

ESTC Meeting 2016 – 11th of June, Prague, Czech Republic

Meeting minutes

People present

Rodolfo Saccani, Italy (FIVL), Chairman
Miroslav Vejt, Czech Republic (LAA), Host
Jens Voetmann, Denmark (DHPU)
Dave Thompson, UK (BHPA)
Runar Halling, Norway (NLF)
Laszlo Szollosi, Hungary (HFFA)
Laszlo Kerekes, Hungary (HFFA)
Ulf Martensson, Sweden (SSFS)
Arne Hillestad, Norway (NLF)
Marion Varner, France (FFVL)
Claude Bredat, France (FFVL)
Beni Stocker, Switzerland, (SHV)
Karl Slezak, Germany (DHV)
Ewald Kaltenhofer, Austria (ÖAeC)
Mark Shaw, UK (BHPA)
Andre Bizot, Netherlands (KNLV)
Luisa Slezak, Germany (DHV), Minutes Secretary

Opening

The meeting starts at 9:15 in the catacombs of the Hotel Martina in Prague. The chairman Rodolfo welcomes all the delegates, thanks the host Miroslav for organizing the meeting, thanks Luisa for the great work performed on the minutes last year and for offering to manage the minutes also this year.

Rodolfo informs the attendees that the EHPU AGM in January (Portugal) has confirmed his election as the chairman of ESTC.

1. Control of former decisions

1.1. Common flying rules, anti-midair-collision campaign

A decision was taken at the 2015 meeting that Karl should make a proposal for a pattern of the common European flying rules (thermal and soaring). This pattern is supposed to explain the rules easily and understandably and therefore mainly with drawings. It should be published in the member magazines and websites of all European Federations in the national language for a European-wide anti-midair-collision campaign.

Karl explains that he started but did not finish the work due to a legal problem concerning SERA, the new "Standardized European Rules of the Air". SERA is responsible for paragliders and hanggliders. Yet, there are no rules for thermal flying and soaring included in SERA. Thus, it could become a legal problem to publish rules for that kind of flying as they will probably be contradiction to SERA. E.g. SERA allows overtaking on both sides for sailplanes, hanggliders and paragliders. However, the recommendation from ESTC is to overtake only on the right hand side. In case of crossing courses, SERA only knows "right has right-of-way". This is a potentially dangerous contradiction to the common thermal rule "give way to the pilots circling in thermal". Ewald explains that at the moment, Austria is without any official thermal and soaring rules because the statutory rules for hangglider and paraglider were completely replaced with the SERA rules. Against this background, Karl did not want to create a document which is a bit dubious concerning its legal validity.

After discussion and important input from Marion as a lawyer, the ESTC takes the following decisions:

- Karl is newly tasked with the job. He will prepare a proposal for a pattern with common European flying rules which are not in contradiction to SERA.

- As SERA is responsible for flying rules for hanggliders and paragliders, those rules should be part of SERA. EHPU should use their contacts to the European legislation in order to adopt common thermal/soaring rules in SERA in the long term. This step should be taken in coordination with the responsible bodies/federations for sailplanes.

1.2. Regular analysis of the European Accident Database

At the 2015 meeting, Karl was tasked to regularly analyze (2-3 times/year) the European Accident Database. Karl explains that he is not able to do this work properly because a lot of accident reports are incomplete. Particularly the French reports, which are hundreds, are not suitable for an analysis. This is due to the fact that the most important data as well as the short accident description in English are missing. Claude explains that there are two reporting systems in the FFVL. The pilots use the FFVL-system for reporting and there is an internal data transfer to the EHPU database. It seems that this data transfer does not work properly. Dave explains that BHPA had a similar problem in the beginning of using the EHPU database. He says that it was an effort to fix the transfer of data between both systems but now it is working well.

Decision: Marion will take that matter into his hands and will make the internet officer restructure the system in order to make sure that we will have the most important data in future accident reports. Karl will start making regular reports as soon as he receives the necessary information from the French federation.

1.3. Read-Only accounts (EHPU Accident database)

As wished, this point was discussed at the 2015 meeting and it is completed. The safety officer can now choose whether he gives a person a full account (with edit function) or a read-only account.

1.4. German annual accident statistic/analysis in English

Sweden and other smaller federations asked (at 2015 meeting) the DHV to publish its annual accident statistic/analysis in English. The 2015 report is available (and sent to all delegates by email) and the DHV will translate future reports, too.

1.5. Letter to WG 6 (Decision ESTC-Meeting 2015)

ESTC respectively EHPU were asked to write a letter to the WG 6 and the test laboratories with the clear demand to judge every correctly performed test flight maneuver. If a maneuver is valid, it has to be taken into account for the classification. That letter has been sent and it can be found here: http://www.ehpu.org/content/letter_to_wg6.pdf

The WG6 discussed the letter and stated that the current norm already bans what we called "best case testing" in paragraph 4.2 and therefore no action is required. This interpretation has been recorded in the minutes of the WG6 meeting held on 20 Oct 2015 in Berlin.

Here is a summary of the report to ESTC members sent by Rodolfo via email in Oct 2015:

Here is paragraph 4.2:

4.2 Classification of flight characteristics

When testing in accordance with the procedures 5.5.18.1 to 5.5.18.23, various aspects of the paraglider's behaviour are measured. These measurements are classified according to 4.4.1 to 4.4.23.

The class of a paraglider according to this document is determined by the highest classification obtained, i.e. by the highest level of pilot skill required (see Table 1).

According to the WG6 this paragraph does not only mean that the overall classification of the glider is determined by the highest classification assigned to the various tests, but also that the classification of each and every test is determined by the highest classification of each single execution of the maneuver prescribed for that test (should the maneuver be executed more than once), intending that best case testing is already banned and has always been.

2. EHPU stops financing the AFNOR secretary work for WG 6

The contract between EHPU and AFNOR concerning the financing of the AFNOR secretary work with money from EHPU has expired at the end of 2015. The EHPU AGM 2016 took the decision not to renew the contract with AFNOR for 2016. Instead it will enter into new negotiations with AFNOR or another national EN institution. This matter brought with it a long discussion in ESTC. Arne explains that the decision at the EHPU AGM was taken majoritarian with 8:5 votes.

The main reasons for the decision was the disaffection with the outcome of the WG 6 meetings in matters of safety as well as the massive influence from the side of manufacturers and test laboratories on the WG 6 work on the one hand and the lack of influence from the side of the pilot federations, which pay for that work, on the other hand.

Marion explains that the French Federation FFVL has sent a letter to all European Federations and EHPU in order to convince them to continue the WG 6 work and the payment to AFNOR. FFVL has decided to sign a contract with AFNOR and pay for the secretary work themselves because they want to avoid stopping the WG 6 work. In the letter, FFVL asks the other federations for participation on that payment. Marion and Claude appeal strongly to the ESTC not to bury the WG 6 work because developing a good safety standard is the keynote of EHPU and was the reason for the founding. According to Marion, neither EHPU nor the federations have answered the letter yet. Most of the ESTC-delegates did not know about a letter from FFVL to their federation. Some delegates do not approve the decision of FFVL and clarify that their national organizations will not contribute.

FFVL will write a new letter to the responsible persons (political body and to safety officer) in the European federations.

3. Update on Austrian guest flight rules

Ewald explains that a new law is on the ministries table to sign. This new law contents a list of countries which licenses will be acknowledged in Austria. The problem is that the new law covers not only gliders, paragliders and hanggliders but also light aircrafts. As there are issues with the light aircrafts, discussions are continuing. Since 1st of May another law is in force which makes it easier for foreign pilots without Austrian residence to fly in Austria. They can take an easy test at an Austrian flight school. If they pass, they receive a temporary license for one year. This is a way for pilots from countries which licenses are not accepted in Austria to receive a license. We hope that next time the new law is in force.

4. European Accident Database

In the meantime, there are more than 2400 incidents and accidents reported to the database. Details see list below.

Country	Number reports	Quality of data
Czech Republik	2	high
Denmark	20	medium
France	706	low
Germany	989	high
Italy	65	medium
Netherlands	105	medium
Sweden	49	medium
Switzerland	263	high
United Kingdom	559	high
Belgium	0	
Spain	0	
Austria	0	
Portugal	0	
Hungary	0	
Ireland	0	
Norway	0	

Romania	0	
Slovenia	0	
Serbia	0	

4.1. Problem of partly blank reports

There are still some problems with disappearing data if the user makes a mistake during filling in the form. Dave and Rodolfo have identified one of the problems. If one types in an incorrect entry in a free field (not dropdown) e.g. "100 kg" instead of just the number "100", the system informs you about the wrong entry. At the same time, it resets all the drop down menus (not the other fields) to default. Maybe this is the reason why there are many fields left blank even though the pilots report that they have definitely filled them out.

Decision: Report to the programmer Alex in order to fix this problem.

4.2. Participation of Austria

Ewald reports that there is currently no possibility to officially introduce the EHPU Accident Database in Austria. Incidents/Accidents have to be reported to Austrocontrol which offers an online reporting system. The Austrian Federation, ÖAeC, is not interested in an additional reporting system due to two reasons: Firstly, ÖAeC is not responsible for incidents/accidents. Secondly, the responsible body already has a working online reporting system.

4.3. Standardized response email to the reporting person

Most of those responsible for the EHPU database in the federations know about the following matter: Pilots send the report and if they do not receive any response from the federation, they are insecure whether they have filled out/sent the report properly. Sometimes, they are also disappointed because of the lack of interest in the report. Some safety officers do send a personal email to each pilot but that takes a lot of time. ESTC discusses about the possibility to add a function for a standardized response-email to the person who has reported the accident.

Decision: A function for sending a standardized email to the reporting person has to be adopted. A proposal for the text that could be used for this purpose can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

There must be an additional field for the email-address that the reporting person intends to use for the communication between him and the EHPU database. This is necessary because the reporting person maybe wants to have email communication with the database only via a specific (confidential) email-address.

5. FLARM

Beni reports about incidents in Switzerland. Two helicopter nearly collided with paragliders. Air space restrictions close to helicopter stations are possible. Best way: FLARM instead of restricted areas. But: Swiss flight instrument manufacturer Flytec has stopped producing the FLARM chip. Now there seems to be a solution. A lot of drones are flying in Switzerland and they may need some kind of FLARM as well. This could decrease the costs. SHV is thinking about supporting FLARM for paragliders/hanggliders again. Beni clearly states that only a passive FLARM, without a screen as a signal-giver to other aircrafts around, is meant. Beni asks about experience in other countries about FLARM or other devices.

In the following discussion it becomes obvious that there is no real experience with FLARM for paragliders/hanggliders. Dave warns about the use of active FLARM as this would lead pilots to fly into clouds. Also, from another point of view, this matter is interesting and requires observation: Drones! We have to expect increasing drone traffic in the near future. We also have to admit that drone traffic will take place in the airspace we frequently use. Karl reports that the DHV has visited the German Ministry of Transport in order to express their concerns regarding drone traffic in uncontrolled airspace. The ministry was full of understanding for their concerns and promised them to take them in consideration.

Rodolfo concludes this matter with the demand to all EHPU members to circulate any information on this issue. He and Jens express their concerns that additional restrictions will be introduced if paragliders cannot be seen, like drones, by other aircrafts.

6. New law in Italy

Rodolfo thanks all ESTC-members which participated in the survey on airport restrictions in Europe.

This contribution has been very helpful. Until now, nothing is been decided and a final decision on the matter will take time. There is a proposal from Italian Aeroclub with additional restrictions for paragliders/hanggliders. FIVL will keep on fighting for as much freedom as possible.

7. Safety Management System (SMS)

Raymond asks to collect feedback on the document circulated. Raymond is not present at the meeting so he cannot present the project. Andre reports from the SMS-System of the Dutch Federation. There are annual analysis about all reported accidents and even minor incidents and mistakes which happened in schools, clubs and to free pilots. The outcome is presented to schools and clubs at the end of every year. Andre says: "We can say that we got a lot of points out of it where it was easy to change something that similar things wouldn't happen again or somewhere else. It really helps creating an environment that is not about errors but about avoiding them".

8. Harness buckles

Karl introduces that matter and explains what has happened that finally lead to a safety note which concerns hundreds of paragliding harnesses (see: <http://www.dhv.de/db1/source/technicdatareportnotes.php?lang=en&item=245>)

There were several reports from chest strap buckles which opened unintentionally and one fatality in Italy end of January. Concerned are the Finsterwalder Clicklock and T-Lock buckles. But there are also buckles from other manufacturers which had problems in the past, mostly concerning production failures. A long discussion follows. At the end, there is a decision:

We have to admit that a technical system like a harness buckle can fail. Due to wearing, wrong operating, material or production failures, ice, snow, dirt in the mechanics. Therefore, we must accept that this systems can never work completely reliable and save. The ESTC recommends an additional rule and a suitable test (for EN and LTF harness standard) to make sure that the pilot cannot fall out of the harness in case one of the buckles breaks.

The following wording (thanks to lawyer Marion) is agreed upon: "The failure of any one single buckle used to secure the pilot in the harness must not allow the pilot to fall out the harness".

9. Project for disabled tandem passengers

Arne shows a video with a wheelchair developed for tandem flights. He says that there is still some work to do in order to make this tool really suitable for the purpose.

10. Location and date for the next meeting

HFFA invites ESTC for the next meeting to Budapest, Hungary on June, 10. 2017

Closing

The meeting closes at about 6pm.

Rodolfo Sacconi
Chairman

Luisa Slezak
Minutes Secretary