

AUDIT

Audit of business continuity management

Skyguide

KEY FACTS

Skyguide plays a crucial role in Swiss airspace management, ensuring the safety and efficiency of civil and military air traffic throughout Switzerland, as well as in specific border zones in France and Germany. As Skyguide is the country's single air navigation service provider (ANSP), any disruption to its operations results in an immediate suspension of air traffic, affecting airlines, passengers and the Swiss economy. These critical responsibilities underline the importance of having a robust continuity mechanism that can ensure that services remain available even in crisis situations.

The air traffic disruption experienced in 2022¹⁶ and 2024¹⁷ demonstrated the need for greater organisational resilience. These events had immediate repercussions across the whole transport system, confirming Skyguide's role as a strategic player whose operational continuity is essential to the stability of Switzerland's economy, logistics and security.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) made various recommendations regarding business continuity management (BCM) in its 2021 audit on the implementation of minimum requirements relating to air navigation services.¹⁸ These included the implementation of geo-redundancy measures and disaster recovery plans (DRPs), which are vital to ensuring the availability of critical services.

In this audit, the SFAO assessed Skyguide's BCM from a governance perspective, based on the ISO 22301 standard.¹⁹ The SFAO found that BCM maturity is still inadequate. The management and strategy components have not yet reached an acceptable level of maturity. However, the formalisation of a BCM policy and a BCM directive, as well as the completion of a business impact assessment (BIA), demonstrate a desire to gradually put in place a structured business continuity management system (BCMS).

Lack of a structured BCMS

Skyguide's BCM implementation shows a clear initial commitment to ensuring structured business continuity, particularly in response to the recommendations of the Accenture report²⁰ commissioned by the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC) following the 2022 incident. However, the current approach is still too fragmented. BCM is more like a series of ad hoc initiatives than a cross-functional process driven by and aligned with the organisation's overarching goals. It is essential for Skyguide to take the next step forward by formalising and deploying a fully-fledged BCMS. This would ensure consistent, cross-functional and sustainable management of the business continuity mechanism within the organisation.

¹⁶ Accenture's independent investigation report into the incident at Skyguide on 15 June 2022, available on the DETEC website

¹⁷ Article on the closure of Geneva airspace due to the failure of the cooling system following flooding in the basement of the control centre, available on the Skyguide website

¹⁸ Audit of critical infrastructure protection: implementation of minimum requirements within the purview of the Air Navigation Service (21408), available on the SFAO website

¹⁹ ISO 22301 standard

²⁰ Accenture's independent investigation report into the incident at Skyguide on 15 June 2022, available on the DETEC website

No clear management

Robust implementation of BCM cannot rely solely on Skyguide. With no clear national and international guidelines, formalised responsibilities or shared funding mechanisms, overall BCM management at national level remains inadequate. It is the responsibility of DETEC, in collaboration with the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) and the Federal Finance Administration (FFA), to establish this normative framework.

It is essential for Skyguide to clearly define the responsibilities, requirements and funding related to the continuity of air navigation services in collaboration with the representatives of the owners, DETEC, the DDPS and the FFA. This approach should also involve the regulatory authorities – specifically, the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) and the Military Aviation Authority (MAA), as well as partners such as the Air Force (AF). Such an approach would ensure coordinated management and sustainable financing of BCM, thus consolidating the continuity mechanism across Swiss air navigation and providing a common, shared and sustainable vision.