

Report from the IGC Airspace, Licencing and Medical Specialist
To the IGC meeting in Lausanne March 2007
By Peter Eriksen

Airspace

Airspace is, and will probably always be a critical issue for our sport. Following a couple of year's silence, the harmonization of the lower airspace in Europe is about to restart, this time with even more pressure from the European Union to find a solution. The biggest issue will be the continued use of Class E airspace for a mix of VFR and (a low density of) IFR traffic. This seems only to be achievable if the VFR aircraft is equipped with transponder.

The continued expansion of the Low Cost marked, using remote cheap airports for their operations, is a growing problem, especially when one look at the order books at Boeing and Airbus. This calls for new TMAs and CTRs in areas where the airspace is uncontrolled today.

Another challenge is the introduction of UAVs. It seems as if the authorities maintain the viewpoint that the responsibility to see (sense) and avoid remains with the UAV, but this is being contested by a growing UAV industry lobby.

The requirement to mandatory carriage of Mode-S transponders in all aircraft has hit the UK lately. Although a solution seems to be reached for the short term, allowing gliders to fly without in 2007, a longer term solution has not been found.

ADS-B is going to replace one day. Certain areas without radar coverage are using it today, but the benefits in areas today covered by Mode-S Radar are rather limited compared to the investment, so the transition may not start for another 10 years.

The battle about the 8.33 kHz radio is still ongoing in Europe, it' is uncertain if we manage to avoid that investment in the longer term.

A Light Aviation Conference was held in Eurocontrol in December. At this conference the different viewpoints were exchanged, and a continued dialogue was agreed. This at least gives us good direct links to the decision makers at European level

Licensing

Lat year I reported that the ICAO licensing working group recommends that gliding and ballooning licenses are kept outside the new licensing structure (the new structure basically sees a PPL as a first step for the future airline pilot. This has now been finally agreed, and is considered as a positive outcome for us, as it will make it easier to achieve e.g. different medical requirements than powered flying.

In Europe, discussions on the management of the future EASA licenses are ongoing. It is clear that the theoretical and practical syllabus will be like in the ICAO glider license, nobody wants to change that. The management of the future license is however a hot issue. The viewpoint of EASA is that this could be given to e.g. NACs or Air Sports Organisations at national or European level. The CAAs are of course fighting against that, as they will loose an important activity.

Medical

Also this is discussed with EASA, where the proposal from Europe Air Sports (EAS) and the Euopean Gliding Union (EGU) is that medical examination for Gliding should be conducted be a general practitioner. Here it is more the aero medical doctors we fight against than the CAAs. A decision is expected in 2007.

For Europe, all the above mentioned issues are dealt with by EAS and EGU together, who do a tremendous job, and are highly respected by the authorities.

---end---