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Minutes of meeting between CIVL and EHPU at September 15th 2012:

The EHPU and CIVL Bureau held a meeting about safety and certification of gliders on the final day of the XIIth European Paragliding Championship 2012 in Saint-André-Les-Alpes.

Attending the meeting from CIVL were: Agust Gudmundsson, Stéhane Malbos and Goran Dimiskovski.
Attending the meeting from EHPU were: Luca Basso, Angus Pinkerton, Hannes Weininger and Rasmus Rohlf.

There was no PMA representation at the meeting because they have not been able to reach any agreement or mandate anyone to speak on this matter on behalf of their members. The PMA were expected to hold a meeting in St. Hilaire during the weekend of September 22th-23th 2012, where these matters may be discussed further. CIVL had been waiting for a suggestion from PMA for a new “competitions class” classification and certification tests since the beginning of 2012, but it became clear in July that no such agreed proposal would be forthcoming.

The meeting between EHPU and CIVL was held without a detailed agenda, but the following major points were made:

Gliders characteristics are far from being the only safety challenge at competitions. Therefore related subjects such as as competition locations; different reserve systems (2-hands or double reserves); pilot qualifications; safe task setting; and the options for reducing the possibility of cheating by fixing acceleration systems; were recognised as important issues to address to improve safety in competitions. It was agreed that these issues must be addressed in the future together with any changes to improve glider characteristics.

Many pilots and manufacturers had been strongly against the banning of open class gliders. But now it would appear that the majority of pilots have accepted using EN certified gliders and several gliders that had previously been “Open Competition Class” have now been certified (with some modifications, largely to reduce the maximum accelerated speed). Glider development has definitely not been stopped by banning open class gliders in CAT 1 competitions.

Pilots in competitions are under substantially more pressure and stress then when they are free flying. There is a big difference between conditions that are “flyable” and those that are safely “taskable”. It is important that sanctioned competitions (whether by FAI or individual Federations) are flown under generally safer conditions than might be appropriate for general free flying for the same pilots.

Lack of sufficient statistics makes it difficult to see any significant change in safety, but the prediction by some about deterioration of safety by demanding mandatory certification of gliders in competitions has certainly not been seen.

The EN certification scheme for gliders has intentionally been developed around flight safety

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characteristics, and was not intended for classification for competition purposes. However, some recent developments in glider design have been incorporated in the review of the EN standard by the CEN/TC 136/WG 6 and after dealing with all comments the work will shortly be sent out to the national standardisation bodies for final vote. One examples is a change that has been made to ensure that pilots can perform SIV exercises in the new EN D gliders. The use and mounting points of folding lines on EN D gliders is now more regulated, and a full set of line must be provided with the glider. Changes have also been made to the way that the amount of the wing affected by an asymmetric collapse is measured, and the minimum % of cord affected by a symmetric front collapse has been increased from 30% to 50%. (In addition, one important change not related to competition gliders is a significant general tightening of the requirements for behaviour in spiral dives of lower classified gliders.)

It is always important to look at the safety challenges also from a legal and fairness point of view. This should be explained to both pilots, organisers, manufactures and federations.

Overall there were good discussions about safety.

Concerning gliders taking part in CAT 1 competitions, the EHPU recommends that CIVL should continue with the regulation that only EN certified gliders are allowed. For a possible improvement of safety and to share the burden which is now only on the EN-Certificate, a "competition class" based on EN plus additional construction regulations could be considered.

EHPU will work on making suggestions for CIVL Plenary which expresses the majority opinion of members of EHPU. CIVL and EHPU will continue to work together for safety within paragliding.

A big thanks and gratitude must be given to all the participants at this meeting for their contributing with their expert knowledge and precious time.

Yours sincerely

Luca Basso
Angus Pinkerton
Hannes Weininger
Rasmus Rohlff