



Why did GdF join MOSAIC?

GdF's predecessor organisations fiercely lobbied in the 1980s to see the transformation of the public authority BFS (Bundesanstalt für Flugsicherung) into a state-owned corporation. This had several reasons, the two most important ones being the restricting dependence from annual federal budgets and the sub-standard remuneration and working conditions.

BFS was never free to invest the necessary amounts into appropriate, state-of-the-art equipment and couldn't flexibly react to changing requirements. On the other side BFS staff, as civil servants, never had the right in Germany to fight for the improvement of their working conditions. This changed with the corporatisation into DFS (Deutsche Flugsicherung GmbH): remuneration was significantly raised to reflect the high professional qualification and commitment of Air Traffic Services (ATS) personnel, and the level of stress and responsibility particularly operational staff (ATCOs, FDAs and ATSEPs) have to shoulder day-in, day-out.

DFS was a fresh start for all of us, with a corporate culture defined to justify the highest hopes among us. This atmosphere of hope quickly changed when certain "modern" ideas of corporate development and, above all, competitiveness were introduced to dominate all management decisions of late. Safety seemed to slide out of the central focus it is owed in a service the core of which is the provision of that same public safety.

For a few years now, privatisation was in the making by German politicians determined to follow some budgetary guideline and divest the state of its "commercial interests". At a time when GdF was still fighting in the courts and at the bargaining table to be recognized as trade union, politicians drafted and swiftly adopted legislation (the so-called ATS Act) to enable 74.9% privatisation of DFS, along with the adoption of the European minimum requirements for the qualification of personnel. All this happened with the intent of making DFS more competitive and "carrying competition into Europe", presumably to fulfil the Single European Sky requirements.

While putting a public service centred around providing safety almost completely into the hands of private investors is a bad idea in itself, GdF opposition now rose in force mainly because of the poor conditions accompanying the sell-off of the majority in DFS. Reducing safety standards, job security and working conditions at the same time showed very clearly that ATS should be changed from the long-established public service of "ensuring safe, orderly and efficient air traffic" to a business with the aim of scooping up the biggest possible market (=airspace) share in Europe by becoming the most competitive (=cheapest) Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP).

GdF believes that cost efficiency, return on investment and market share are factors that must never be allowed to decide the policies and the everyday work philosophy of an ANSP. For years DFS staff has been told that safety is never in question, that it is implicit in ATS. But we don't believe this anymore, with economic factors as the above so obviously at the forefront of management's decision-making.

GdF believes that only the installation of public trans-border ANSPs as envisaged by MOSAIC can prevent the perversion of a service to provide the public with safe air travel into a profit-centred business cutting whatever corners slip through state oversight.

