



# NS21 airport slot returns WASB guidance

## Introduction

The approval of NS21 slot relief measures globally is resulting in different slot return policies being implemented in different jurisdictions. This paper provides guidance on the different slot return policies and their potential impact to airline historic schedules.

## WASB Principles<sup>1</sup>

1.2. Full series of slots (other than newly allocated series) for which a carrier wishes to claim full season alleviation should be returned between the Historic Baseline Date (HBD) and HBD+7days - meaning 8 February 2021 16h00 UTC. The coordinator will alleviate the series and place them in the slot pool for reallocation and use on a non-historic basis only.

If a full series of slots was granted historic precedence for the NS21 and is returned between the HBD (31 January 2021) and HBD+7 (8 February 2021, 16h00 UTC), the series of slots will be considered to have been operated for the purpose of establishing future historic precedence. This means the full series will be included in the NS22 SHL of the airline who returned the series of slots.

Returned series of slots between HBD and HBD+7 will be reallocated to airlines, including the airline who returned the series of slots if requested, for use on an ad hoc only basis, subject to any temporary capacity limits being applied and the coordinator giving consideration to carriers on the waitlist. Reallocations will be processed as soon as possible after HBD+7 using the priorities outlined in WASG 8.3 and 8.4.

Full series of slots returned before HBD, or after HBD+7, will be returned to the slot pool for reallocation and not included in the NS22 SHL of the airline who returned the series of slots.

1.3. Series of slots held at HBD that are not returned or only partially returned at the deadline of HBD+7 days will be subject to the utilization requirement set for that season to secure the historic entitlement in the subsequent equivalent season. The utilization rate should be declared prior to HBD.

Only series returned before HBD will reduce the size of the series that will be part of the calculation for the 50% usage rate. Consequently, the return of partial series between HBD and HBD+7 does not reduce the size of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/4820c05b19f148e2855db91f2a579369/wasb-northern-summer-21-recommendation-for-slot-use-relief.pdf>

series that will be part of the calculation for the 50% usage rate. Please be reminded that WASG art. 8.7.2.2 (so called “double-dip”) is suspended for S21.

All series of slots held at HBD+7 will be subject to the evaluation of the slot usage threshold. Any slot cancelled after HBD, except full series of slots handed back by HBD+7, will be counted against the usage threshold, unless the non-utilization can be justified under any of the applicable exemptions. A series of slots which complies with the minimum utilization requirement will be eligible for historic precedence for NS22 and will be included in the NS22 SHL.

#### 1.5.1. Slot usage requirement threshold shall be set at 50:50

For all series of slots held at HBD+7 (16.00 UTC) historic precedence is only granted if the airline can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the coordinator that the respective series of slots was operated at least 50% of the time.

All cancellations made after HBD are considered as non-utilization of the series of slots in the 50% usage calculation, unless the non-utilization is justified on the basis of the provisions of section 1.6 of the [WASB recommendations](#).

#### 1.5.2. WASG art. 8.7.2.2 shall be suspended

All slot returns made prior to the HBD shall be returned to the slot pool for reallocation. The returning carrier will not be eligible to historic precedence on any slot returns made prior to the HBD.

## WASB Summary

- No alleviation is provided for slot returns made before the HBD
- No alleviation is provided for part series of slot returns made between HBD and HBD+7
- Full slot use alleviation is provided for full series of slots returned between HBD and HBD+7
- Series of slots held at HBD must operate 50% to be eligible for historic rights in S22, unless fully returned to the coordinator before HBD+7.

## Full and Conditional waivers

Slot use waivers are approved in some countries such as the USA, Thailand and Peru. Airlines should identify what conditions might exist to be eligible for the waiver. For example, some countries require:

- Slots to be returned at least four weeks in advance of the date of operation.
- Slots to be returned before HBD+7

Airlines who return slots in accordance with any waiver conditions will be eligible to historic precedence for the same slot series in NS22.

Details of airport full and conditional waivers are made available where known on the [IATA COVID-19 Website](#). Airlines should also validate the information directly with the relevant coordinator.

## European Union

*Please note the final position of the EU is **yet to be confirmed**, and therefore the following subject to change. We have based this guidance on the Presidency proposal of 18 Jan 2021 to illustrate only the direction it may take. It is possible that this proposal may be confirmed by mid-February. Until any change is confirmed, the normal EU Regulation applies for NS21.*

The European Union (EU) is reviewing proposals for slot use alleviation and there is no final outcome at the time of writing. However, the following conditions are under consideration and warrant airlines to consider their strategy for such scenarios:

### **50:50 Use-it or lose-it rule**

Historic precedence is only granted for a series of slots if the airline can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the coordinator that the series of slots held at HBD was used at least 50% of the time.

### **50% slot return limit for full series alleviation**

For full series handed back before a certain deadline (current proposal is entry into force of the amended Slot Regulation + 8 days) airlines will receive full slot use alleviation. This will pertain only to full series which had been allocated to the same airline for the scheduling period from 29 March 2020 until 24 October 2020; the full series alleviation will be limited to a percentage to be determined (the current proposed limit is 50%) of the slots which had been allocated to the same carrier for the scheduling period from 29 March 2020 until 24 October 2020. The remaining series of an airlines slot portfolio must be used according to the final usage threshold (currently drafted as 50:50).

According to the current proposal, airlines holding less than [...] slots per [...] (*reference number of slots still under discussion*) at an airport are not subject to the 50% slot return limit and can return all their full historic series for full alleviation.

### **Three-week return deadline**

Airlines are required to return slots at least three weeks in advance of the date of operation to avoid any sanction by the responsible national authorities.

### **“Force majeure”**

The EU recognises a similar approach to the [WASB](#) for justified non-use of slots / force majeure for COVID-19 related restrictions. The emphasis is on new restrictions or in other words, newly extended, newly defined or additional restrictions since the allocation of slots.