



EUROPEAIRSPORTS

EUROPE AIR SPORTS

The Association representing European National Aero Clubs and Air Sports Organizations in Regulatory Matters with European Authorities and Institutions.

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Sporting & Recreational Aviation Conference – EUROCONTROL 1 DECEMBER 2006

SETTING THE SCENE by Sir John Allison, President of Europe Air Sports

I would like to start by thanking our colleagues and friends at Eurocontrol for sharing this day with us. They have given generously of their time and facilities to make this joint conference possible. I would like to thank especially, Sam Parkin, Peter Eriksen and Gaelle Evrard for all the help they have given and, from Europe Air Sports, our indefatigable Secretary-General, Harry Schoevers. Also Louis Berger and the Belgian Federations for their remarkable turnout and equipment displays. And finally, the FAI, who produced the posters.

We felt the need to hold this event to give a focussed voice to the needs of the various branches of purely recreational aviation and all air sports. The idea is to provide an opportunity for the officials of Eurocontrol and other interested parties to hear at first hand the distinct airspace needs and concerns of each of the main air sports. Then for Eurocontrol to respond, and for us all to have a debate on the issues that so fundamentally affect our futures. Because these matters are so important, and because the aspirations, needs and point of view of recreational aviation are different from mainstream commercial aviation that the ATM system has evolved to support, the debate may be tough at times. But I am sure that the good relationship between us and the air traffic control professionals here at Eurocontrol is easily strong enough to withstand the test of robust but courteous and respectful debate.

In that spirit, I will open with the fundamental proposition that the air sports community neither wants nor needs an Air Traffic Management System at all. Indeed, in our perfect world, centred only on our priorities, it would not exist. The artificial classification of airspace, the nuisance of having to talk to, or, worse still, to take instructions from, a third party, the requirement for communication, navigation and recognition equipment not strictly required for our own purposes, are all impositions either on our pocket or, more importantly, on our freedom to take our pleasure in the sky in the way we wish.



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That vision of airspace paradise is of course completely unrealistic. But I make the point, not in any way to hurt the feelings of our ATC friends, but to remind everybody that the ATM system was not put in place for our benefit. It exists, quite rightly, for the benefit of Commercial Air Transport, and, as a by-product, for the benefit of some of our colleagues in the more complex operating end of our sector – such as those aeroplane pilots who do fly IFR. I am thinking here of the members of PPL/IR Europe. We all want CAT to be safe; no doubt some of us used the system to get here today. We are not kicking against that. But it should not be forgotten that the recreational and sporting pilot is no more than an incidental user of air traffic services. We have no choice but to work within, or around, the airspace structure, requirements and rules that exist solely for the benefit of others.

The issue is how to resolve the aspirations of two communities with very different objectives and needs. We are fearful. We see a creeping but inexorable trend towards ever more restrictions on our activities – more controlled airspace, more demands for expensive equipment. Above all, we fear being steadily squeezed into fewer and smaller areas where it is still possible to operate until we become extinct. This concern is particularly acute for the engineless sports that are simply not amenable to a classic air traffic environment, but for their proper pursuit must be able to range over large areas.

We fear the power, influence and money of professional aviation and supporting organisations such as commercial airports and, yes, the providers of Air Traffic Services, all backed by the desire of politicians to support commercial activity and to ensure that the businessman gets to, for example, Brussels or Cologne on time and safely, and the holidaymaker to Majorca. These things may be important. But so, too, are our needs. The importance of the individual is a fundamental concept in European society. We have a right to claim that our individual freedom to pursue leisure and sport in the sky should be considered on a level playing field along with the competing claims of CAT.

We need the sky, too. The sky is ubiquitous. The sky belongs to everyone. The sky represents personal freedom. It should not be mortgaged to one interest group. The sky has to be shared equitably between competing and mutually incompatible needs.



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The sea is shared without undue difficulty between all kinds of users. There is less sea than sky and it is only two dimensional. We must find an equitable way to share the sky.

Certain themes run like a river through the sports presentations that you are about to hear:

- **Minimum equipment requirements. Mandatory fitment of new technologies only if essential. Minimum changes and lots of warning time, so that any absolutely necessary and proven equipment mandates lead to investment decisions and pay-back that are fair and equitable.**
- **No charging [I should think not – we should be compensated for the inconvenience, actually, because we are obliged to use a service that we do not require]**
- **Above all, access to airspace and oceans and oceans of free airspace**

I think that there are some pretty obvious ways that, with a little give and take, a shared system suitable for all can evolve. There are a lot of us and we operate a very considerable fleet of aircraft, making a huge number of flights each year. We do not come as supplicants. We insist that we be treated as equal stakeholders.

Sir John Allison
President, Europe Air Sports

1 December 2006