva, take-offs after 22:00 are down 30% in 2019 compared to 2017.

Jean-Marc Thévenaz: « We are pleased to see our investment and the work of our teams across Europe rewarded with improving figures. We congratulate the approach of Genève Aéroport, our long-term partner, and as the first company on the platform, we take the signing of this joint declaration very seriously. »

Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) has invested over 8 billion CHF in a more efficient fleet. By investing in modern and significantly quieter aircraft, SWISS has reduced noise pollution by 50%. In the same context, SWISS, Genève Aéroport and air navigation services are jointly working to optimise take-off and landing procedures to the best of their ability, to limit these nuisances.

« In the field of environmental protection and noise abatement, SWISS is always seeking to improve its performance. The signing of a joint declaration is the logical next step for the company and we are delighted to be able to demonstrate our commitment to Genève Aéroport in a collaborative approach in order to avoid the delays of unscheduled flights after 22:00. We welcome this proactive initiative » says Lorenzo Stoll, Managing Director of SWISS for French-speaking Switzerland.

In 2018, the number of flights affected by departure after 22:00 due to delays represented 1.1% of the total number of flights operated by SWISS from Geneva. For 2019, the number of delayed flights fell to 0.4% thanks to various measures.

The three signatories of the agreement are also committed to using the coming months to understand and experiment with the levers that will have the greatest impact on delays. Other airlines are naturally invited to join the process and may at any time join this joint declaration.

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Measures to control flights after 22:00

2016: Reduction of movement capacity after 22:00 and no scheduled departure after 22:00

2017: Increase in the noise charges by more than 100%

2019: Joint declaration with easyJet and SWISS to reduce take-offs after 22:00

2021: Incentive taxes for the least noisy aircraft

Upon approval of the operating regulations: quotas for take-offs after 22:00

Genève Aéroport's roadmap to reduce its noise footprint

12 July 2016: Coordination protocol in which the Canton and the Confederation undertake to strengthen measures intended to limit noise, particularly between 22:00 and midnight.

14 November 2018: Adoption of the Sectoral Aviation Infrastructure Plan (SAIP) by the Federal Council. This document sets a two-step objective for Genève Aéroport: a medium-term noise curve, which the airport must first respect, then a curve, representing a lower noise level, in 2030.

29 May 2019: Adoption by the Council of State of the new Objectives Agreement in order to specify how this objective can be achieved. Contained in this document, the Government relies on a mechanism for monitoring and controlling noise changes. Furthermore, it requires from the airport, in coordination with the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA), new operational measures.

17 September 2019: Public consultation of the operating regulations by the FOCA, up to 17 October 2019. This text includes all the operational measures allowing the platform to achieve its objective, in particular:

- a noise quota mechanism to combat delays beyond 22:00;
- a new runway exit lane that reduces aircraft taxiing times.

The ambitious objective, coordinated between the Confederation, the Canton and the airport, is to restore by 2030 the number of exposed persons to the same level as in 2000.

First positive results

The figures measuring the noise emitted by aircraft movements are represented in the form of « noise curves ». These are calculated each year. They are then presented to the Advisory Committee for the fight against air traffic nuisances (CCLNTA) and discussed. The 2018 noise curve shows that the airport is on the right track. The exposure of the population and the area of the curves decreased in 2018 compared to 2017. The areas exposed to noise decreased by 2.1 km². More than 5'000 people have passed outside noise-exposed areas, on a constant population basis.

The calculation is carried out by the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research (EMPA) on the basis of traffic statistics provided by the platform and Skyguide, and validated by the FOCA.