



FAI Aerobatics Commission (CIVA)
Annual Plenary Meeting 2025
Paris Le Bourget Air and Space Museum, France

Report from the CIVA President

This year

We are all acutely aware that 2025 has included less than half of the full set of World and European aerobatic championships that competitors should expect from CIVA. Our power Unlimited and glider Advanced and Unlimited pilots have been faced with no international FAI standard events at all, a dire situation whose roots every one of us must review to build a better foundation for 2026. For next year we already have successful bids for WAC in the USA and the two-class WGAC and WAGAC glider championships in France. I am however aware that efforts are being made by a least one European organiser planning to bid for and then run the EAAC and EIAC events in 2026, and have some optimism that we will be able to discuss a full complement of events at the plenary conference.

Where to concentrate our resources

A thorough SWOT review of CIVA's strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats was drafted and circulated earlier this year, indicating that while the availability of top-class aerobatic planes and the training to fly them is probably better than ever, the long term human effects of the tough worldwide financial situation of 2008, the more recent Covid pandemic and mankind's increasingly militant attitudes have distinctly affected not only personal freedoms to participate in expensive motor sports such as ours but also entrepreneurial attitudes toward creating somewhat risky projects to develop viable bids for FAI style category-1 aerobatic events and then run them. These demand a top-quality management team to construct a workable bid plan, secure adequate funding and a usable airfield, and then assemble a group of experienced helpers to make sure that everything can and will proceed at the standard we expect. Experienced operators have managed this task to great effect since CIVA began in the 1960's and the "how to do it" bank is well primed, indeed a comprehensive explanation of every aspect is available in our 'Guide to Contest Organisation' that combines the hard-earned experience of organising teams over many years. The level of project risk to be identified and carefully overcome however remains significant.

A decade of forward progress

This year also marks the tenth through which it has been my privilege to work on your behalf as the president of CIVA. During this time an enormous range of topics and specific matters of interest have received dedicated attention and constructive input by current bureau members and other officers, while associated critical areas have moved forward with help from knowledgeable and talented people within the wider CIVA aerobatic community plus FAI's international spread of resources. Underpinning all of the above there is now a solid and reliable set of online explanatory supporting material covering every aspect of our sport, providing comprehensive administrative and results oriented reference materials and records, plus open-access comment channels and imagery via our well established social media streams.

A key ethic within organisations such as ours is to continually build knowledge and experience while keeping sight of the development of longer term objectives. Among the dozen or so FAI commissions that drive the yearly series of competitive World and Continental air sport events around the world, CIVA can reflect on a well established set of online and official resources that provide solid guidance and practical experience in every area.

Aerobatic Championships in 2025

This year we have experienced the lowest range of FAI category-1 championships for many decades. Only two of the possible three power events received bids from organisers at and after the 2024 plenary conference, the missing one being sadly for our topmost Unlimited class. For glider competitors the situation has been even more acute, there being no 2025 international glider aerobatic championships at all. This state of affairs should serve as a very clear wake-up call to the NACs and potential aerobatic organisers who have the requisite experience and ability but for whatever reason have refrained from taking the necessary steps to implement and move forward with the required activities.

The entry lists and subsequent programme activities at the recent combined Advanced and Intermediate power World Championships in Hungary were strong enough to thoroughly stretch the organisers under Tamás's control. With just one day lost to the weather all 70 competitors were able to fly three full programmes, with no significant issues affecting progress. The new Advanced power World Aerobatic Champion is French pilot Maxime Orth, and the top three positions in the WAAC team awards as shown here were taken by France, Romania and the USA.



In the lower category Romanian competitors dominated, the 2025 Intermediate World Aerobatic Champion being Sebastian-Martin Dan (ROU) while here the team results were topped by Romania, the Czech Republic and the home pilots from Hungary.



There seems little doubt that an Unlimited power European event would have received at least a similar response to the two categories at the Hungarian twin championships, though as we know no bids were submitted for such an event.

For glider competitors we can only hang our heads, with nothing at all to break a solid 14 year run of paired Unlimited and Advanced championships. The clear evidence is that in most categories aerobatic pilot numbers remain strong; with the sole exception of the glider Unlimited class there is no shortage of suitable aircraft, and training sessions all over the world are thriving. Our critical need therefore is for robust activity by NACs and organisers to assemble the necessary drive and enthusiasm to bid for and then run the events that form the bedrock of our traditional activities.

The prospect for 2026

Building upon the excellent bids received from the US for an Unlimited power WAC and from France for the usual paired Unlimited WGAC and Advanced WAGAC glider championships, all duly approved at the 2024 plenary conference, we need now to set our sights on adding events next year for Advanced and Intermediate power – perhaps another combined event to follow this year's well supported Hungarian example?

We must all also work hard to move back and regain the experience of former years when bids in every category were often received and approved one or two years ahead of the annual conference. The experience of most organisers is that less than a single year to plan and run a major championship is not enough; formalising the schedule for these events on at least a 'year after next' basis should be our normal target.

The championship structure

While nearly all of CIVA's memorable events through the last 65 years have been fully-fledged category-1 FAI championships, some other FAI commissions take maximum advantage of the category-2 system – modellers CIAM for example usually include over 300 worldwide competitions annually on this basis in their calendar. These involve some simple underlying FAI commitments for organisers to comply with and a small sanction fee is due to the commission each time, but few alterations to their regulations are required to make them happen and become included in the Federation calendar of events. A common theme is linking of multiple events to create the basis for cumulative points tables and rankings in the same way that our sadly abortive CIVA Open Tour Series was conceived to provide. The bureau is actively considering this approach and with further discussions and exchanges a workable format for aerobatics may emerge.

As a final note, it seems to me that actually making international FAI category-1 aerobatic championships happen with the challenging technical status and personal reward that competitors must have is our inescapable primary objective. Beside this basic duty, deeper consideration of historic expectations will surely provide for us a realistic way forward. Within the overall envelope of mandated responsibilities in our regulatory structure, we should bear in mind that flexibility is already approved to run with a less extensive schedule, thus for example an 8-day Saturday to Saturday event may be the right solution. A mildly restricted set of programmes can still underpin the formal declaration of World and Continental champions, as we saw recently in Hungary. Remember also that glider events adopted a format with the financially onerous hotel accommodation excluded many years ago and proved that this works well – surely such a welcome simplified organiser responsibility would work at power events too?

Yes it's different and yes such thoughts may not appear immediately desirable. However if the prospect of running a championship in your country remains for whatever reason a hurdle too far then perhaps it's time for a re-think. This may be the way to entice NACs and organisers to reevaluate the task and operate effectively with a more modest workload and less burdensome financial commitment – can we not agree that is better than no event at all?



Nick Buckenham

CIVA President 2016 - 2025