

# EUROCONTROL



## **EUROCONTROL Specification for Short Term Conflict Alert**

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This document specifies the minimum requirements for the development, configuration and use of Short Term Conflict Alert (STCA) in the ECAC area.			
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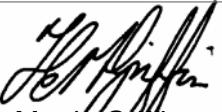
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## DOCUMENT CHANGE RECORD

The following table records the complete history of the successive editions of the present document.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is aimed at all Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) in the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) area. It specifies the minimum requirements for the development, configuration and use of Short Term Conflict Alert (STCA). STCA is a ground-based safety net intended to assist the controller in preventing collision between aircraft by generating, in a timely manner, an alert of a potential or actual infringement of separation minima.

The European Convergence and Implementation Plan (ECIP) contains an Objective (ATC02.2) for ECAC-wide standardisation of STCA in accordance with the EUROCONTROL Specification of Short Term Conflict Alert (this document). This document specifies, in qualitative terms, the common performance characteristics of STCA as well as the prerequisites for achieving these performance characteristics.

It should also be noted that Regulation (EC) No 552/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2004 on the interoperability of the European Air Traffic Management network (the interoperability Regulation) contains *inter alia* the following essential requirements:

- “*Systems and operations of the EATMN shall achieve agreed high levels of safety. Agreed safety management and reporting methodologies shall be established to achieve this.*”
- “*In respect of appropriate ground-based systems, or parts thereof, these high levels of safety shall be enhanced by safety nets which shall be subject to agreed common performance characteristics.*”

The present document facilitates harmonization of the STCA elements of the ground based safety nets and sets up the prerequisites for the refinement, in quantitative terms, of the common performance characteristics which might be developed in a further step in response to the requirements of the SES interoperability Regulation.

This document is targeted at stakeholders identified in ECIP ATC02.2, and the requirements are placed on ANSPs. The document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 describes the purpose, scope and structure of the document.
- Chapter 2 lists reference documents, explains terms and contains a list of abbreviations.
- Chapter 3 describes the STCA concept of operations. It provides the contextual information for interpretation of the requirements contained in Chapter 4.
- Chapter 4 specifies the minimum qualitative requirements that are regarded as necessary for effective STCA. It does not prescribe implementation aspects. Only the *minimum* requirements that are considered essential for ensuring the effectiveness of STCA in the

ECAC area are specified. These requirements are necessarily of a qualitative nature considering the implications of local factors that need to be considered. The requirements in this chapter are normative in the sense that:

- Requirements using the operative verb “**shall**” are mandatory to claim compliance with the Specification. Mandatory requirements are explicitly numbered with the prefix “STCA-”.
- Requirements using the operative verb “**should**” are recommended.
- Requirements using the operative verb “**may**” are optional.
- Requirements using the operative verb “**will**” denote a statement of intent.
- Chapter 5 identifies the comprehensive guidance material available to assist in implementing this Specification.

Use of the word “shall” is avoided in Chapter 3 of this Specification and in the guidance material in order to emphasise the introductory, explanatory and non-normative nature of the information provided.

Some of the terms in section 2.2 and the requirements on procedures in section 4.2 are derived from paragraph 15.7.4 of ICAO Doc 4444. Any differences in formulation are intended to remove ambiguity and not to imply deviation from ICAO provisions.

## 2. CONVENTIONS REGARDING TERMS

### 2.1 Reference Documents

[EURO-HRS]	Guidelines for Trust in Future ATM Systems: Principles, HRS/HSP-005-GUI-03, Edition 1.0, May 2003
[SRC-ESARR4]	ESARR 4: Risk Assessment and Mitigation in ATM, Edition 1.0, 05-04-2001

### 2.2 Explanation of Terms

alert	Indication of an actual or potential hazardous situation that requires particular attention or action.
ATS surveillance service	Term used to indicate a service provided directly by means of an ATS surveillance system.
conflict	Converging of aircraft in space and time which constitutes a predicted violation of a given set of separation minima.
false alert	Alert which does not correspond to a situation requiring particular attention or action (e.g. caused by split tracks and radar reflections).
ground-based safety net	A ground-based safety net is functionality within the ATM system that is assigned by the ANSP with the sole purpose of monitoring the environment of operations in order to provide timely alerts of an increased risk to flight safety which may include resolution advice.
human performance	Human capabilities and limitations which have an impact on the safety and efficiency of aeronautical operations.
nuisance alert	Alert which is correctly generated according to the rule set but is considered operationally inappropriate.
separation	Spacing between aircraft, levels or tracks.
short term conflict alert	A ground-based safety net intended to assist the controller in preventing collision between aircraft by generating, in a timely manner, an alert of a potential or actual infringement of separation minima.

warning time	The amount of time between the first indication of an alert to the controller and the predicted hazardous situation.  <i>Note.– The achieved warning time depends on the geometry of the situation.</i>  <i>Note.– The maximum warning time may be constrained in order to keep the number of nuisance alerts below an acceptable threshold.</i>
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## 2.3 Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACAS	Airborne Collision Avoidance System
ADS	Automatic Dependent Surveillance
AGDL	Air-Ground Data Link
ANSP	Air Navigation Service Provider
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATCC	Air Traffic Control Centre
ATM	Air Traffic Management
ATS	Air Traffic Service
EATMN	European Air Traffic Management Network
EC	European Commission
ECAC	European Civil Aviation Conference
ECIP	European Convergence and Implementation Plan
ESARR	EUROCONTROL Safety Regulatory Requirements
FUA	Flexible Use of Airspace
GAT	General Air Traffic
HMI	Human Machine Interface
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
OAT	Operational Air Traffic
RVSM	Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum
SES	Single European Sky
SRC	Safety Regulation Commission
STCA	Short Term Conflict Alert
VFR	Visual Flight Rules

### 3. STCA CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

#### 3.1 Purpose of STCA

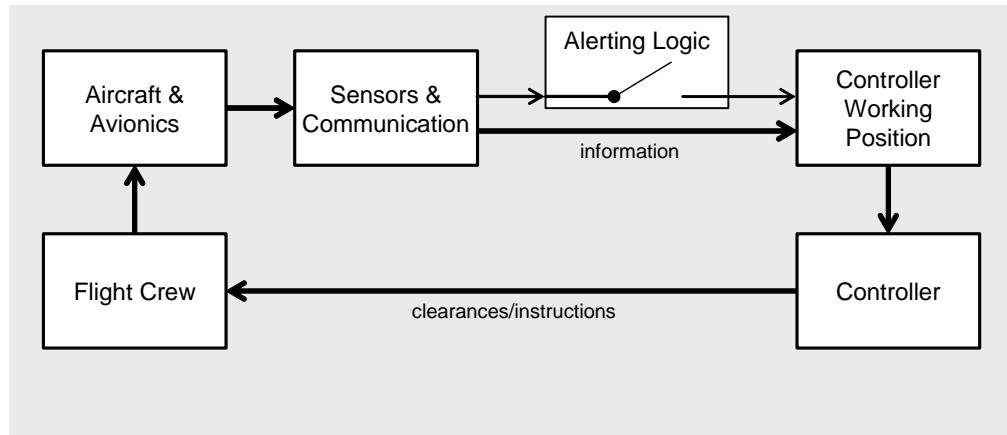


Fig. 1: Simplified ATC Control Loop

As illustrated in Fig. 1, today's ATC system is human centred: based on processing of a continuous stream of information, the controller issues clearances and instructions to prevent or resolve conflicts.

However, the drive for consistency in cognitive information processing tasks leads to selective perception/exposure, selective attention and selective interpretation. As a result, conflicts and deviations from clearances or instructions leading to aircraft proximity can remain unnoticed.

STCA adds independent alerting logic to the control loop by generating indications of existing or pending situations, related to the proximity of aircraft as well as their relative positions and speed, which require attention/action.

STCA is intended to function in the short term, if applicable providing warning times up to 2 minutes.

#### 3.2 Operational Context

When STCA was first introduced, ATS surveillance services were in most cases provided using mixed (raw radar data supplemented with computer-generated synthetic data) situation displays. In the meantime, the norm for provision of ATS surveillance services has become full-synthetic situation displays in most ECAC States. Decision support tools are gradually being introduced to enable the controller to handle more traffic in order to cope with the ever increasing demand. At the same time, automated support systems have become more robust and trustworthy but also more complex and

interdependent. These changes imply a different operational context for STCA.

It is essential that individual ANSPs establish a clear STCA policy for their particular operational context to avoid ambiguity about the role and use of STCA using the following generic policy statements as a starting point:

**STCA IS A GROUND-BASED SAFETY NET; ITS SOLE PURPOSE IS TO ENHANCE SAFETY AND ITS PRESENCE IS IGNORED WHEN CALCULATING SECTOR CAPACITY.**

**STCA IS DESIGNED, CONFIGURED AND USED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEPARATION PROVISION AND COLLISION AVOIDANCE.**

STCA is only effective if the number of nuisance alerts remains below an acceptable threshold according to local requirements and if it provides sufficient warning time to resolve hazardous situations, governed by the inherent characteristics of the human centred system.

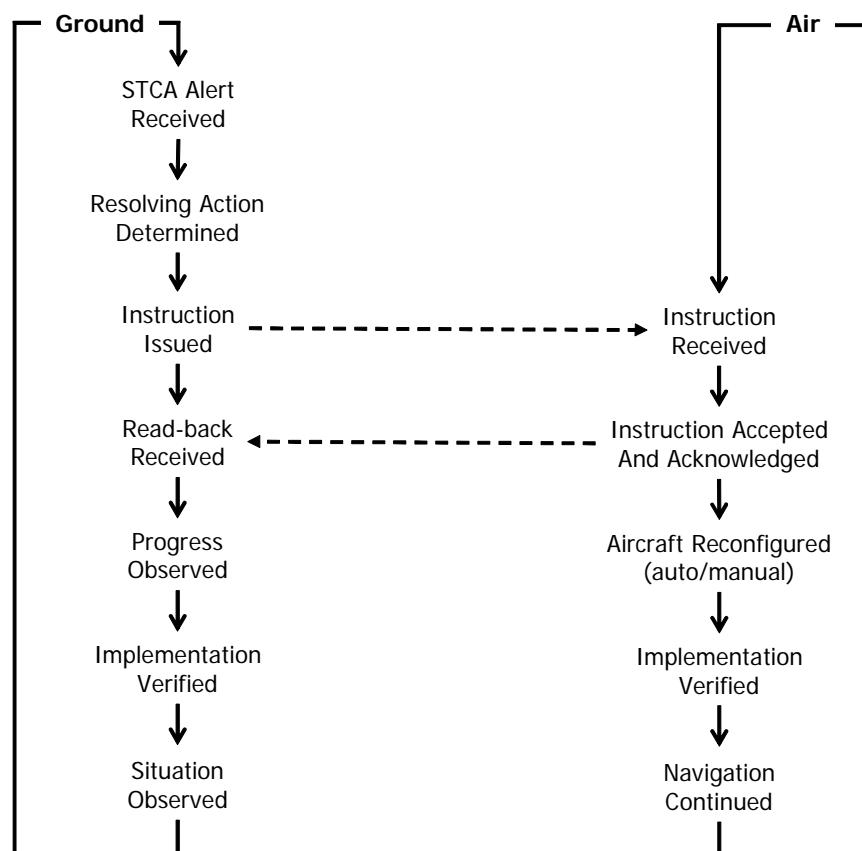


Fig. 2: Expanded ATC Control Loop (triggered by STCA)

Fig. 2 illustrates the nominal sequence of events to resolve a particular situation as two loosely coupled loops. Being a human centred system, the Ground loop reflects the states of the controller and the Air loop reflects the

states of the flight crew. For each state transition to occur certain preconditions have to be met and actions performed, complicated by many fixed or variable delays and anomalous cases.

### 3.3 Operational Concept

#### 3.3.1 Human Performance Considerations

In order to be able to process all available information, the controller must acquire situational awareness and build a mental model of the airspace and traffic pattern. To control the situation and make decisions, the controller has to establish a sector plan, which includes strategies and tactics to handle the traffic flows and conflicts.

Furthermore, there is a natural tendency for the human being to search for information that supports already taken decisions and avoid information that would be critical of it (accept as true information that conforms to pre-existing knowledge; reject as false or irrelevant information that does not conform).

The use of STCA will depend on the controller's trust. Trust is a result of many factors such as reliability and transparency. Neither mistrust nor complacency is desirable; training and experience is needed to develop trust at the appropriate level (see [EURO-HRS]).

For STCA to be effective, the controller must have a positive attitude towards STCA. This requires that the following aspects are addressed:

- **Appropriateness and timeliness**  
The rule set for generating alerts should be appropriate; dissonance with normal control practices (and/or decision support tools with a longer look-ahead time) should be avoided.
- **Effectiveness**  
The controller in charge may not notice or recognise the reason for an alert for the same reasons that left the conflict undetected. This should be addressed in HMI design.
- **Comprehensibility and performance monitoring**  
The increasing complexity of STCA and the environment in which it is used should be addressed through appropriate training and competency assessment. Practices and controller perception of the effectiveness of STCA should be evaluated periodically and following changes to STCA. Lessons from particular situations or incidents in which STCA was involved should be shared through appropriate mechanisms.

#### 3.3.2 Design Considerations

STCA should perform in concert with the airspace design and classification, variety of airspace users, Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) and the applicable procedures for air navigation services.

Special consideration should be given to making all ground-based safety nets and controller tools perform in concert.

Depending on the diversity of these aspects, STCA should be capable of using different parameters for generation of alerts in different volumes of airspace at different moments in time. A large number of volumes of airspace may need to be defined so that parameters can be tuned according to the use of individual volumes of airspace, including which flights are eligible for the generation of alerts. Different parameters may be applied in the case of system degradation (e.g. unavailability of one or more radar stations).

Local instructions concerning the use of STCA should be established to ensure that STCA is used in a safe and effective manner. Pertinent data should be regularly analysed in order to monitor and, if necessary, optimise the performance of STCA.

### 3.3.3 Technical Aspects

STCA is suitable for use in any airspace covered by adequate surveillance.

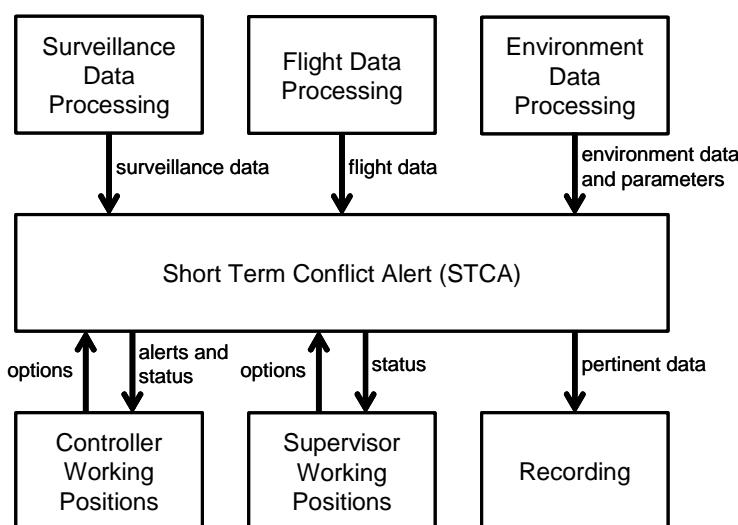


Fig. 3: STCA Context Diagram

As illustrated in Fig. 3, STCA should obtain information from Surveillance Data Processing, from Environment Data Processing and possibly from Flight Data Processing in order to generate alerts:

- Surveillance data including tracked pressure altitude information should be used to predict conflicts
- Flight data should be used as follows:
  - Type/category of flight: to determine the eligibility for alert generation
  - RVSM status: to apply appropriate parameters in RVSM airspace

- Concerned sector(s): to address alerts
- Cleared/Block Flight Levels: to increase the relevance of conflict prediction
- Type of aircraft/wake turbulence category
- Number of aircraft: to apply appropriate parameters for formation flights
- Manually entered Flight Levels: to compensate for missing pressure altitude information
- Environment data and parameters should include parameters to configure STCA for distinct volumes of airspace

Alerts should be generated at least at Controller Working Position(s) of the control sector(s) working the aircraft. Status information regarding the technical availability of STCA is to be provided to all Working Positions. Selectable options of STCA related to eligibility, configuration and technical availability may be available at Controller and Supervisor Working Positions.

All pertinent data for offline analysis of STCA should be recorded.

### **3.4 Safety Aspects**

It is assumed that EUROCONTROL Safety Regulatory Requirements are effectively implemented. It is recommended to put emphasis on [SRC-ESARR4] and its guidance material for the implementation of, and changes to, STCA applications.

### **3.5 Future Directions and Need for Change**

STCA will have to meet future demands imposed by, amongst other things, further traffic increase, changing traffic patterns, FUA, changing aircraft characteristics, further automation in the air and on the ground and, potentially, the introduction of new concepts.

STCA needs to be adapted to new separation modes (e.g. self-separation), in particular if lower separation minima are considered.

The compatibility of STCA and other ground-based and airborne safety nets, in particular ACAS, needs to be maximised.

Availability of improved or new aircraft information through Mode S, ADS and AGDL will offer new opportunities to improve STCA.

This could, amongst others, lead to changes in the following aspects of STCA:

- Correlation of ATC constraints with aircraft intent in order to further reduce the number of nuisance alerts;
- Increased look ahead time and multi-level or different types of alerts;

- Correlation of alerts from multiple sources (on the ground and in the air) to generate combined alerts.

## 4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

### 4.1 Policy, Organisational Clarity and Training Requirements

#### 4.1.1 Policy

**STCA-01** The ANSP **shall** have a formal policy on the use of STCA consistent with the operational concept and safety management system applied to avoid ambiguity about the role and use of STCA.

The policy **should** be consistent with the generic policy statements in section 3.2 of this Specification but may contain more detail or additional aspects called for by local factors.

The policy **should** be communicated to all relevant staff in order to ensure consistency of all design, configuration, operational use and monitoring activities in compliance with the intended use of STCA.

#### 4.1.2 Responsibility for Management of STCA

**STCA-02** The ANSP **shall** assign to one or more staff, as appropriate, the responsibility for overall management of STCA.

It **should** be possible for other staff in the organisation to identify the assigned staff. The assigned staff **should** seek advice from the STCA manufacturer, as appropriate.

#### 4.1.3 Training and Competence

**STCA-03** The ANSP **shall** ensure that all controllers concerned are given specific STCA training and are assessed as competent for the use of the relevant STCA system.

*Note.– The primary goal of the training is to develop and maintain an appropriate level of trust in STCA, i.e. to make controllers aware of the likely situations where STCA will be effective and, more importantly, situations in which STCA will not be so effective (e.g. sudden, unexpected manoeuvres).*

### 4.2 Requirements on Procedures

#### 4.2.1 Local Instructions

**STCA-04** Local instructions concerning use of STCA **shall** specify, *inter alia*:

- a) the types of flight (GAT/OAT, IFR/VFR, RVSM/NON-RVSM, etc.) which are eligible for generation of alerts;

- b) the volumes of airspace within which STCA is implemented;
- c) the method of displaying the STCA to the controller;
- d) in general terms, the parameters for generation of alerts as well as alert warning time;
- e) the volumes of airspace within which STCA can be selectively inhibited and the conditions under which this will be permitted;
- f) conditions under which specific alerts may be inhibited for individual flights; and
- g) procedures applicable in respect of volumes of airspace or flights for which STCA or specific alerts have been inhibited.

#### 4.2.2 Controller Actions

**STCA-05** In the event an alert is generated in respect of controlled flights, the controller **shall** without delay assess the situation and if necessary take action to ensure that the applicable separation minimum will not be infringed or will be restored.

*Note.– STCA does not exist in isolation; when a pilot reports a manoeuvre induced by an ACAS resolution advisory (RA), the controller is required not to attempt to modify the aircraft flight path.*

#### 4.2.3 STCA Performance Analyses

**STCA-06** STCA performance **shall** be analysed regularly to identify possible shortcomings related to STCA.

#### 4.2.4 Statistical Analyses

The appropriate ATS authority **should** retain electronic records of all alerts generated. The data and circumstances pertaining to each alert **should** be analysed to determine whether an alert was justified or not. Non-justified alerts, e.g. when visual separation was applied, **should** be ignored. A statistical analysis **should** be made of justified alerts in order to identify possible shortcomings in airspace design and ATC procedures as well as to monitor overall safety levels.

### 4.3 Requirements on STCA Capabilities

#### 4.3.1 Alerting Performance

**STCA-07** STCA **shall** detect and alert operationally relevant conflicts involving at least one eligible aircraft.

**STCA-08** STCA **shall** provide alerts for operationally relevant conflicts.

*Note.– Conflicts are operationally relevant when covered by the adopted rule set and optimisation strategy. The rule set and optimisation strategy should*

*be determined taking into account the relevant local factors. STCA should not be expected to alert all operationally relevant conflicts.*

**STCA-09** STCA alerts **shall** attract the controller's attention and identify the aircraft involved in the conflict; STCA alerts **shall** be at least visual.

An audible element **may** be included to improve the systems ability to draw the controller's attention to the alert. If a continuous audible element is included, an acknowledgement mechanism **may** be provided to silence an alert.

**STCA-10** The number of nuisance alerts produced by STCA **shall** be kept to an effective minimum.

*Note.– Human factors and local circumstances determine what constitutes an effective minimum.*

**STCA-11** The number of false alerts produced by STCA **shall** be kept to an effective minimum.

*Note.– Local circumstances determine what constitutes an effective minimum.*

#### 4.3.2 Warning Time

**STCA-12** When the geometry of the situation permits, the warning time **shall** be sufficient for all necessary steps to be taken from the controller recognising the alert to the aircraft successfully executing an appropriate manoeuvre.

*Note.– Insufficient warning time may be provided in cases of sudden, unexpected manoeuvres.*

**STCA-13** STCA **shall** continue to provide alert(s) as long as the alert conditions exist.

#### 4.3.3 Alert Inhibition

**STCA-14** STCA **shall** provide the possibility to inhibit alerts for predefined volumes of airspace and for individual flights.

*Note.– It may be necessary to inhibit alerts for predefined volumes of airspace (e.g. exercise areas) to suppress unnecessary alerts. It may be necessary to inhibit alerts for individual flights (e.g. formation flights) to suppress unnecessary alerts.*

**STCA-15** Alert inhibitions **shall** be made known to all controllers concerned.

#### 4.3.4 Status Information

**STCA-16** Status information **shall** be presented to supervisor and controller working positions in case STCA is not available.

#### 4.3.5 Adaptability

STCA **should** be adaptable for the procedures in use in all distinct volumes of airspace at any moment in time.

STCA **may** need to take into account the specific volume of airspace in which each aircraft is flying, in order to apply appropriate parameters or trajectory estimation. Different parameters **may** be applied in the case of system degradation (e.g. unavailability of one or more radar stations).

In RVSM airspace, STCA **should** be able to selectively assess the applicable vertical separation minimum of either 300 m (1 000 ft) or 600 m (2 000 ft), as determined by the current RVSM approved or non-approved (incl. unknown and exempt) status of the flight concerned.

#### 4.3.6 Data Recording

**STCA-17** All pertinent STCA data **shall** be made available for off-line analysis.

*Note.– Off-line analysis may need access to other data sources as well (surveillance data and voice recordings) for complete analysis.*

## 5. GUIDANCE MATERIAL

### 5.1 Structure of the Guidance Material

Comprehensive guidance material to assist in implementing this Specification covers the full STCA lifecycle:

- Definition of objectives
- Implementation or change
- Tuning and validation
- Operating and monitoring

The guidance material consists of a document titled **EUROCONTROL Guidance Material for Short Term Conflict Alert** with several appendices. Most appendices can be used as stand-alone documents for particular purposes. Table 1 shows the structure of the guidance material.

Title	Purpose
EUROCONTROL Guidance Material for Short Term Conflict Alert	General description of the full STCA lifecycle, aimed at staff with responsibility for overall management of STCA.
Appendix A: Reference STCA System	Detailed technical explanation of typical implementation details of STCA with emphasis on parameterisation and performance optimisation. Optimisation concepts are also covered in detail.
Appendix B: Safety Assurance	A set of three documents that can be used as starting point for STCA safety assurance work in a particular local context.
Appendix B-1: Initial Safety Argument for STCA System	ANSPs may find it convenient to present the safety argument as a stand-alone document initially, as is the case with this document. However, the argument will ultimately become part of the safety case document and the stand-alone version will then become defunct.
Appendix B-2: Generic Safety Plan for STCA Implementation	Describes what safety assurance activities should be considered at each lifecycle phase, who should do them, and what the criteria for success are.

Appendix B-3: Outline Safety Case for STCA System	Addresses in detail the assurance and evidence from the System Definition stage and outlines the likely assurance and evidence for the later stages.
Appendix C: Cost Framework for the Standardisation of STCA	Assists in identifying potential financial implications of standardisation of STCA in compliance with the EUROCONTROL Specification for Short Term Conflict Alert.
Appendix D: Case Study	A set of two documents describing the (partial) application of the optimisation and safety assurance guidance material in a demanding environment.
Appendix D-1: Optimisation of STCA for ATCC Semmerzake	Identifies potential solutions for handling military formation flights and a large number of primary tracks in STCA whilst keeping the number of nuisance alerts to an effective minimum.
Appendix D-2: Functional Hazard Assessment of STCA for ATCC Semmerzake	Describes the Functional Hazard Assessment of the identified potential solutions for optimisation of STCA, performed as initial step of safety assurance activities.

Table 1: Structure of the guidance material

## 5.2

### Availability and Feedback

The guidance material is freely available at [www.eurocontrol.int/safety-nets](http://www.eurocontrol.int/safety-nets) and regularly updated based on feedback received.

Feedback and questions can be addressed to the contact listed in each document and to [safety-nets@eurocontrol.int](mailto:safety-nets@eurocontrol.int) .

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