

ESTC Meeting 2015 – 13th of June, Herrsching am Ammersee/Germany

Meeting minutes (public viewing)

Persons present:

Arne Hillestad, Norway (NLF)
Jens Voetmann, Denmark, (DHPU)
Jean Pierre, France, (FFVL)
Claude Bredat, France, (FFVL)
Marion Varner, France, (FFVL)
Miroslav Fejt, Czech Republik, (LAA CR)
Martin Kinzl, Switzerland, (SHV)
Beni Stocker, Switzerland, (SHV)
Hans-Peter Fallesen, Sweden, (SSFF)
Valentin Popa , Romania, (AZLR)
Andre Bizot, Netherlands, (KNVvL)
Dave Thompson, UK, (BHPA)
John Lovell, UK, (BHPA)
Ewald Kaltenhofer, Austria (ÖAeC)
Karl Slezak, Germany, (DHV)
Luisa Slezak, (Minutes) Germany, (DHV)
Roland Börschel, Germany (DHV)
Horst Barthelmes, Germany, (DHV)
Rodolfo Saccani, Italy, (FIVL)

The meeting starts at about 9:30 AM

Greetings to John

As announced at the last meeting in Nice, John Lovell(BHPA) lays down his function as the chairman of the ESTC after 15 years. On behalf of the whole ESTC, Karl(DHV) thanks John (and Yvonne for keeping the minutes in all these years) for his long voluntary commitment. Long applause from the participants.

Elections of new chairman

Rodolfo(FIVL) was appointed chairman by Rasmus Rohlf, former EHPU General Secretary. He asks for a formal election of the new chairman by the ESTC members.

It has been determined that no other candidate is available for the election. An open election took place, unanimously voting for Rodolfo Saccani.

At 11:00 AM, Rodolfo Saccani took over the temporary chairmanship of ESTC. The chairmanship has to be confirmed by the EHPU Presidents Meeting in January 2016.

Acknowledgment of tests for airports devices carried out by the test laboratory

Aerotest from the French Association FFVL

Marion(FFVL) presents a letter to Karl(DHV), sent from the German Ministry for Transport and Traffic to the lawyers of the French federation (but Karl already was aware of this letter). In this letter it is confirmed that certifications according to EN 926-1 and 926-2 (paraglider load and flight tests) issued by Aerotest are fully acknowledged in Germany, in the same way as certifications from the DAkkS-accredited test laboratories. Background is that every certification issued by a governmental representative from an EU-Member country has to be acknowledged according to the German air traffic law.

Discussion:

Karl(DHV): How will the French association proceed?

Marion(FFVL): Open for anything, there is a cooperation with Air Turquoise, but even cooperation with DHV is thinkable.

Andre(KNVvL): Which paragliders tested in France can be used in Germany?

Karl(DHV): Only those with certification issued by Aerotest

EHPU Financing ESTC

Rodolfo(FIVL) and 2015 EHPU Chairman Arne(NLF) informed the ESTC that EHPU took the decision, at the last annual meeting, to finance the ESTC-Meetings with an amount of €2000/year. The organization hosting the annual ESTC meeting can issue an invoice to EHPU up to this amount to help covering the costs.

Pilot survey

Rodolfo(FIVL) asks for the real number of active pilots in the single countries. Problem: In some countries the licenses are valid unlimitedly, in others they are limited and must be renewed in a certain period of time. Some of the numbers therefore will be estimations.

A try:

Norway: 2150 PG, 210 HG

Denmark: 850 total

France: 23000 PG, 1200 HG

Czech Republic: 2500 PG, 200 HG

Switzerland: 15700 PG and HG

Sweden: 1500 PG, 150 HG

Romania: 1300 PG, 17 HG (problems to control licences, unknown number of active pilots without licences)

Netherlands: 1526 PG, 327 HG (difficult estimation of pilots)

UK: 4600 PG, 1500 HG

Austria: 4000 PG, 500 HG (valid licences 26000)

Germany: 34000 PG, 3000 HG

Italy: 9000 PG, 1000 HG

Austrian guest flight rules

Ewald(ÖAeC) stated that there will finally be guest flight rules in Austria. They will not be based on the IPPI-Card rating from FAI (like e.g. in Germany) but on acknowledgement of the national licenses. The Aeroclub and the Austrian Ministry of Transport are currently working on a list of the acknowledged licenses.

In order to proof whether the foreign licenses are at least equivalent to the Austrian licenses, the Austrian Aeroclub has send a letter to all European Federations/Aeroclubs asking for information about the training requirements for the national licenses. By the end of the summer there should be a list of acknowledged licenses. At the moment, the following licenses are positively proven by the Austrian Aeroclub and proposed to the Austrian Ministry of Transport:

Australia

Denmark

Germany

France

Italy

Croatia

Lithuania

Netherlands

Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Sweden
Switzerland
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Czech Republic
Ukraine
Hungary
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Development of accident numbers

Karl(DHV) presents the paragliding accident statistics for Germany (German pilots at home and abroad) since 1997. It shows that the number of paraglider pilots has increased during the last 15 years from 20.000 to 34.000. The number of reported incidents and accidents has increased too, but compared to the increasing number of pilots, the curve of the increasing incidents/accidents is flatter.

The number of fatal accidents per year has been roughly stable during the last 15 years, between 8 and 12 on average.

Carefully spoken, that means that during the last 15 years paragliding has become safer.

Rodolfo(FIVL): the number of fatalities in Italy stayed almost the same over the years, with a constant number of pilots. Knowledge of techniques and weather-conditions, passive safety of gliders in lower classes have increased greatly over the last 15 years but today we can see two different types of pilots: those who take advantage of all these improvements and fly much safer than 15 years ago and those who fly gliders in higher classes, have a more competitive approach (also related to online competitions) and take more risks. The final result is a constant rate of fatalities.

Question: Why is the number of the pilots in Germany increasing?

Karl(DHV): The main reason is probably that DHV promotes supervised flying intensively (magazines, internet): Pilots who don't fly frequently should fly only class A gliders or max. low level B-gliders (less serious accidents, statistically) and should fly supervised by flight schools.

Anti-midair-collisions

Karl(DHV) stated out that mid-air-collisions are a serious problem – several fatalities – a lot of dangerous situations, that could have developed into serious accidents. DHV has started a humorous campaign in his members magazine in order to remind the pilots to the rules of the air.

Proposal: EHPU should create an information flyer (with simple design) which shows the common rules of the air in the European countries and even informs about differences. This flyer (maybe double-side) should be published once a year in the member-magazines of all the European federations and even on their websites.

DHV would work on it and will send a first proposal as soon as possible. It is agreed that, apart from the specific rules, a main-rule should apply: It is the duty of all pilots to maintain a safe distance to all other pilots.

Dave(BHPA) and Marion(FFVL) remind that there should be a careful use of the wording "right of way" because pilots who think they have right of way "don't think" at all. In almost every case there is a duty to "give way". For the common EHPU-information about the rules of the air, this should be taken into consideration. Dave(BHPA) explains that there is a difference between law and rules. E.g. the regulations for overtaking or thermaling in the UK are not law, but rules, given from the federation.

Marion(FFVL) reports that in case there are no legal regulations for specific mid air encounters but rules from a responsible body (federation) are available, a court will always refer to these rules. Therefore, even the rules should get as much attention as laws legally in force.

Decision: DHV work on a proposal for common EHPU rules of the air for paragliders and hanggliders.

On behalf of the DHV-Board, Karl asks for a common rule for flying at a ridge. It has to be defined more precisely whether the rules are valid only while flying at a slope or even in case of flying above a ridge.

A long discussion with several proposals for a definition took place. For details, see record of the meeting. Finally, the ESTC agreed the following common rule for ridge soaring.

Decision: Approaching head on when ridge soaring or near a slope or an obstacle: The glider with the ridge/slope/obstacle on his left hand side has to give way and has to change his course to the right.

In order to make both situations clear, near the slope and above the ridge, the EHPU information side of common rules should contain clear drawings of the different situations.

Thermal rule: "While thermaling, the slower climbing pilot has to give way to the faster climbing pilot".

Legal situation concerning this rule: In most of the countries it is unknown. But in Switzerland it is part of the law and in Germany it is part of the specific rules for paragliders and hanggliders, issued by the DHV as representative of the Ministry of Transport.

After a long discussion the ESTC took the following

Decision: When thermaling, neither the faster climbing nor the slower climbing pilot has the right of way. Both are responsible for a safe distance.

Switzerland and Germany are asked to work for changing their national rules.

Overtaking

According to the new SERA (Standardized Rules of the Air), gliders (sailplanes) can choose the overtaking-direction. Both sides, left and right (former, only right) are allowed now.

Question: Should this rule also be valid for paragliders and hanggliders?

Decision: There is no need to change the existing rule: Overtaking only at the right hand side.

Landing approach

It is a common law in whole Europe that during landing approach, the higher flying aircraft has to give way to the lower flying aircraft. In spite of that, it is agreed that this rule should be part of the EHPU rules of the air:

During the landing approach the higher flying pilot has to give way to the lower flying pilot.

Alcohol, Drugs

After a long discussion about the question, whether the EHPU rules of the air should contain something about flying under influence of alcohol or drugs, the majority votes against that

proposal. The common rules should be limited to the essentials with the clear emphasis of avoiding collision. Apart from that, flying under influence of alcohol and drugs is forbidden by law in every single country.

Decision: No rule about alcohol/drugs should be in the document, the document is about collision avoidance

EHPU-Accident database

New database-member

France has joined the database, the week before the ESTC-Meeting. Everybody is happy now, because France is one of the major paragliding/hanggliding countries in Europe. The more data from accidents and incidents can be found in the database, the better is the profit for research and analysis.

View-only function

Karl(DHV) explains that the programmer is currently programming a view-only function. This means, there will be the possibility to give database-accounts to people who are then able to see the data but not to edit the data.

Database-access for pilots

Hans-Peter(SSFF): All pilots/federation-members should be able to get the information from the database with the view-only function. In Sweden, only few accidents happen and only a part of them are reported. It would be a better motivation for reporting incidents/accidents, if the pilots could see the benefit for all pilots- public accident reports. A survey in the Swedish magazine showed that there's huge interest in information about accidents. Due to the small amount of accidents in Sweden, European database is fantastic tool to use to help pilots.

Karl(DHV): In Germany, the DHV doesn't want to make the data public to all pilots. More than 250 incidents/accidents a year – it is not possible for the DHV safety officer to investigate every accident thoroughly. Partly accident reports are incorrectly filled out by the pilots themselves. The DHV only publishes fully investigated accident reports on his website. Another problem might be faked accidents that are only reported to harm producers/brands.

Beni(SHV): Pilot might blame behaviour of glider even though he himself made a mistake – publishing untrue facts can cause trouble with manufacturers.

Martin(SHV): We have to take into consideration, that possible identification of the accident pilot, in case of publishing the accidents, might stop pilots from reporting.

John(BHPA), Dave(BHPA): The BHPA publish main data from UK accidents on the BHPA-Website. There is a tool, which automatically takes the data from the BHPA national accident database into a form on the BHPA-Website with the following informations:

Date/sex/age/licence/location/condition/wing, launch type/glider/short summary/injury. Of course, every federation can do the same with the own national data.

After the following discussion the ESTC took the following

Decision: Every federation is free to publish the national data for public purpose. But the EHPU data are furthermore confidential. Because the smaller federations have a well-founded interest in an analysis of the European data (because they have too few accidents for an own analysis), ESTC ask Karl(DHV) to make a overview analysis 3 or 4 times a year. Karl agrees under the reservation of an approval of DHV-Board and DHV-CEO.

Analysis tool for the database

Currently, there is no analysis function programmed on the database. Only the search-function allows an analysis. **It is consensus, that a statistic function, which generates diagrams on the base of the data, would be a useful tool. Karl(DHV) will go in contact to the programmer in order to find a reasonable solution.**

WG6, EN standard for paragliding equipment

Arne(NLF) starts this topic with the question "What has to be updated? How shall we look into the WG6 and contribute to get a good safety standard? Is there a need for an improvement of gathering information?"

Beni(SHV): Work is finished on gliders and parachutes standard, work in progress on harness-standard and connecting elements.

In the following discussion it became apparent that some members of ESTC were unfamiliar with the way WG6 works, as they had no direct involvement with WG6. Some of the following questions were addressed and clarified by those members with WG6 involvement. Rodolfo(FIVL), Marion(FFVL) and Arne(NLF) explain the open questions.

It gets even obvious, that there is a certain dissatisfaction concerning the results of the certification by the test laboratories (classification of paragliders A-D). The criticism from a part of the participants is that it seems that the test laboratories partly work under the principle of "best case testing" which means that only the best results of the test flights are taken into consideration and the worse ones are ignored. Evidence for that is a number of certifications, particularly in EN-B, which appear to be clearly misplaced. Rodolfo(FIVL) determines that it is unacceptable that when the test manoeuvres are repeated multiple times, only the good outcomes may be used to determine the classification category of the glider. EN 926-2 is not totally clear in this regard and this should be fixed.

Karl(DHV) explains that the DHV-retesting of A-and B-paragliders (DHV-safety tests) originates from the dissatisfaction with the results of the certification. More than 60 A and B gliders have been retested, partly with huge differences to the results of the EN-tests. The English version of the Safety Class database is currently a work in progress.

Beni(SHV) says that testing according to the DHV-safety tests would be the better way to check a paraglider seriously. Because they allow the test pilot to check the glider closer, if he thinks there is a weak point in the glider behaviour. For certification, the test pilot has to check the glider exactly according to the rules of EN, for example regarding the size of a frontal collapse (40%), even if he has clear evidence that a bit greater deflation would lead to a critical behaviour.

The ESTC then discussed whether the review of the test-flight videos by a group of experts involved in paragliding safety could represent a useful tool to share the knowledge about the difficulties of the certification process and at the same time to add some transparency and control over the operation of the test laboratories.

Marion(FFVL) asks for consideration of the fact that the test-flight videos are property of the manufacturers. He even says that no decision should be made at the ESTC level concerning the standard without the advice of the test laboratories and WG 6.

A long discussion follows and at the end, there are the following common

Decisions:

ESTC, as the technical emanation of EHPU, should write a letter to the WG 6 and the test laboratories asking that every test manoeuvre, when properly executed according to the test protocol, is taken into account for the classification. If a manoeuvre has been executed more than once, the worst result should determine the certification. No "best-case-testing" anymore. For upcoming modifications of the standard EN 926-2, it should be clearly written in the test flight rules that every valid manoeuvre has to be taken into account for classification.

Request to test laboratories and manufacturers: Please share certification videos with experts of ESTC and WG 6. This will both improve knowledge among the experts involved in safety decisions and also will provide a healthy super-partes control over the operation of the test laboratories. Upcoming modifications of the standard EN 926-2 should contain a duty to publish the test-flight videos.

A closer communication between EHPU/ESTC and WG 6 is absolutely necessary. The safety experts from the European Federations, who have a deep knowledge of the safety issues and their evolution over time, are willing to provide contributions to the development of the EN standard and EN should take advantage of this willingness.

During next year ESTC meeting this topic should be discussed again.

EN standard for helmets CE-EN 966

Marion(FFVL) informs that the American organization allowed their pilots to use skiing helmets. Andre(KNVvL) completes: CIVIL allowed skiing and snowboard helmets in competitions because there are more head shapes available.

Karl(DHV): For professional use (training, tandem) the use of EN-966 certified helmets is mandatory in Germany and probably in whole Europe.

Decision: ESTC will not make a recommendation to the pilots that they should use only EN-966 certified helmets.

Better communication from the ESTC committee

Rodolfo(FIVL) proposes to publish ESTC minutes, decisions and other documents on a publicly accessible section of the EHPU website.

Decision: ESTC asks EHPU to provide a public section on the EHPU website for publishing an edited version of the ESTC meetings minutes (specially edited for the public reading) and to also publish relevant news and updates about the committee operation.

Winch-Towing

Horst Barthelmes, towing expert from the DHV, gives a presentation about winch-towing in Germany. His research highlighted a problem with weaklinks. Main reason for breaks is that weaklinks aren't changed regularly, but used up until they break. In Germany it is mandatory to use 150-kg weaklinks for towing single-paragliders. Horst proposes to change that requirement to 200-kg in the future, except for mobile winches and steel-ropes, and he asks the ESTC group about their experience with weaklinks.

France: Plastic weaklinks are normally in use, frequent replacement is necessary. Marion will report the matter to the committee in FFVL.

Norway: No standard for weaklinks

Denmark: Weaklinks are still used, won't stop using them, started using weaklinks of greater strength (200kg instead of 150kg)

Switzerland: almost no winch towing, not a lot of knowledge

Sweden: A lot of towing is done; Chief instructor's statement about weak links: No standard for weaklinks. Rarely used nowadays. Very dangerous when weaklink releases below 30-40 meter above ground. Weaklinks are mandatory when towing with steel ropes.

Romania: Two schools use winches – no rules.

Netherlands: No weaklinks are in use at all.

UK: A lot of winching, weaklinks are used on everything, for paragliders usually 125 kg, sometimes 150 kg. Dave: the videos we have watched showed human errors, not problems with weaklinks. Suggests huge foam ball around the weaklink, so pilot would not be hit by metal.

Austria: Only one school and two clubs have winches.

Symbol for paragliding/hanggliding-sites on the ICAO-Cards

Jens(DHPU) was asked by his safety chief, to bring up a new symbol to the ICAO Card . Sites should get a paraglider symbol not the hangglider symbol any longer, because there are ten times more paragliders in the air then hanggliders. Most of the participants agree, but Andre(KNVvL) sees the danger, that the paraglider symbol could be confused with the already existing parachute symbol.

Recommendation: The matter should be discussed by the competent committees.

Place and time of next meeting

Miro(LAACR) proposes to hold the 2016 meeting in Prague, at a place near the airport. Everybody agrees.

Date: June, 11, 2016

Place: Prague, Cech Republic

No further topics

Rodolfo(FIVL): Thanks to the DHV for the organisation and Luisa for taking the minutes.

Dave(BHPA) under applause of all participants: Thanks very much to Rodolfo for guiding his first ESTC Meeting as the chairman in an excellent way.

End: 6 PM

Minutes Secretary: Luisa Slezak