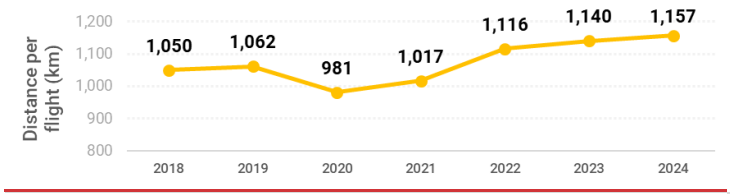
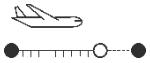
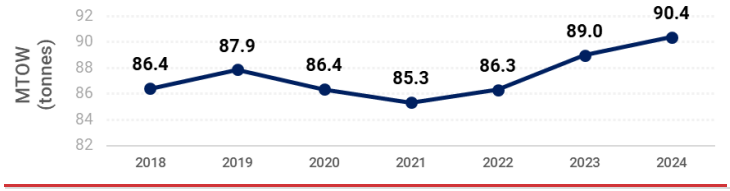
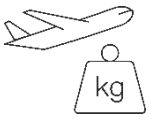
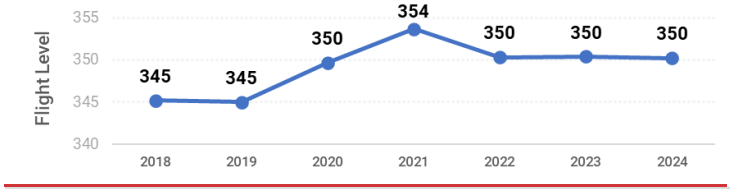
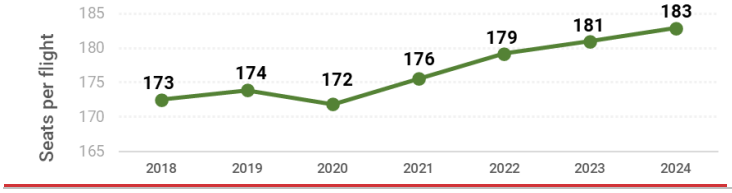
EUROCONTROL Data Snapshot

Further, higher, bigger…

31 July 2025

		Average value 2024	
	**Flight distance**	**1,157 km/flight** *+107 km vs 2018*	
	**Maximum take-off weight (MTOW)**	**90.4 tonnes/flight** *+4 tonnes vs 2018*	
	**Achieved Flight Level**	**FL 350** *+502 feet vs 2018*	
	**Seats**	**183 seats/flight** *+10 seats vs 2018*	

Last year's data snapshot #46 provided insights into the average flight in the EUROCONTROL area. With the addition of 2024 data, what new aviation trends can we uncover?

In 2024, the average distance of a flight was **1,157 km** - an increase of **17 km** compared to 2023 - continuing a six-year trend of rising flight distances. This is largely due to a decline in regional and domestic flights over the past two decades and can be attributed to the higher Cost per Available Seat kilometre (CASK) for short-haul flights compared to medium/long-haul flights, a rise in other transport options such as high-speed rail and roads, as well as policy and behavioural shifts focused on reducing the environmental impact of flying.

The most common types of aircraft that were flown in the EUROCONTROL area in 2024 were narrow-body aircraft; the Boeing 737-800 and the Airbus A320, with maximum take-off weights (MTOW) of 79 tonnes and 78 tonnes, respectively. The average MTOW of a plane has been rising since a dip during the 'COVID years' (2020-2021) when there was an increase in the proportion of very short-haul flights (under 500km). Since 2018, average MTOW has increased by 4 tonnes, including a **1.4 tonne** increase since 2023, reaching **90.4 tonnes** in 2024. The fleet mix of flights between 2023 and 2024 shifted slightly, with 2024 seeing a higher proportion of narrow and wide-body aircraft and fewer regional jets. This change is unsurprising as larger and newer aircraft help airlines improve cost efficiency.

It is more efficient for jet aircraft to fly at high altitudes. However, in a congested airspace, the optimal flight levels are not always available for aircraft operators. During the 'COVID years', there was a sharp increase in the average flight level due to reduced traffic and the removal of many flow management measures. In 2022, the average flight level decreased to **flight level (FL) 350 (35,000 ft)**, which is some 500ft higher than 2018, and has remained constant since.

In terms of seats, the average per flight in 2024 was **183,** up from 173 in 2018. This increase aligns with the rising MTOW, the introduction of newer aircraft with more seat flexibility and the reduction in the number of regional jet flights.

Technical bits: Average of the maximum flight level achieved in the month of July calculated considering only flights above FL200. Average seats calculated by excluding military, cargo, business-aviation and 'other' market segments. Where we mention flights, we mean flights operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR).

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