

Report: Light end/low cost gliders working group (WG)

January 2008

The working group has been established during summer 2007. The main aim has been to respond to the proposal approved by the last IGC plenary meeting:

"A Low Cost Entry Classes Committee is created.

This committee would regroup all existing subcommittees and representatives of the low-cost classes and initiative groups (World Class, Microlift class, Ultra-light gliders, Microlight Motorgliders, etc.) into a single committee. This Committee would be tasked with coordinating and managing actions across the entire low-cost, light-end, segment of Soaring toward better exploitation of that segment of Soaring toward global membership growth by targeting attraction and retention of less (financially and soaring infrastructure) fortunate pilots and countries. Initial action of this committee would be a thorough review, and report to the plenum, of the entire class structure at the low-cost, light-end of Soaring, with recommendations on actions to better exploit that segment and optimize its class structure, as requested by the 2006 IGC Plenum."

The members of the WG are: Vladimir Foltin (chairman), Francois Pin, Tor Johannessen, Alvaro de Orleans-Borbon, Eric Mozer, and Goran Ax.

The WG has initially started by review of the work which has been already done in this field. During this task the working paper has been drafted. The following aspects have been pointed out and commented:

- Current IGC classes as the target for this WG (world championship and/or other classes).
- The current structure and recent activity in such classes (number of sailplanes, the latest progress, and future attractiveness).
- Definition criteria to be used for future common class definition (conventional span or mass, use of certification limits, handicapping, other).
- New emerging technology or trends in this field (new microlight gliders/motorgliders).
- Other considerations to the topic (future of PW5 in WGCs).
- Proposals for the more appropriate name for the WG.

Despite little activity of the WG in 2007 there have been some very interesting opinions presented by the WG members during their responses to the working paper. One of the first intentions of a few WG members has been a try to define a new class using very simple and not a conventional definition criteria which will be able to include the majority of the existing (older or brand new) sailplanes or motorgliders with the performance just below the current IGC club class. Later those and also some other opinions have been discussed during the autumn IGC bureau meeting. During the IGC bureau discussion the mass limit combined with span limit has been proposed as one of the options which can better reflect the present situation and keep the current world class gliders to be appropriately supported in the future. The bureau also expressed the opinion to focus more into the area of new designs in order to capture these sailplanes/motorgliders to the new class. It has been agreed that WG will report to the plenum and that there will be no firm proposal for a new class structure because of the lack of information at this time. At the end of the meeting the next conclusions has been presented for the WG consideration:

- The IGC will try to organise the international test competition.
- This competition will be held in the two classes - expanded world class (13,8m span) and EASA certified microlight motorgliders.
- The goal is to learn if there is enough interest in and if all gliders are homogeneous enough to be suitable to fly common competitions in the future.
- The France will be possibly able to support this idea and host such event in 2008.

In order to obtain more current general opinion on the various possible ways forward the WG will try to prepare a survey for the delegates and competition pilots. The questionnaire with explaining presentation will be made available to the delegates at the IGC plenary meeting and to competition pilots during the WGC in Rieti and other competitions. A sufficient response time will be made available to the delegates so they will be able to discuss the issue with their home NACs.

New more appropriate name for the WG will be further discussed during the next months. After the WG conclusion the name will be presented at the IGC plenary meeting.

Vladimir FOLTIN
Nitra, 13th January 2008