When setting out on a long journey, it usually pays to have a map to make sure you know where you are going. But a map itself is useless if you don’t know what the starting and finishing points are on the journey.

In 2007 Air Navigation Service Providers agreed a ‘finishing point’ for their journey: a global ‘Seamless ANS’ system. This vision was agreed by members of CANSO and articulated in the Organisation’s ‘Global Vision for the Future of ANS’. Across ten policy areas (see sidebar) the Global Vision sets out a roadmap for the regulatory and institutional reforms required to reach Seamless ANS.

But how does an ANSP know where it stands today on the ‘road’? It is to answer precisely that question that the new ANSP Fitness Check, launched at the CANSO AGM in June, has been created.

What is the ANSP Fitness Check?

The CANSO ANSP Fitness Check is a tool to help ANSPs to assess their performance improvement journey by identifying their present situation and then determining where they want to be in 3-5 years. “One difficult issue was the title, because we needed to avoid ‘quality speak’” explains Klaus Golinski who chaired the QMWG throughout the production of the Fitness Check. “The final title was invented in an Irish pub, a place not normally related to the air traffic control world! And it is important to stress this is a guidance tool, not a mandatory tool for the ANSPs. But even a self-assessment tool can be a strong ‘influencing tool’ if applied in a positive way.” To give the exercise a positive touch, the term ‘Fitness Check’ was coined.

In early 2009, following evaluation of several different options, including creating a bespoke model, the Quality Management Workgroup (QMWG) decided to base the Fitness Check on the new ISO 9004:2009 Quality Management Guidance Standard 1. The availability of self-assessment tools in ISO 9004, together with the fact that many ANSPs had already implemented a QMS based on ISO 9001, was crucial to the decision. “Two small sentences in the 9004 text played a very important role in the decision process,” says Klaus.

The CANSO Global Vision assists the industry to confront critical issues and questions, while proposing solutions to support Members to achieve lasting improvements to global ATM performance.

The Global Vision’s central aim is a Seamless ANS system.

What are the elements of a Global Vision?

- Managed Safely
- Appropriate Regulations
- Customer Focussed
- Civil-Military Cooperation
- People Focus
- Business-like Approach
- Optimised ATM Systems
- Environment
- Security

Under the direction of Gudrun Held a great deal of work towards the Global Vision has been taken on by CANSO’s Business Transformation Programme, for example by developing guidance material to assist ANSPs in separating regulation from service provision. The Quality Management Workgroup invited the Business Transformation Workgroup to review Part 1 of the Fitness Check, to reinforce the link with the Global Vision. You can see more on the Global Vision and the BT Workgroup in a video which can be viewed on the CANSO website: www.canso.org/BTvideo
Golinski. “Sentences encouraging the users of the standard to customise the tools making them more suitable for own situation and needs gave the flexibility needed to tailor the standard.”

“That was exactly our aim when developing this new version of ISO 9004; to provide the management of organisations with a flexible tool fitting to their own situation and ambitions” adds Bob Alisic, former Task Group Leader responsible for development of the new ISO 9004:2009.

By October 2009 a first draft of the customised self-assessment tool was ready for review. The tool included two sections not normally found in assessments of this kind, but which are crucial to ANSPs: safety and environment. The tool was developed in coordination with all of the CANSO Workgroup Chairs, agreed by the Association’s Executive Committee, and then submitted to the June 2010 Annual General Meeting for approval as a CANSO Standard of Excellence (which was unanimously granted).

The fitness check is divided into two parts. Part 1 uses the CANSO Global Vision as a reference point. It is a holistic approach as it takes all elements of CANSO’s Global Vision into account. This tool was developed to help ANSPs plan and prioritise their journey towards the Global Vision.

To complete Fitness Check (F-check) Part 1, ANSPs are asked:

- To mark their present position on the journey towards the Global Vision
- To circle where they want to be in e.g. 3-5 years

The resulting gap analysis helps the individual ANSP to prioritise their actions and direction and it helps CANSO to develop needs-driven guidance material, policies and also seminars or training.

This part is a joint development of BT Programme and QMWG. But it is owned by the QMWG. It will be reviewed on an annual basis and adapted to the Global Vision whenever required.

F-Check Part 2 is a detailed check for an ANSP’s internal use. The F-Check 2 is an excellent instrument to stimulate internal discussions and communication about possible gaps and improvements. This part also uses a holistic business-oriented approach to managing for sustained performance. In addition, it will provide hooks for more detailed guidelines, standards, assessments which may be developed by other CANSO programmes/groups e.g. for SM, environment management, HR, customer relations.

Levels of achievement

The gap analysis of the F-Check part 1 establishes five levels of achievement along the road towards the Global Vision. “Getting the right terminology was essential to the success of the F-Check” explains Golinski. “There was a danger of prescription and we were keen not to try and create the ‘ideal’ ANSP. It was also important to stress

"It was important to show Members a completed document so that people didn’t feel it would be in a state of flux” says Gudrun Held. “We were also proud of the work and the response from members, and we wanted to present that in an upbeat, innovative way. The team juggled ideas for weeks, from Red Cross tents to fitness centres; it had to be ‘infotaining’ – not boring – and tailored to the needs of CEOs; to be convincing and demonstrate expertise; show the overall result and still provide the opportunity to discuss individual results; and show proof that the tool works and deserves to be a CANSO Standard of Excellence.” The result was the Market Stall, with members of the QMWG dressed in fitness gear, and Klaus Golinski dressed in a Doctor’s coat. Information, including aggregated results from Members who had gone through part 1 of the check, was displayed on boards which encouraged discussion and exploration. There is some video showing the complete CANSO Marketplace at www.canso.org/oslo2010.

Former chair of the QMWG Klaus Golinski believes self assessment can be a strong influence if applied in a positive way.
that different levels may well be appropriate to different organisations. Level 5 may not always be the best for a particular ANSP – it may be unnecessarily expensive or complicated for them at this time.”

In the medium-term, refinement of the F-Check will include greater regional specialisation, to better reflect regional priorities and circumstances. The group may also look at how the fitness check could be applied to industry suppliers and stakeholders in the industry.

Positive reception
The reception to the F-Check was very positive, with 30 ANSPs filling in part one, providing a range of interesting data (see box above). It was decided to launch the Fitness Check and present the results in an interactive way as possible, and this led to the Fitness Check stand at the CANSO Waypoint 2013 Market Place at the AGM in June (see side bar page 13). “The feedback was gratifying. A typical comment was ‘You’re talking about business management, not quality.’ This showed we had got the Fitness Check right, because quality management should always be about business improvement” says Golinski.

The Fitness Check has already proved an invaluable tool for the ANSP industry to have a sense of how far it needs to go to reach a seamless ANS. The road will have many twists and turns yet, but at least with the F-Check to rely on, CANSO Members will know what levels of fitness they aspire to and need to develop to undertake the journey.