EUROPEAIRSPORTS

21 September 2018

Towards the GA Roadmap 2.0: key priorities for Europe Air Sports (EAS)

Introduction

More than four years after the launch of the GA Roadmap EASA is taking stock of the achievements – so far – and has invited key stakeholders to submit their assessment and priorities for the future. As the representative organisation of sports and recreational aviation at EU level, Europe Air Sports welcomes this opportunity and applauds EASA for the very positive developments over the past years.

Sports and recreational aviation is a significant activity, not only by looking at the numbers of participants (EAS represents approximately 700.000 airspace users in Europe) but also with regard to its social and economic dimension. By offering Europe's youth a relatively affordable opportunity to take up flying, sports and recreational aviation plays an important role in introducing young people to the sector, thus often preparing them for a future career in commercial aviation. Ensuring that sports and recreational aviation can thrive is therefore also in the wider interest of the European regulator, the EU's Member States and the aviation industry. Clear evidence of this can be seen significantly in the new Basic Regulation (2018/1139/EU) and EASA's continuing efforts to develop better, lighter, and more risk proportionate rules for sports and recreational aviation.

The future of sports and recreational aviation: it has been a long and winding road

EAS agrees with EASA that the GA Roadmap has already gone some way in improving the regulatory framework for our sector. For too long, European aviation regulation has overburdened sports and recreational aviation with disproportionate rules, driving up costs and frustration among our members, while at the same time generating no more than stagnating safety levels. For too long, the European regulator has imposed rules on our sector, which were often only a minor modification of the rules applicable to commercial air transport. This overregulation has discouraged people to fly recreationally, by increasing the required level of compliance and importantly also the cost of flying.

Things started to improve slowly but steadily as of 2007 with the Commission's Communication "An Agenda for Sustainable Future in General and Business Aviation". Following years of dialogue between EAS and the European regulator at political and technical level the GA Road Map, launched in Rome in October 2014, finally brought about concrete improvements for our sector, including in the fields of flight crew licensing, maintenance and operations. What often stood in the way of adopting further improvements was the rigid legal framework of the Basic Regulation (2008/216/EC).

Against this background EAS is very supportive of EASA's intention to come forward with a GA Road Map 2.0 that builds on the process and progress made, while fully exploiting the new flexibilities allowed under the new Basic Regulation (2018/1139/EU).

Key priorities of the Road Map 2.0

1. Be guided by the principles and objectives of the new Basic Regulation

The new BR contains important principles and objectives that should guide EASA in its further work in the area of sports and recreational aviation. Of particular importance to EAS are the following:

- Focus on performance-based requirements and procedures and take non-binding measures, including safety promotion actions, where possible.
- Respect and implement the "risk hierarchy" stipulated in Article 4(2) in order to ensure measures are "proportionate to the nature and risk of each particular activity", focusing strongly on the risk to uninvolved third parties. This requires a systematic and continuous assessment and review of the implementing rules and the interpretation of the Essential Requirements of the new Basic Regulation.
- Ensure to contribute to the improvement of the overall performance of the civil aviation sector, keeping in mind that sports and recreational aviation is a significant part of this sector.

2. *Bring about concrete improvements, focusing on these areas*

- Access to airspace: Access to airspace is a *sine qua non* condition for sports and recreational aviation to take place. We call upon EASA to recognise our right to access and use airspace, sharing it fairly with other users. This aspect is crucial also with regard to the increasing number of unmanned aircraft whose introduction and integration into airspace used by our members can undermine safety, unless regulated intelligently.

  In principle, emerging technologies can play a beneficial role in facilitating better access to airspace for all users. However, the utmost care must be taken that the deployment of new technologies is cost effective. The GA community is only going to accept new technologies if they bring tangible improvements to its flying activities. Therefore, thorough cost-benefit analyses are required to assess the usefulness of these technologies. Importantly, before new technologies are introduced all benefits of current technologies (e.g. transponder, Flarm) must be used at their best potential. The mandatory introduction of 8.33 kHz radios is still notorious within our community as a new technology that had to be fitted in our aircraft at high cost, without however generating a single benefit for the sector.
- Flight Crew Licensing: The current system of ratings is confusing and cluttered. A new rulemaking initiative is needed to simplify and streamline the system. This should include the rapid extension of well known principles of modular and competence-based training towards the initial private licenses LAPL and PPL. For example, this should include offering limited privileges for local flights only, and if necessary,

applicable only in the licensing member state. Moreover, the instructor and examiner chapters need to be reviewed and tailored to the needs and well proven practices of GA.

Moreover, the work on easier access to Instrument Flying (Instrument Rating) for GA pilots must continue and this project be turned into a success.

Considering recent technological developments, electric light aircraft should be integrated in a smooth and encouraging manner. Flying such aircraft should be considered an additional experience for a private pilot, worth a variant in the license, rather than as separate skill in a silo-like licensing process and a new "electric" license.

- *Crediting of flight time on Annex I aircraft for the currency requirements of LAPL and PPL:* There is no technical or other justification why hours flown on Annex I aircraft in the categories a) to g) should not count towards the currency requirements for the LAPL and the ratings of the PPL. The principles of improving the overall performance of the aviation sector and the risk hierarchy require that this is done. Otherwise the experience and skills gained in thousands of hours flown are lost. Furthermore, separating Annex I (national) aircraft from EASA aircraft leads to costs and complexity that would be better spent on other aspects of improving safety.
- *Flight instruction for the initial issue of LAPL and PPL(A), SPL and BPL:* For many years before EASA had been established, all aircraft registered in a Member State and fulfilling ICAO standards, were used for initial flight training at the discretion of the authority, unless they were considered unsuitable. This well proven system is hampered by EASA's current interpretation of Annex I that those aircraft cannot be used for flight Instruction. This must be corrected urgently as training on Annex I aircraft is a cost effective and environmental friendly way to become a pilot.
- *Ensure a uniform application of regulation in the Member States:* Some of our members report a high level of frustration with the level of understanding and diverse interpretation of the meaning of European regulation in some of the Member States. EASA would do a good deed in favour of the European idea by working even more closely with the Member States and by offering its assistance in the interpretation and application of the common European rules. In doing so EASA should promote a shared understanding of the European rules and help to ensure an implementation in a proportionate way – respecting the risk hierarchy – that is consistent with the spirit and principles of the new Basic Regulation.
- *Model flying within the context of EASA's regulatory powers regarding drones:* The new Basic Regulation brings all unmanned aircraft for civil use within the regulatory competence of EASA. This also affects hundreds of thousands aeromodellers who are at risk of being dragged into unnecessary regulation. We call upon EASA to continue to work closely with EAS and the European Model Flying Union in order to guarantee the lightest conceivable touch of regulation for this sector, which has operated very safely for many decades in the absence of European regulation.
- *Mitigate the "cliff effect" of those stakeholders who cross the boundary from national into EASA regulation:* Learn lessons by studying regulatory regimes with acceptable safety performance (and often much more effective innovation) outside the scope of EASA regulations, and adapt EASA regulations appropriately to ensure proportionality on the EASA side of the boundary. This is a cross domain and includes:
    - Annex I aircraft, in particular experimental aircraft and microlights;

- the designers of those aircraft and their processes;
- third-country regulatory systems, in particular the FAA regime for FCL and continuing airworthiness, in which GA appears to thrive with at least the same level of safety as in Europe;
- portable (non-installed) equipment that operates safely without certification.

- *Establish the right to experiment for Member States:* Protect innovating Member States against the reflex to issue comprehensive regulation before the first test is run.
- *Qualified entities:* On the basis of the New Basic Regulation, EASA is called upon to welcome initiatives brought forward by sports and light aviation actors in view to establishing qualified entities.