



Subject: Continuing support to the Belgian ballooning community

One of the major concerns and challenges of the Belgian ballooning community (owners, pilots, student-pilots, clubs, federations and local aviation authorities) are to keep up with the new common European rules in aviation. These new rules are the result of the different European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) rulemaking programs which have been initiated by the EU-Union/EU-Commission. Some of these rules are already in force (especially in the area of design certification and airworthiness/maintenance) since 2008-2009, while others are drafted today to get in force in the next couple of years (e.g., flight crew licensing, medical, training and operations).

One of the tasks of the Royal Belgian Balloon Federation (Koninklijke Belgische Ballon Federatie –KBBF) is to support the ballooning community to understand and implement the new European rules. That is: make people confident with, prepare them for, educate them about and prepare manuals/documents for, the current and upcoming EU aviation rules.

For example: in the area of airworthiness (EASA Part-M) the balloon federation has helped the balloon owners to create and submit their “Aircraft Maintenance Program” documents and/or direct them to Continued Aircraft Maintenance Organizations (CAMO). This is an ongoing process since September 2009.

Today (i.e., the 2010-2011 period) the Royal Belgian Balloon Federation is involved in the preparation of the new EU/EASA Flight Crew Licensing model/rules (Part-FCL) and the operational rules (Part-OPS) which the Civil Aviation Authorities (CAA) of the EU-member states have to get in force by April 2012.

For the upcoming Part-FCL rules, the ballooning community needs support to easily convert the existing licenses into new licenses. But also new training/instruction and examination processes will have to be developed. In this area the small countries with low number of student-pilots face a potential problem because training centers, which become mandatory, can never become profitable if just targeted at the local market. Having to go abroad will be a barrier for many new recreational and sporting pilots. We expect the number of pilots to drop (also because of new upper age limits). This becomes a challenging task for the balloon federation.

For the upcoming Part-OPS rules, the balloon federation shall be a knowledge center for the development of operational plans/manuals whether it be in the recreational or commercial corner. According to the federation ballooning should stay affordable and payable when performed for leisure and the level of entrance be kept as low as possible.

Besides the follow-up and introduction of new European induced rules the federation also organizes sporting events, safety conventions and product updates. A web site and electronic newsletters are used as communication vehicles between the members.

Koninklijke Belgische Ballon Federatie – KBBF

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