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INTRODUCTION

This section provides the purpose, audience, and layout of this document as well as the way this document should be used.

Purpose and Scope

Article 10.5 (c) of the DANUBE FAB State Agreement specifies that the Governing Council shall adopt the Annual Report and propose it for endorsement by the State authorities on transport.

The Annual Report provides the means to monitor the implementation progress of the Strategic Programme and the Annual Plan. The scope of this report is limited to activities which were expected to be carried out in 2023, based on the timescales identified in the Strategic Programme 2023 – 2027 and Annual Plan 2023.

This report may be used as a basis for modifying the Strategic Programme, and the subsequent Annual Plan.

Objectives

The objectives of this report are to:

- Explain the work undertaken in relation to the Strategic Programme / Annual Plan activities planned in 2023;
- Detail the status of high priority tasks;
- Identify, and propose corrective measures where appropriate, for late activities;
- Identify strategic studies that may be necessary for the further development of the FAB.

Publication and Confidentiality

The approved DANUBE FAB Annual Report 2023 is a public document that is made available on the DANUBE FAB website (www.danubefab.eu).

Aspects of the Annual Report which are considered confidential and restricted for internal stakeholder use only and inappropriate for general publications will be developed and distributed separately.

Drafting of the Document

The Annual Report has been developed by the DANUBE FAB SAPSC with due consideration of the "DANUBE FAB Strategic Programme 2023-2027", and "DANUBE FAB Annual Plan 2023". Input has been sought from the NSAs, the Military and the ANSPs of both States.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS MADE IN 2023

Summary of Progress in 2023

In 2023, DANUBE FAB planned for 105 Tasks over 69 Activities. Each task has been classified as **Completed / On Track**, **Behind**, or **Removed or put on hold**. A graphical overview of progress across the FAB is provided below.

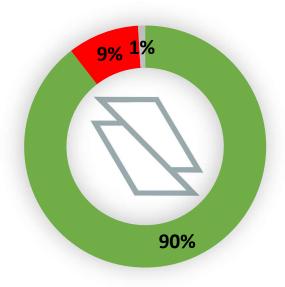


Figure 1: DANUBE FAB 2023 Progress - All Tasks

Task Status		Number of Tasks	
Complete / On Track	Completed / On Track	94	90%
Behind	In Progress - Late	10	9%
Removed or put on hold	Put on hold	1	1%
	Total:	105	

Table 1: DANUBE FAB Progress - All Tasks

Key Activities in 2023

This section provides a brief overview and status update of the key DANUBE FAB activities that were undertaken in 2023.

Free Route Airspace

Free Route Airspace (FRA) implementation involving DANUBE FAB and its neighbouring States, the SEE FRA project (South East Europe Free Route Airspace), expanded even further on 23rd February 2023, with the inclusion of the airspace of the Czech Republic (FRACZECH). This represents the third expansion of the SEE FRA project, successfully implemented on the 7th November 2019, thus making possible cross border free route operations across the airspace of six States (Republic of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia). Therefore, SEE FRA becomes one of the largest free route airspace blocks in Europe.

Since SEE FRA expanded even further, with the inclusion of FRACZECH (Czech Republic), starting with 23rd February 2023, other airspace re-structuring projects in the Eastern Europe, which involve DANUBE FAB, are considered:

- Czech Republic/Poland Cross border FRA operations in the spring of 2024 Cross border FRA operations will be implemented between Czech Republic and Poland;
- Poland / Ukraine / Romania / Moldova Interface improvement having in mind the current context in the region, the studies on next SEE FRA expansion will not start earlier than Spring 2025;
- Cross border FRA operations SECSI FRA and SEE FRA is still under analysis, proposed implementation timeframe being 2029/2030 (as per ERNIP). Due to the legal implications (EU/non-EU states participation) versus operational benefits, further analysis are required at DANUBE FAB level.

These proposals have been set out in the EUROCONTROL Route Network Improvement Plan (ERNIP).

InterFAB Cooperation

Cooperation and communication between the nine FABs form the core of the InterFAB Cooperation platform (IFCP). This platform provides an opportunity for cooperation and coordination across all FABs, enabling the alignment of common goals, experiences to be shared and a strong and cohesive voice maintained.

DANUBE FAB is a key participant in the IFCP and is committed to remaining an attentive and proactive member. To date, DANUBE FAB has both participated in and hosted InterFAB workshops, in the streams for research, operations, performance and communication. DANUBE FAB has played an active role for the whole period, being one of the core FABs involved in the IFCP.

Meetings in 2023:

- A series of InterFAB coordination meetings continued to take place at the level of InterFAB Coordination Platform (IFCP) Points of Contact, focused on coordinating common positions on the amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the Single European Sky (recast);
- One InterFAB Performance Workshop (October);
- One InterFAB Communication meeting (September).

Following the the 5th InterFAB Research Workshop "Single European Sky and Resilience in ATM", hosted by DANUBE FAB in September 2022 in Sofia, having in mind the outstanding

contributions and discussion, in 2023 the documentation has been compiled and is now available at the following link:

https://www.fabec.eu/images/user-pics/pdf-downloads/resilience/flipbook/index.html

In 2023, also, two InterFAB studies have been finalized, compiled and published in September:

- Fragmentation in European ATM/CNS today: How is the link to Performance
 Available at the following link: https://www.inter-fab.eu/images/user-pics/pdf-downloads/FRAGMENTATION 20230913 Final .pdf;
- Study on traffic scenarios: Interdependency of capacity, environment, and cost based on traffic forecasts

Available at the following link: https://www.inter-fab.eu/images/user-pics/pdf-downloads/InterFAB%20study TrafficScenarios 20230925.pdf.

PROGRESS OF STRATEGIC PROGRAMME TASKS & OBJECTIVES

The DANUBE FAB Strategic Programme 2023 – 2027 and the Annual Plan 2023 established a number of strategic objectives. This section provides an overview of work undertaken in 2023 towards the achievement of these strategic objectives. It should be noted that this provides an illustrative description of the steps taken by DANUBE FAB in 2023 rather than a comprehensive overview of all contributing tasks to each strategic area.

Strategic Objective 1 (SO1): SAFETY

Maintain, and wherever possible improve, the current level of safety so that the number of accidents or serious incidents induced by air navigation services at least remains at, or decreases from, its current level, notwithstanding increased traffic.

Activities included ongoing processes of maintaining and updating the Safety Management Manual in order to ensure the compliance with all modifications of regulations that came into force in 2023. In addition, the final Report of the common ROMATSA-BULATSA Safety Culture Survey performed in September 2022 at DSNAR Constanta was finalized in Q4 2022 by ROMATSA and BULATSA finalized their Report in Q1 of 2023 after the Common Safety Culture Survey organized at ROMATSA headquarters in November 2022. Also in 2023 it was developed and approved a Common Report on the Safety Culture Surveys conducted jointly within ROMATSA and BULATSA.

Starting from 2023 it was decided to align all ROMATSA and BULATSA activities related to Surveys and to develop common Surveys and common final Reports. In December 2023 mutual bilateral audit visits were organized (both at ROMATSA headquarter and BULATSA headquarter), regarding the application of the Regulation (EU) 376/2014 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 1018/2015.

Strategic Objective 2 (SO2): ENVIRONMENT

Improve the efficiency of flight operations and minimize the environmental impact of ATS.

In 2023, SEE FRA (South East Europe Free Route Airspace) which comprises of Budapest, București, Sofia, Bratislava and Chisinau CTAs was extended to include Czech Republic (FRACZECH). Users have subsequently been able to plan their flights freely across the airspace of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Republic of Moldova and Czech Republic 24/7 without the limitations of geographical boundaries. Cross-border operations between SEE FRA and Baltic FRA are also available to airspace operators from 2022.

According to simulations, SEE FRA contributes to a significant reduction of emissions and of millions of miles (NM) daily from the total mileage.

DANUBE FAB also continues to attend CANSO Environmental Working Group meetings and will look for further projects which can reduce the environmental impact of ATM within DANUBE FAB boundaries. This work includes studying the impact and requirements stemming from the new EU Green Deal, released in 2021. This is to ensure DANUBE FAB States not only meet the requirements, but also that the ATM related effects on the environment are minimised as far as possible.

Strategic Objective 3 (SO3): CAPACITY

Provide capacity to accommodate increasing traffic and airspace user demands, whilst reducing flight delays.

Capacity is, and remains, a high priority for DANUBE FAB. BULATSA continued the procurement process for a new ATM system, which, depending on the system implemented, should increase airspace capacity in future.

Measures previously implemented have also put DANUBE FAB above the targets noted in the Performance Plan, with the combined positive effects of implementing new ATM Systems, FRA H24, sector optimisation and continuing to select, train and license new ATCOs estimated to have provided the additional capacity needed to accommodate the traffic growth. Although the gradual reduction of COVID-19 related restrictions and the re-routings caused by the conflict in Ukraine through Romanian and Bulgarian airspace have led to a traffic growth above forecasts, both ROMATSA and BULATSA have managed this within the targets.

Strategic Objective 4 (SO4): COST-EFFICIENCY

Deliver high quality air navigation services at a competitive rate in line with European-wide targets.

In 2023, implementation of RP3 Performance Plans continued, while preparations for the new RP4 kicked off. Romania and Bulgaria sent their initial cost estimates to be taken into account when setting the EU-wide performance targets.

Strategic Objective 5 (SO5): TRANSVERSAL

Drive benefits through technological changes and interoperability of systems and procedures.

Efforts have been ongoing throughout 2023 to deliver joint, FAB-level projects such as the implementation of extended OLDI messages. For the latter, steps have been made in 2023 for its progress, which implementation is expected to bring positive results for the summer 2024.

Other transversal topics include the possibility of completing joint training sessions, which shall continue to be investigated in 2024.

Activity Progress Monitoring

The following tables summarize the progress of tasks associated with DANUBE FABs seven Implementation Projects. The tasks and activities for each project were laid out in the Annual Plan 2023.

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
A – Strategy, Planning, External Relation	s and Communications	■ Complete / On track ■ I	Behind Removed
Project to maintain the established governance structure of DANUBE FAB, including regular meetings of the Governing Council, the ANSP and NSA Boards. Additionally, to formulate robust implementation projects and activities that clearly articulate how new policies, programmes, plans, and actions will be delivered on time, on budget, and to expectations; so as to maintain effective strategic and planning processes within DANUBE FAB.	Strategy and Planning [Activities A01 – A09] 9 Activities 17 Tasks	82%	The delayed tasks in this area of activity are linked to the development and adoption of the Strategic Programme 2024 – 2028 and the Annual Plan 2024 which are in progress and shall be completed early 2024. Another delayed task regards the FAB Enlargement project. As no concrete commitments have been received from the two States Observers, after more than five years, DANUBE FAB will investigate the options regarding the future collaboration with the Observers.
	External Relations and Communications [Activities A10 – A17] 8 Activities 13 Tasks	100%	N/A

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
B – NSA Coordination		Complete / C	On track Behind Removed
Review rules and procedures, implement consultation mechanism and processes for harmonisation, mutually recognise Supervisory Tasks, cooperation in areas with NM and stakeholder consultation, set up common task force to monitor performance, formal coordination between NSAs and coordination of security issues at FAB level.	NSA Coordination [Activities B01 – B05] • 5 Activities • 6 Tasks	17% 83%	Activities B01, B02, B03, B04 have been carried out, whereas activity B05, task 5.1 has become unnecessary, given that the COVID 19 pandemic has ended. As for activity B05, task 5.2 was postponed and it will be maintained in the DF NSA Board Annual Plan 2024 and NSAs will try to carry out this activity through face-to-face meetings, depending also on the evolution of the legislative framework at European and national level.
C – Performance Planning, Monitoring an	nd Reporting	■ Complete / C	On track Behind Removed
Exchange of information on implementation and reporting of national Performance Plans, as well as for achieving common position on performance regulation proposed for RP4.	Performance Planning [Activities C01 – C03] 3 Activities 3 Tasks	100%	N/A

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
D - Human Resources and Training		■ Complete / On track ■ B	ehind Removed
Maintain appropriate personnel and competences for FAB operation, maintain common training board and maintain the FAB training policy, establish Common approach for training system, common training approach and activities for ATCOs and other staff.	General [Activities D01] 1 Activity 2 Tasks	50%	No Training Board meetings were held in 2023. Processes for sharing resources and developing and providing joint training courses are ongoing and shall continue into 2024 to ensure they are completed in the near future.
	ATCO Training [Activity D02] 1 Activity 1 Task	100%	Investigations into providing joint ATCO training courses, with further work on this is an ongoing process.

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
	MET Training [Activities D03 – D04] • 2 Activities • 2 Tasks	100%	Identifying common training opportunities for MET personnel is an ongoing process.
	ATSEP Training [Activities D05 – D06] • 2 Activities • 4 Tasks	100%	Identifying common training opportunities for ATSEP personnel is an ongoing process. Jointly development of a common material to be used in ATSEP training processes for Basic Training and Qualification Training is due in Q4 2024.

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
E – Technical Rationalisation and Infrast	ructure	■ Complete / On track ■ Be	hind Removed
DANUBE FAB jointly analyse its CNS infrastructure development and where possible conducts common procurement. The objective of this project is to further develop the cooperation in the technical domain by identifying opportunities to coordinate, rationalise and/or share technical infrastructure, thereby generating cost savings and better efficiency.	Technical Rationalisation and Infrastructure [Activities E01 – E06] • 6 Activities • 8 Tasks	75%	The review of existing DANUBE FAB Technical rationalisation and Infrastructure documentation is behind the schedule. Investigation of some potential common projects was delayed for Q4 2024.

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
F – Operational Activities		■ Complete / On track ■ Be	hind Removed
Airspace Design This implementation project aimed at implementing new routes within DANUBE FAB, by applying the necessary process for airspace changes and safety cases of the route changes. The key project for 2023 was the ongoing implementation of Free Route Airspace expansion, as noted as a High Priority Project	Airspace Design [Activities F01 – F09] 9 Activities 11 Tasks	100%	N/A
Operational Procedures Management Operational procedures need to be continuously updated and revised as the airspace is developed and improved in order to remain safe and efficient. The Operational Procedures project is tasked with fulfilling that role.	Operational Procedures Management [Activities F10 – F15] • 6 Activities • 10 Tasks	90%	Updating the DANUBE FAB ConOps is in progress.

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes
Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) Maintain AIS services and AIS aspects of the DANUBE FAB CONOPS.	Aeronautical Information Services [Activities F16 – F17] 2 Activities 2 Tasks	100%	N/A
Meteorological Services Maintain compliance with international standards, harmonisation of MET KPIs and SWIM services coordination for the MET domain.	Meteorological Services [Activities F18 – F20] • 3 Activities • 4 Tasks	100%	N/A

Overview	Sub Category	Progress	Delayed tasks and notes			
G - Safety, Quality, Environment and Security Activities		■ Complete / On track ■ Behind ■ Removed				
Updates of safety case and safety policy and common generic safety management manual, safety culture measurement and improvement, develop FAB wide safety targets, implement safety performance monitoring, coordinate best practice, Conduct operational safety surveys and SMS audits.	Safety Management [Activities G01 – G06] • 6 Activities • 13 Tasks	92%	Finalisation of establishment a joint mechanism to exchange information applicable to the whole change management process for changes outside national boundaries was postponed for Q2 2024.			
Quality & Environmental Management Systems Monitoring of environmental KPIs, Harmonise management systems.	Quality & Environmental Management Systems [Activities G07 – G09] • 3 Activities • 5 Tasks	100%	N/A			

Overview **Sub Category Progress** Delayed tasks and notes ATM Security Management Systems **ATM Security Management Systems** Establish a coordination and information exchange mechanism between DANUBE Harmonisation of Information Security [Activities G10 - G12] FAB ANSPs, in the cybersecurity domain, Management Systems of both ATM/ANS as well as ATM/ANS Cybersecurity 3 Activities providers, establish a coordination and Roadmap update, were both postponed for 2024. information exchange mechanism between 4 Tasks DANUBE FAB ANSPs, in the cybersecurity ATM/ANS Cybersecurity domain, Roadmap update.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

One of the Annual Report's objectives is to identify any corrective measures that may be necessary for the further development of the FAB and review the progress of previous corrective actions identified.

The table below charts the corrective actions suggested. Corrective actions are marked either as 'New', 'Ongoing' or 'Complete', and a short justification and summary of their impact (if appropriate) is provided.

Justification		Status	Comments		
1 – Monitoring Processes					
The development of the Annual Report represents the formal deliverable which summarises the wider task of monitoring progress within the FAB. Regular, informal communication between FAB managers and experts ensures ongoing transparency and visibility on progress. The following processes have been implemented to enhance this informal review process:			Monitoring processes are ongoing, but further informal coordination between experts should be undertaken to increase the number of tasks and activities completed in all areas. Further to this, all standing committee and working group meetings must take place every six months in 2024.		
Attendance of the SAPSC co-chairs at parts of OSC and SQSESC			Target:		
 committee meetings to ensure oversight of task progress; Monthly discussions between the DANUBE FAB Administrative Cell, and Experts to maintain a live FAB activity tracking spreadsheet, to be discussed in a monthly catch up meeting; Quarterly reporting from co-chairs of each of the working level committees (OSC and SQSESC) to the SAPSC co-chairs. 	Dec 2024	Ongoing	Increased participation and completion of standing committee and working group meetings in 2024.		
These measures increase the "hands-on", proactive approach to project management, to ensure that the tasks and activities progress effectively. Increasing the regularity of encouragement and motivation will minimise late running of tasks.					
2 – Provision of Maintenance Services for DANUBE FAB Website					
The requirement to procure maintenance services for DANUBE FAB website remains. This task should be prioritised to ensure its completion within 2024.			The procurement process was agreed to take place in Q1 2024.		
	Dec 2024	Ongoing	Target: Website maintenance services to be procured in 2024.		

Justification		Status	Comments		
3 – Strategic Alignment towards Joint Training Provision					
A number of DANUBE FAB activities regarding training (Section D) are being delayed as a lack of alignment exists between ROMATSA and BULATSA. It is imperative that these differences are resolved, and a joint strategic approach agreed between both parties, or that alternative arrangements to deliver DANUBE FAB joint training provision are identified.	Dec 2024	Ongoing	Target: ☑ Approach for DANUBE FAB joint training should continue in 2024.		
4 – Review of Resource Availability					
A number of tasks across the DANUBE FAB project have seen delays during the last years (especially since the COVID-19 pandemic) due to a lack of available resource. This is due to the fact that key experts from BULATSA and ROMATSA are already tasked simultaneously with the implementation of internal projects and the DANUBE FAB activities are often perceived as an additional work burden. This is particularly relevant in the summer months for the Operational Functions, where the continued traffic growth requires capacity to be maintained in the ACCs, diverting efforts away from DANUBE FAB project work.	Dec 2024	Ongoing	Target: ☐ This task should be monitored by the SAPSC and working groups throughout 2024 to ensure key tasks and activities can still be progressed. ☐ Prioritisation of required resources during each of the working group and standing committees.		
5 – Recommencement of Standing Committee and Board meetings for key activities and projects					
Linked to the previous, the number of DANUBE FAB information sharing and coordination meetings dropped. To improve the pace at which activities are completed, all DANUBE FAB bodies should recommence their biannual meetings in 2024.	Dec 2024	Ongoing	Target: ☐ Two meetings of each of the following groups should be held in 2024: ☐ Training Board ☐ SQSESC ☐ Technical Working Group		

CONCLUSIONS

Situation

2023 was another extremely challenging year for the entire aviation community due to the effects of the conflict in Ukraine and Middle East, leading to high traffic levels, especially in the DANUBE FAB airspace.

The European Commission's vision for a Single European Sky process is blocked, mainly due to the divergent positions of the EU Member States, with little progress being made since July 2021. Given the current challenges in agreeing the regulatory text, the publication timeline is not known and the remaining timeframe before the European elections in May 2024 is rather short considering the differences between the positions of EP and Member States.

Tasks & Activities

For 2023, DANUBE FAB planned for 105 Tasks over 69 Activities. Of these 105 tasks:

- 90% (95 tasks) have been completed or are considered in progress or on time;
- 10% (10 tasks) were behind with no progress or significantly behind schedule;
- 0% (0 tasks) were removed due to their redundancy.

A key highlight of the work completed in 2023 is the addition of the Czech Republic (FRACZECH) to SEE FRA, thus making possible cross border free route operations across the airspace of six States (Republic of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia). Therefore, SEE FRA becomes one of the largest free route airspace blocks in Europe. This not only improves the environmental impact of DANUBE FAB air traffic management, but also demonstrates DANUBE FABs role as a leader in implementing FRA across Europe.

Further to this, DANUBE FAB is implementing an extended set of OLDI messages across the FAB. Investigations into additional OLDI messages that can be implemented are ongoing, for potential roll out into 2024.

To improve the effectiveness of the FAB, the recommendations identified in the Strategic Impact Study (internally developed and issued in January 2022) should be further assessed and implemented where considered necessary. Further to this, the FAB should ensure all standing committee and working group meetings occur biannually, with other informal meetings taking place to discuss technical details or share information on best practices. Doing so shall ensure all tasks and activities are tracked and completed in a timely manner.

Finally, a key task to be completed in 2024 is the finalization of the DANUBE FAB ConOps update. Given the progress the FAB has made in completing FRA extensions and implementing technical projects, these need to be represented in a new version of the document.

Recommendations

The DANUBE FAB project identified 5 corrective actions as part of its 2023 Annual Report, all of them being ongoing. Actions to address them have been identified and are being actioned by experts across the FAB.

DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

For the purpose of this document the definitions in the harmonised regulatory framework for the creation of the Single European Sky shall apply. The following definitions and acronyms are used in this document:

AIS - Aeronautical Information Service

AMP - Aeronautical Meteorological Personnel

ANSP - Air Navigation Service Provider

AP - Annual Plan

AR - Annual Report

ARN - ATM Route Network

ATM-MP - ATM Master Plan

ATSEP - Air Traffic Safety Engineering Professional

CDM - Collaborative Decision Making

CNS - Communications, Navigation and Surveillance

(E)/(L)SSIP - European/Local Single Sky ImPlementation (mechanism/documents)

EATM – European Air Traffic Management

EC - European Commission

EP – European Parliament

ERNIP – European Route Network Implementation Plan

EU – **E**uropean **U**nion

FAB - Functional Airspace Block

ICAO - International Civil Aviation Organisation

IDP - Interim Deployment Programme

IDSG – Interim Deployment Steering Group

IMS - Integrated Management System

ISMS - Information Security Management System

KPI – **K**ey **P**erformance **I**ndicator

MET – Aeronautical Meteorological Services

MIL - Military

MWO - Meteorological Watch Office

NM - Network Manager

NMB - Network Management Board

NOP - Network Operations Plan

NSA – National Supervisory Authority

NSP - Network Strategic Plan

OI - Operational Improvement

OSC – **O**perational **S**tanding **C**ommittee

PRB – Performance Review Body

SAPSC - Strategies and Planning Standing Committee

SBP - Strategic Business Plan

SES – Single European Sky

SESAR - SES ATM Research

SIGMET-SIG nificant MET erological information

SP - Strategic Programme

SQSESC - Safety, Quality, Security and Environment Standing Committee

SSC - Single Sky Committee

TWG - Technical Working Group

WAM - Wide Area Multilateration