
NEFAB Annual Report 2013

According to Article 5 (b) of the rules of procedure of the NEFAB Council an Annual Report shall be drawn up for each year.

The NEFAB Annual Report 2013 provides information on significant developments in the NEFAB cooperation during 2013.

The present annual report has been approved by the NEFAB Council.

NEFAB Annual Report 2013

Introduction

In June 2012 Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Norway signed an agreement (the State Level Agreement), which forms the main legal basis for the establishment of the North European Functional Airspace Block (NEFAB). The agreement entered into force in December 2012, and at the end of 2013 NEFAB had completed its first year of operations.

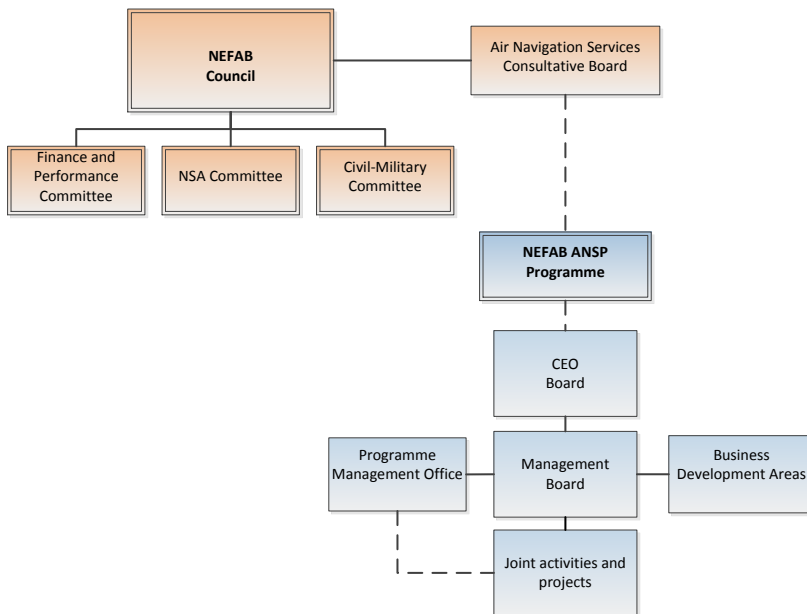
NEFAB was established to implement a major part of the Single European Sky legislation and aims at streamlining routes, increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness, ensuring capacity and reducing pollution within its airspace.

The first significant step in the process that led to the creation of NEFAB was a Feasibility Study Report finalized in 2011, which analysed the potential benefits of a cooperation between the NEFAB Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs). The report showed that there is a significant potential for benefits. Having assessed the report, the National Supervisory Authorities (NSAs) of the NEFAB States concluded that the cooperation would fulfil the legal requirements for Functional Airspace Block (FABs) set out in EU Single European Sky legislation. On this basis the NEFAB States at ministerial level decided that it would make sense for the four states to set up a FAB between them.

NEFAB governance

The NEFAB Council is the body responsible for the governance of NEFAB. The Council is assisted by three committees; the National Supervisory Authorities (NSA) Committee, the Civil-Military Committee and the Financial and Performance Committee. In addition, the Air Navigation Services Consultative Board shall ensure that any necessary consultation of the air navigation service providers and other stakeholders takes place. All these bodies have a legal basis in the State Level Agreement.

In addition, the NSAs have signed a cooperation agreement (the NSA Agreement) to carry out their tasks under the State Level Agreement, which covers aspects such as the supervision of air navigation service providers. Similarly, the air navigation service providers have entered into a separate cooperation agreement (the ANSP Agreement). Under the ANSP Agreement a NEFAB CEO Board and a NEFAB Management Board are set up with responsibility for decision-making and supervision respectively. A NEFAB Programme Management Office is also established. It manages the NEFAB Programme, which defines the cooperation between the air navigation service providers further, and gives support to the service providers and NEFAB states.



Main developments in NEFAB in 2013

Cooperation between the ANSPs in NEFAB

The cooperation between the ANSPs is still in a transitional phase. This is in line with the Feasibility Study Report, which stipulates that the period through 2015 should be considered as a ramp-up period. The NEFAB ANSP Programme was established and functional as of September 2012 – even before the formal establishment of NEFAB. During this first period the ANSPs have initially concentrated their efforts on two projects for cooperation, which they have concluded are feasible in a relative short term, and which will bring clear benefits for the airspace users: NEFAB Airspace 2015 and NEFAB ATS Provision 2015. The former is the establishment of a Free Route Airspace concept for the NEFAB airspace. The latter entails developing an enhanced Air Traffic Service concept in support of the Free Route Airspace. These two projects were merged into one project early in 2013: The NEFAB Target Concept Project, which will deliver the NEFAB Network Plan in April 2013.

NEFAB Free Route Airspace (FRA) concept

The preparations for Free Route Airspace in NEFAB are progressing as planned, with the aim to have it implemented on 12 November 2015. FRA will be implemented in the airspace managed by the NEFAB States, including in Bodø Oceanic FIR. It will apply above FL135 in Norway and above FL 95 in the other States, subject to further validations. Furthermore, the base scenario is to establish a seamless interface between the NEFAB FRA and the FRA concept in the DK-SE FAB above FL 285, which is the lower level of FRA in DK-SE FAB. (More information under the heading “Cooperation with DK-SE FAB”.) Important documentation for the establishment on NEFAB FRA was adopted by the NEFAB Management Board in April 2013 and distributed to the ANSPs for implementation. A Safety Case report was completed and adopted in November.

NEFAB ANSP Business Development Areas (BDA)

During autumn 2013 the ANSPs started the process of reviewing possible business development areas in addition to the initial projects mentioned above. The aim is to develop concrete plans for enhancing cooperation in the NEFAB ANSPs Programme, aiming at cost efficiency improvement, harmonization of services and sharing of best practices. The benefits identified in the Feasibility Study Report from 2011 are an important point of departure.

The approach is to identify areas and activities for further exploration into common activities and projects, as follows:

- Sharing best practices
- Identifying possible areas for FAB wide cost efficiency improvements

- Common Business opportunities
- Harmonization of subject area
- Coordination of FAB wide activities in the subject area

Seven business functions have been defined for BDAs in the NEFAB Programme:

- Safety
- CNS
- Finance
- Training
- AIS/AIM
- Operations
- Performance

By end of 2013 the sub-projects *Safety*, *CNS*, *Training* and *AIS/AIM* had been initiated. According to the annual plan for 2014, a complete review should be finalised by June 2014 and a study action plan completed and approved by mid-August 2014.

The outcome of this process will be followed closely by the NEFAB States, and will be fed into the process of developing a Strategy for NEFAB. (See the section below on NEFAB Strategy.)

Additional information on the cooperation between the NEFAB ANSPs in 2013 is available in the [NEFAB Programme Annual Report 2013](#).

Cooperation with Denmark and Sweden

The importance of and potential benefits from closer cooperation between NEFAB and DK-SE FAB is recognised. The ANSPs from the six States (as well as from Iceland) entered into a framework agreement in 2011 on closer cooperation concerning the development of airspace.

At ministerial level, steps were taken in 2013 to facilitate development of closer cooperation between NEFAB and DK-SE FAB. Norway took the lead in establishing a network of representatives at ministerial level, and organised three meetings in this setting. Terms of Reference for this network were developed during the year and finally adopted in November. It will be for Denmark, who is chairing the Network at ministerial level in 2014, to take the lead in furthering the cooperation as stipulated in the declaration from the Ministers.

The most significant achievement, so far, is the ministerial declaration from 11 March 2013, signed by the Ministers responsible for transport issues of the six States concerned. The theme of the declaration is a commitment for cooperation in airspace development. The stated long term aim is a possible future consolidation of the two FABs. As a first step, the six States commit themselves to undertake necessary actions to ensure implementing the Free Route Airspace concept above FL 285 in the entire airspace of NEFAB and DK-SE FAB by the end of 2015. Furthermore, the Ministers are committed to encourage their ANSPs to cooperate regarding Air Traffic Services across national borders between NEFAB and DK-SE FAB.

As a consequence of the ministerial declaration, the ANSPs of NEFAB and DK-SE FAB established a joint project for the preparation and implementation of a seamless Free Route Airspace area within the airspace of NEFAB and DK-SE FAB above FL 285 – thereby enabling the airspace users to flight-plan user preferred trajectories regardless of the respective FIR/AoR boundary within the entire airspace mentioned. The project, called NEFRA, has its own governance and dedicated project plan. Progress reports will be submitted twice a year to the States involved (i.e. the NSAs and the Ministries of Transport). The establishment of a joint CONOPS (“concept for operation”) for NEFRA has proved complicated due to differences in the approach applied in the two FABs.¹

¹ It was finally agreed in February 2014, after extended delays. Furthermore, it was agreed to implement NEFRA in two stages – 2015 and 2018, due to lack of commitment from DK-SE FAB regarding automatic system support already in 2015. Terms of Reference for phase 2 were agreed in February 2014.

A Free Route Airspace concept, like the NEFRA project, will bring real benefits for the airspace users through the possibility to plan and execute user-preferred routings to a larger degree than with a 'fixed route' network, and hence, to reduce fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions. The potential benefits are disproportionately more pronounced when the Free Route Airspace concept covers a large, continuous airspace – like NEFRA.

Cooperation with other states/FABs

The main focus on cooperation with other states and/or FABs is currently on the cooperation with the DK/SE FAB, see above. However, Russia is also an important strategic partner for NEFAB, especially since all NEFAB States have a common border with Russia. Initial contact was made with Russia in 2013, both at ministerial level and at ANSP level, to start discussions on potential cooperation activities.

The reply from Russia was received on 21.02.2014. Russian Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation Federal Air Transport Agency expressed their interest in organising cooperation with aviation authorities and ANSP providers of NEFAB states. In the letter it was expressed the need to specify the possible proposals on the discussion.

EU Pilot

NEFAB submitted the documentation required by SES- legislation before establishing a new functional airspace block (FAB) on 6 January 2012. After having received comments from the Commission and other interested parties, NEFAB replied to these comments on 26 September 2012.

In February 2013 the NEFAB EU-States received a so-called "EU Pilot" letter seeking clarification on how the FAB fulfils the requirements of SES- legislation. A significant amount of resources was invested to draft a reply, which was approved by the NEFAB Council on 21 May and submitted to the Commission on 23 May 2013. A second "EU Pilot" letter requesting an implementation plan for the actions stated in the first reply was received on 22 July 2013 and a reply was approved by the NEFAB Council on 27 November and submitted to the Commission on 29 November 2013. The parts of the replies that concerned cooperation between NEFAB and DK-SE FAB were drafted in cooperation with the two FABs.

Reference Period 2 – NEFAB performance plan

The very first NEFAB performance plan will be adopted in 2014 and relates to reference period 2 (2015-2019). A significant part of the preparatory work was initiated during 2013 and mainly concerned the assessment of the proposed EU-wide performance targets put forward by the Commission and the advice given by the Performance Review Body to the Commission.

The NEFAB states remain committed to ensuring consistency between their performance targets and the EU-wide performance targets and will continue their work with the NEFAB performance plan in 2014 fully in line with this commitment.

Use of English as the only language in parts of NEFAB airspace

At the request of the NEFAB ANSP Programme and the NSA Committee the NEFAB Council has at several Council meetings in 2013 discussed the possibility of making English the only language to be used for the provision of air traffic services and meteorological services in parts of NEFAB airspace. As a starting point the airspace concerned is limited to en-route airspace.

The NEFAB Council recognizes that this initiative is both useful and necessary to enable cross-border service provision within NEFAB. At its meeting in September 2013 the Council encouraged the NEFAB States to consider whether any national legislative measures are necessary to enable the implementation of such an initiative and to report the findings at the Council meeting in December 2013.

Based on the information submitted by the NEFAB States the Council concluded at the December meeting that it is legally possible to implement such an arrangement. It decided that the ANSPs are to propose a more specific definition of which parts of NEFAB airspace will be covered and that the NSA Committee, assisted by the ANSPs, shall draft a proposal to be submitted to the Council for adoption. The aim is furthermore to adopt any necessary national regulations by the end of 2015 at the latest.

National language requirements are one important obstacle to cross-border service provision. By removing this obstacle, one important enabler of cross-border service provision is in place. By enabling cross-border services the ANSPs may establish cross-border sectors irrespective of national borders and provide services based on operational requirements. This is expected to reduce the total workload of the ACCs concerned and leads to a more cost-efficient service provision and opportunities for contingency arrangements. This will benefit both operators, passengers and ANSPs and improve the performance of NEFAB.

NEFAB Strategy

A considerable amount of time in 2013 was devoted to discussions on a strategic plan for NEFAB.

A strategy seminar for representatives and alternate representatives to the NEFAB Council, the NEFAB committees, the CEO Board and the Management Board was held in September in order to gain more input and guidance on how the high-level NEFAB vision can be converted into specific targets and actions to reach these targets.

An important element in the strategic plan is the outcome of the review of the feasibility study and the identification of business development areas that the ANSPs have started in order to establish new potential NEFAB cooperation projects in addition to FRA/NEFRA, see above. As already mentioned, the review should be completed by June 2014 and an action plan should be completed and approved by mid-August 2014.

The NEFAB Strategy drafting process continues in 2014 with a view to adopting the strategy at the next meeting of the NEFAB Council in November.

LARA / PRISMIL

LARA (Local and sub-regional ATM support system) and *PRISMIL* (Pan-European repository of information supporting the military) are tools developed by EUROCONTROL with the purpose of assisting the ANSPs, as well as military authorities and airspace users in their efforts to ensure that the available airspace is made use of in the most efficient way by civil and military airspace users. These tools will facilitate the implementation of the planned Free Route Airspace concept in NEFAB, and they are important for the verification of military mission effectiveness performance in NEFAB which is an element of the NEFAB performance plan for 2015-2019.

The **LARA** tool will make it possible to introduce a more automated procedure for allocating airspace for military training, both in the process of planning the use of the available airspace by civil and military operators long term and short term, and in the process of changing the allocation of airspace between civil and military operators in real time. In the latter case, the purpose is to be able to notify closure of active military training areas in an efficient way (i.e. by automated means) and with minimal delay to all stakeholders concerned.

The **PRISMIL** tool will make it possible to compile statistics on the actual use of the airspace by civil and military operators, and on the actual military mission effectiveness - as defined in the NEFAB performance plan.

In July 2013, the NEFAB Management Board submitted a proposal for the implementation of these tools in all the NEFAB States. The proposal was endorsed by the NSA Committee and the Civil – Military Committee, and it was subsequently approved by the NEFAB Council in its September meeting.

The tools are to be implemented by the ANSPs and the military authorities and operators. A detailed roadmap for the implementation was drawn up, with planned target dates for implementation in first half of 2014 for Estonia and Norway, and first half of 2015 for Finland. (Latvia has already started the process of implementing LARA.) However, the process of preparing the implementation has faced some challenges in several States which needs

to be solved before finishing the implementation. That might have some effect for planned schedules but the plan in general still is that these systems will be implemented in the NEFAB area by November 2015.

Activities in the NEFAB governance bodies during 2013

NEFAB Council

The NEFAB Council met 4 times during 2013; in February, May, September and November. Information on the main topics discussed at the meetings is available in information notices published on the NEFAB website:

www.nefab.eu

[Council meeting on 6 February](#)

[Council meeting on 21 May](#)

[Council meeting on 19 September](#)

[Council meeting on 27 November](#)

The NSA Committee

The NSA Committee met six times during 2013 and was chaired by the Finnish NSA (TRAFI). In addition, four working groups under the NSA Committee have been established and started their activities.

- The Performance WG is responsible for the preparations of the NEFAB Performance Plan for Reference Period 2 (2015-2019).
- The Airspace Management WG follows the preparations for the establishment of the NEFAB Free Route Airspace concept and the common Free Route Airspace with the DK/SE FAB, as well as the facilitation of cross-border service provision.
- The WG on Reporting, Exchange and Dissemination of Safety Information drafted a proposal for harmonised procedures for the NSAs in NEFAB. The proposal was approved by the NSA Committee. The WG now concentrates on the practical implementation in the NEFAB States. An important element in this work is the establishment of common safety performance indicators (SPI) for NEFAB. Such indicators will help to identify which areas need attention in order to improve safety, and to check whether safety targets are achieved.
- The Change Management WG has produced a document on a common NEFAB Change Management process, which was approved by the NSA Committee. This is a key document in view of the foreseen changes in the way in which the ANSPs of NEFAB will conduct their activities separately and jointly in the future.

A dedicated task force was set up by the NSA Committee to prepare a proposal for a harmonised implementation of the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) with a target date of December 2014. The proposal was approved by the NSA Committee towards the end of 2013.

The NSA Committee has established a list of experts in the NEFAB NSAs (qualifications, competencies, etc.) which will be useful for the NSAs when assisting each other in performing their tasks. Furthermore, in 2013 the NSA Committee made the necessary preparations for joint audit activities (joint audit teams) in the NEFAB States as from 2014.

Another joint activity by the NSAs is the preparation for the establishment of a common NSA Handbook. This task was initiated by the NSA Committee in September 2013. Assistance will be sought from EUROCONTROL.

The Committee was also involved in the assessment of the proposals regarding use of the English language in NEFAB airspace, and the introduction of the new software tools LARA and PRISMIL. (See separate chapters on these items.)

The NSAs of NEFAB take part in a network for cooperation between the NSAs of the NEFAB States, as well as Denmark, Sweden and Iceland. This network, "7 States NSA Group" was chaired by the Finnish NSA in 2013. It met twice in 2013, and its Terms of Reference were established in June 2013. According to the Terms of Reference the main purpose is to facilitate harmonised implementation of the Single European Sky initiative.

Furthermore, it is a forum for discussing possibilities and options for closer cooperation between NEFAB and Danish-Swedish FAB.

The Civil-Military Committee

The Civil-Military Committee met four times in 2013 and was chaired by the Latvian CAA. A military-military expert group was established, with the purpose of assisting in specific military issues such as common military mission objectives and requirements. The committee initiated a proposal on the implementation of new software tools – LARA and PRISMIL – which can contribute to more efficient use of available airspace for civil and military air operators. (See separate chapter on this item.)

The Committee produced a report on the implementation of the “Flexible use of airspace” (FUA) concept in the NEFAB States, which was submitted to the NEFAB Council. The purpose was to facilitate a harmonised implementation of the FUA concept in NEFAB.

With assistance from EUROCONTROL, the Committee produced a proposal for the civil-military dimension of the NEFAB performance plan for reference period 2. The proposal was submitted to the NSA Committee for incorporation into the NEFAB performance plan.

The Committee was also engaged in the formulation of specific civil-military issues in connection with the establishment of the NEFAB Free Route Airspace concept. Finally, the Committee contributed to the NEFAB strategy work by providing a document regarding military objectives relevant to NEFAB Strategic Plan.

The Financial and Performance Committee

The Committee met three times in 2013, and was chaired by the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication.

The Committee initiated a mapping exercise regarding the structure of the charges for air navigation services of the NEFAB States, which will be continued in 2014. The aim is to identify the differences in national charging policy and assess the possibilities for harmonising the charging policy in NEFAB. Furthermore, the Committee discussed issues related to the development of a long term strategy for NEFAB, as well as a common position on the EU-wide performance targets for reference period 2 (except for safety), including the high-level approach for corresponding targets in the NEFAB performance plan.

The Air Navigation Services Consultative Board

The inaugural meeting of the Air Navigation Services Consultative Board took place on 18 September 2013. Representatives of NEFAB governing bodies were invited and present, together with representatives of ANSPs of NEFAB States as well as representatives of airspace users and staff associations. The agenda of the meeting included presentations and discussion on the governance of NEFAB, and on current activities and plans for the cooperation in the various NEFAB bodies and between the ANSPs, including between the MET providers. Furthermore there were presentations and discussion on the preparations for reference period no. 2 of the EU performance scheme and on the proposal for a second revision of the Single Sky package (SES Package 2+).

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