

EGU Activity in 2008: Report to the IGC Plenary Meeting 2009

The past year has again involved a significant amount of activity for the EGU Board. The process of harmonisation of aviation regulations in Europe is taking longer than initially expected and EASA has continued to deliver a constant flow of NPAs, CRDs and Opinions. EGU has done its best to comment on all these documents and to participate in all meetings and workshops organised by EASA. Here is a brief review of our activity.

MDM 032

The mission of the drafting group MDM032, in charge of proposing a better concept for the regulation of General Aviation, is coming to an end and only three meetings took place in 2008. Even though the outcome may appear miles away from the expectations which had been raised when the working group was set up in 2006, significant progress has been made in the fields covered by the group's terms of reference. The regulation for initial airworthiness for light aircraft has been much relaxed with the creation of the ELA process. Furthermore, the MDM032 has put enough pressure on the groups working on continuing airworthiness as to make Part M more adapted to sport aviation. The members of the MDM 032 group have also been closely involved in drafting the regulation of the flight crew licence and the proposals they made were generally accepted. Our delegates (D. Roberts and myself) also did their best to avoid stringent Ops rules being set up. Additionally, the MDM 032 has been a useful forum where we have been able to provide feedback to EASA and express our worries when EASA was about to introduce a regulation that would hurt us.

INITIAL AIRWORTHINESS

In April, EASA published the NPA 2008-07 about the design, certification and production procedures of the about-to-be introduced ELA (European Light Aircraft system). According to this proposal, sailplanes and powered sailplanes clearly belong to the ELA 1 category which benefits from the "lightest" design, certification and production procedures. The maximum take off mass for the ELA aircraft will be increased to 1200kg so that all our tow planes will fall into this category. The new regulation should enter into force in 2010.

CONTINUING AIRWORTHINESS (MAINTENANCE)

In March, EASA issued the long-awaited Comment Response Document on Part M. which takes into account nearly all the comments we had sent and should make Part M acceptable to us.. Subsequently, EASA sent its Opinion to the Commission but, due to delays necessary for getting the final blessing of the Parliament and the Council of Ministers, the new regulation could not enter into force before the deadline of 28 September set for implementing the regulation on maintenance for light aviation. In order to avoid having to implement an older version of Part M before this date, most national aviation authorities postponed this application. Finally, the new regulations 1056/2008 which modify CE 2042/2008 and regulation1057/2008 which modifies CE1703/2003 were approved on 28 October 2008 and entered into force from the next day.

Every national gliding organisation has now to find out the best way to implement Part M in their country. In order to compare the various solutions used, EGU organised a meeting in May of the EGU airworthiness working group.

In May, EASA issued the NPA 2008-3 proposing the creation of a B3-ELA licence for the maintenance of ELA1 Aircraft (including sailplanes and powered sailplanes).

LICENSING

In March, the European Official Journal published the new Basic Regulation 216/2008 replacing the (in)famous 1592/2002 and extending the competence of EASA to Licensing and Operations.

Subsequently, EASA published NPA2008-17 on licensing and medical. Comments to this document (800 pages!) had initially to be sent before 5 September but the deadline was postponed several times and is now set to 28 February 2009. The EGU participated in two workshops on licensing organised by EASA

Most of the proposals concerning the Sailplane Pilot Licence (SPL) and the Leisure Pilot licence for sailplanes (LPL(S)) are identical to what was proposed by our representatives in the Subgroups Licensing (Patrick Pauwels and myself), but some changes were made during the final review by the FCL Core Group. In particular, the proposed cloud flying rating was deleted because the Core Group did not want anything that looked like an IR rating in the LPL.

We are now faced with preparing a consolidated EGU answer to NPA 2008-17. We have therefore organised a meeting of the EGU Licensing working group which defined a common position. The main issues are cloud flying and proficiency checks. These comments are currently being finalised and will be sent to our members for approval before being sent to EASA.

We also encouraged our members to also send their own comments. In particular we urged them to support the recreational licence which, according to the first comments received by EASA, is very controversial. In particular, the medical part of the LPL is heavily criticised by the lobby of the aero medical examiners who are very active in defending their income. In our view, a clear distinction should be made between the medical standards and the method used to assess fitness. We fully agree with the standards but we feel that the form to be filled by the doctor should be simplified because it is more complicated than the one used in some countries for ICAO Class 2 medicals! But we should not let the LPL proposal be turned down just for such reasons because this would really be throwing the baby out with bathwater!.

Finally, in November EASA published NPA 2008-22 on Authority and Organisation Requirements. This document is a major threat for sport aviation since it has been written only from the perspective of regulating commercial/professional training schools for aeroplane licences. As it stands, every club would have to get an agreement and to be regularly audited. This would imply a heavy bureaucratic and financial burden which may kill many small clubs. EGU will ask for delegation to be given to national gliding bodies. The deadline for sending comments, which was initially set to 31 January 2009, has been postponed to 28 February in order to allow stakeholders to have a complete view on the FCL NPA as well as on this NPA.

OPERATIONS

At the time when this report was written, EASA was about to issue an NPA on operations. We were able to have access to the latest draft. Obviously, these regulations have been written for Commercial Air Transport, add nothing to safety and have no point. But nothing seems to hurt us except the requirement to carry a sheaf of documents in an aircraft that make no contribution to its operation.

We have also worked out the EGU accident statistics for 2007. It is a pity that some major countries are still not contributing to his efforts. We are, nevertheless, the only air sport able to collect such data which are very useful in our negotiations with EASA.

AIRSPACE

EGU has participated in many meetings about Airspace (SESAR, 8.33, etc). The main issue is the extension of use of the 8.33kHz radios to the lower airspace. EGU has recently replied to an enquiry from SESAR.

We also organised a workshop of the EGU airspace and navigation working group. Unfortunately, this meeting was attended by no more than six delegates...

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER BODIES

Our relationship with Europe Air Sports is still excellent. Europe Air Sports has been very successful this year largely due to having recruited an excellent lobbyist who is very active at the Parliament and at the Commission. It recently managed to keep most airfields used by our sport out of EASA's field of competence. Recently, an EASA delegation (in which we took part) also met the new Director of the EASA rulemaking who offered to meet EAS twice a year, in order to discuss all issues related to air sports.

Our relationship with the IGC is also very good. Personally, I think that in the future EGU should become an associate member of the FAI. During these difficult times, the air sports should be united in order to be able to speak with one single voice.

CONCLUSION

As I announced at the last EGU Congress, I will step down as President at the Congress 2009. During the 5 years I have had the honour of being the President of the Union, the EGU has become fully representative of the European gliding movement since the number of members has increased from 13 to 25. During this time period, EGU has also been recognised as a competent and respected partner by the EASA. We have participated in numerous working and drafting groups. We have therefore been able to be influential and avoid too stringent rules being set for our sport. The outcome of the harmonisation of the rules of our sport will probably not be perfect but it would surely have been much worse if we had not been so active.

All this has been achieved by a small a team of idealistic people. I would like to wholeheartedly thank the Board Members who are doing a fantastic job in order to protect the future of gliding. This has a price, many evenings are spent with the computer, many week-ends away from their family, not to mention their office, sometimes even under very stressful conditions with cumulus clouds outside the meeting room, and that requires a lot of determination. They can be very proud of their achievements.

For more information on the EGU activity see our website: www.egu-info.org

Roland Stuck
EGU President
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