



Welcome to the July 2011 enews of IAOPA Europe, which goes out to 23,000 aircraft owners and pilots in 27 countries across the continent

French private instrument rating officially announced

France's ICAO-compliant Private Pilot Instrument Rating, first revealed in the May enews of IAOPA Europe, has been formally announced at the Paris Air Show by AOPA France, the Direction générale de l'Aviation civile (DGAC) and the French Aero Clubs Federation (FFA). The new IR, for which only a single written examination on pertinent topics is required, means that French pilots can obtain the benefits and protection of an IR without going through the nonsensical theoretical knowledge requirements which have hitherto made European IRs unobtainable for 98 percent of private pilots. Holders of FAA IRs will be able to convert them to French IRs easily and cheaply. While the new IR will be valid only in France, IAOPA is pressing for bilateral agreements on recognition from other European countries.

If enough countries recognise and adopt a French-style IR it may be possible to head off EASA's plans on instrument flying, which are unlikely to improve on the current situation. IAOPA Senior Vice President Martin Robinson has written to the UK Civil Aviation Authority with details of the new rating.

The French IR was outlined to IAOPA by Emmanuel Davidson of AOPA France at the Regional Meeting of IAOPA Europe in Friedrichshafen in April. The credit, he said, was mostly due to M Patrick Gandil, Director General of the DGAC, a private pilot who had been unable to take time out to study for the JAA IR exams. M Gandil travelled to the USA in May to look at the FAA IR and flew with Bruce Landsberg, head of the AOPA Foundation.

The practical flying training for the French IR exceeds the requirements of ICAO; the major change is in the theoretical knowledge requirements. M Davidson says: "The written exams for private pilots is centered on the subjects that are pertinent to the conduct of IFR flights in single or twin engine pistons up to FL195. There will be no questions about the hydraulic systems of airliners or the calculation of Mach numbers, only subjects relevant to what pilots needs to know."

In France, fewer than three percent of private pilots hold an Instrument Rating - in the UK, the figure is around one percent. A joint study by AOPA and FFA showed that more than 3,000 French pilots would like to train for an IR(A) in the next 18 months if they could be trained in a manner resembling the one used by the FAA.

AOPA France identified the three reasons for the low uptake of European IRs as:

- JAR-FCL rules assume that only commercial pilots could be interested in an Instrument Rating, and the IR was made part of the professional training. It takes an average of one year of study to be able to take the written exams, with most students electing to take ATP writtens instead of IR exams, as they are easier.
- The student must enroll in a professional flight training school to study for the written exam and the flight training
- The total cost of an IR exceeds €20,000.

“This means that an Instrument Rating is nearly impossible to get for a pilot that has a job and a family,” M Davidson says.

The new IR will allow the pilot to fly on instruments to the same minimums as JAA IR holders. It allows French PPL holders to fly IFR on French registered airplanes in French airspace, and there is provision for FAA IR holders to validate their US IR on their French license - if they have 100 hours on instruments (including sim time) they simply need to fly a ‘skills test’ at an approved FTO.

The theoretical knowledge exam calls for the student to answer 150 questions on air law, radio comms, IFR-related human factors, instrumentation and radio navigation, flight planning, flight following, and meteorology. While an accredited FTO must be in charge of the training, pilots can do the flying in their own aircraft, or in an aero club plane, which further drives down costs.

The first French candidates for the new rating should be taking their written and practical exams as early as September. The way is open for other European countries to accept the French rating, given that it is ICAO-compliant, by making an agreement with France under which French rated pilots could fly into other countries. M Davidson says: “If enough European countries accept the French rating, EASA could decide to adopt a system that is already functional and has been proven as a functioning alternative to its own plans.

“AOPA France wishes to recognise the enormous help of M Patrick Gandil, M Maxime Coffin, head of the mission for General Aviation at the DGAC, M Jean-Yves Pieri of the French DGAC, Françoise Horiot, Président of Gipag, the union of French aviation professionals and FTOs, and Jean-Michel Ozoux, President of the French Federation of Aero Clubs.”

EC to study whether regulations work

The European Commission now has a system for checking existing policies, the goal of which is to make Europe more competitive. The EC’s transport department DGMov is conducting a ‘fitness check’ of its own framework regulations on aviation to see whether they are fit for purpose. The idea is to look for excessive administrative burdens, overlaps, gaps and inconsistencies in policy. One of the first things they are checking is insurance requirements. AOPAs in several countries have sought changes in laws which categorise aircraft by weight for insurance purposes, regardless of how often they fly and whether they generate revenue. In the UK, for instance, a wartime B-17 Flying Fortress which appears at perhaps a dozen air shows a year is forced to pay the same insurance as an Airbus A320 flying 14 hours a day in commercial service. The Commission recognises this problem and has promised to study carefully any recommendations arising from the new study.

Commission debates ban on short flights

Driven by the green lobby, DGMov is discussing the possibility of an EU-wide ban on all flights of between 100 and 300 miles, in favour of high-speed trains. At a meeting in Brussels last week the entire aviation lobby was united in opposition, pointing out such factors as the geography of parts of Europe which makes air transport the only serious option. IAOPA Senior Vice President Martin Robinson asked how an MEP based in Belfast would be expected to get to Brussels, and pointed out the important role helicopters play in delivering oil workers to platforms in the North Sea, as well as other aerial work operations. Mr Robinson says: “There should be no doubt of the strength of the anti-aviation green lobby in Europe, but one has to hope that this is a non-starter.”



AOPA Spain fights new taxes

New charges and taxes at major Spanish airfields are hitting general aviation hard, and AOPA Spain has joined with other organisations to create a new GA Support Group to pressurise the civil authorities for alleviation.

Airports such as Sabadell near Barcelona or Cuatro Vientos near Madrid have introduced ‘airfield transit’ charges which have increased fees by more than 300 percent, while airfields in tourist areas such as Almeria, Menorca, Girona and

Valencia have raised their fees up to €97, the equivalent of 1600% in some cases, mandatory handling not included!

Rafa Molina of AOPA Spain reports that following recent visits to Snr Juan Ignacio Lema, President of AENA, the public body which owns and operates Spain's major airports and airspace, and with some members of the Spanish Parliament, AOPA will henceforth be involved in negotiations over the planning of fees and charges for 2012. A major concern is to ensure that the concept of 'minimum fees' does not adversely affect GA.

AOPA Spain and the GA Support Group will maintain pressure on the Transport Commission of the Spanish Parliament and on AENA, and is considering some form of public event to gain support in this battle.

Language difficulties and safety

The safety ramifications of the use of languages other than English in the IFR system have been highlighted by an airprox over France involving a member of AOPA UK. The pilot was flying IFR at FL11 in his Cirrus when he became aware through his ACAS system of another aircraft passing close behind him. At the same time, he could hear ATC having a conversation with another pilot in French. He thought no more of it until weeks later he received a letter from the DGAC telling him he was under investigation following an airprox and asking for his version of events. The pilot contacted AOPA, and UK Chief Executive Martin Robinson became aware of a safety anomaly when he discovered that under French national law, a Frenchman is entitled to speak French in France whatever the circumstances. This law is the product of national angst at the creeping encroachment of the English language, but it does not sit well with the requirements of aviation safety.

"It makes a mockery of ICAO's insistence on English language proficiency," Mr Robinson said. "I can understand French or other languages being used in VFR flight, but in the IFR system it's vital that everyone understand what's going on at all times. Because this pilot did not speak French he was unable to build a picture of the activity around him, to the detriment of his safety and that of others."

AOPA assisted the pilot in the preparation of his response, and he later received a reply from the DGAC which indicated that the file on the incident was being closed. He remains unaware of the details of the airprox.

New Elba charges hit general aviation in Italy

One of the prettiest GA airports in the Mediterranean is becoming unfriendly to general aviation. Management at Marina di Campo airport (LIRJ) on the island of Elba have multiplied parking charges by a factor of six, effective from June 1st, which means it now costs €480 a week just to park a Cessna 172 on the grass! Protests have been flowing in to AOPA Italy from all over Europe. AOPA President Massimo Levy says: "We immediately got in touch with the management, but the problem is that Elba is a private airport which does not belong to our CAA so, in theory, the increase is legal. After a number of useless phone conversations we've decided to go public. We are writing letters to the Hotel Operators Association, to the National Tourist Organization, and to the local and regional government. So far no official decision has been taken but we have been given assurances from the town councillor responsible for tourism that the previous situation will be re-established." However, at a meeting on June 30th the company decided to postpone any decisions until the end of July. This means that any aircraft landing on Elba during the busy summer season will have to pay the new charges.

Any IAOPA member intending to fly to Elba should visit the AOPA Italia website (www.aopa.it) where any possible change will be announced.

Mr Levy adds: "If you do not want to be squeezed by someone who thinks that just because you fly a small aircraft, you are rich and you can pay everything they ask even without offering any special service, you are formally invited to avoid Marina di Campo, at least until these gentlemen understand that we are not simply ready to pay whatever is demanded of us."

Milan Linate CTR downsized

After a 15-year-long argument between AOPA Italy and the Italian Civil Aviation Authority, the massive Class D controlled area around Milan's Linate airport has been reduced to allow for easier transit around it. On May 15th ENAV finally published on the Italian AIP the new chart for Milan Linate (LIML) CTR, five nautical miles shorter to the north and five miles shorter to the south. This means that one of the largest controlled areas in Italy can now be circumvented without the long detours which have been required up to now. The modification is effective October

20th 2011. For AOPA Italy, this is a great success and, hopefully, the beginning of new relationships with the Air Traffic Control company.

'Upgraded' Channel Islands ATC means poorer service

AOPA is fighting new impositions by aviation authorities in the Channel Islands which mean all aircraft, including those based in the islands, must obtain prior permission for VFR flights into the islands' Control Zone. The Channel Islands are covered by Class A airspace in which Special VFR flights are allowed. Pilots flying VFR from the UK must already file flight plans and inform UK police, customs and immigration authorities of their intentions, giving 12 hours notice. Channel Islands ATC receives the flight plans and it seems perverse to add yet another level of bureaucracy, but they are determined to do so.

The situation is all the more puzzling because the Channel Islands has spent some £12 million upgrading its ATC system, which seems less capable than the one it replaced. While IFR flights are unlimited, there is an unspecified ceiling on VFR flights because ATC is worried that it will be unable to cope with the numbers - even though they are well down on previous years.

AOPA's Channel Islands Chairman Charles Strasser says many pilots feel increasingly unwelcome in the islands, and new and pointless requirement for PPR may put them off coming altogether. "AOPA Channel Islands region has repeatedly requested the maximum number of movements the system was designed to handle and what their present limit is," Mr Strasser says. "This information has not been disclosed. Since the daily number of movements into the Channel Islands Control Zone is less now than at any time in its history, it is clear that the new ATC system is unfit for its intended purpose.

"Clearly there will have to be an independent enquiry and scrutiny of how the millions spent on the new ATCC failed to provide a system fit for present and future traffic into the CICZ and the three CI airports. The considerable knock-on effect on the local economies of the Channel Islands of the proposed GA traffic restrictions are being totally ignored. GA visitors are responsible for bringing substantial revenue to the economies of the three islands through tourism and business.

"Particularly onerous is the effect on locally-based GA aircraft, requiring them also to go through the procedure of getting prior permission before they can return home. Yet, any number of similar GA aircraft can transit the CICZ or fly IFR, needing the same zone controller time, without prior permission being required."

The authorities say the requirement for prior permission, imposed from June 30th, will last for 'around three months'.

AOPA Hellas hails success of Kavala fly-in

The Kavala Fly-in and air show was a huge success, and local authorities in Greece are now indicating that they will make it an annual event. Anton Koutsoudakis of AOPA Hellas says that the show attracted more than 20,000 people, which is extraordinary in view of the fact that Kavala, in northern Greece, has a population of only 70,000. "Many more people watched the flying from their homes," Anton adds. "The city of Kavala is built on the side of a hill, creating something like a giant amphitheatre on the coast, with the aircraft performing exclusively over the sea for safety reasons."

The event was organised jointly by local authorities, the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the Mayor of Kavala and the local Chamber of Commerce, while aviation expertise was provided by Egnatia Aviation flight training school and AOPA Hellas. Such was the popularity of the show that traffic bottlenecks persisted throughout the day and hotels and restaurants were working at capacity.

Anton says: "The financial impact on the small community is obvious. AOPA Hellas is also enthusiastic about the success. General aviation got outstanding promotion, not only counting the spectators on site, but also with TV and newspaper coverage. Local authorities are also very enthusiastic and have announced they will make it a yearly event, and that 'preparations for the 2012 event will start immediately'.

"AOPA Greece will continue to offer any assistance that might be requested, to the local authorities at Kavala and to Egnatia Aviation flight training school. Also, AOPA Greece is using the success of this first event in an attempt to bring other local communities on to the side of general aviation."

Piston aircraft free of volcano regulation

IAOPA's lobbying at ICAO level for special consideration for piston-engined aircraft during volcanic eruptions proved invaluable during the eruption of the Grimsvötn volcano in May, when general aviation was allowed to proceed unhindered across all of Europe.

During the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2010, some European aviation authorities over-reacted by placing restrictions on all flights, even to the extent of banning flights by gliders and balloons. This over-reaction prompted EASA to issue guidance based on ICAO recommendations, which in turn followed suggestions from IAOPA during debates on the issue.

These provide special exemption for piston-engined aircraft, which are allowed to fly in low-ash concentrations, which effectively means non-visible ash clouds. The guidance is contained in EASA Safety Information Bulletin 2010-17, which expressly covers only turbine-engined aircraft and helicopters.

Bulgaria allows direct flights for Balkans summit

Bulgarian authorities have taken unprecedented steps to improve access to the Balkans Aviation Summit at Lesnovo Airport on July 7th and 8th, with a mobile team from the Bulgarian Border Police travelling to Lesnovo to allow EU pilots to fly direct to the airport. They will also be present at Primorsko Airport on July 10th and 11th - the summit takes place in these two centres.

Slavcho Gigov of AOPA Bulgaria says: "This is a big breakthrough for us. Until now, international flights were allowed only at the five major international airports, with no exceptions. We hope that this is the necessary first step towards making passport control available on request, as it is in Western Europe.

The Balkans Aviation Summit 2011 coincides with the official opening of Lesnovo Airport. The airport terminal was finished towards the end of last year and the final fitting out has been completed. "It deserves an opening party," says Mr Gigov. "We are expecting lots of guests from Greece and the other neighbouring countries. We will have aerobatic performance by Svilen Ivanov, who is the current President of AOPA Bulgaria, and who is probably the best aerobatic solo performer in the Balkans. The party will be held on the 8th, and on the following day everyone will fly over Bulgaria from Lesnovo to Primorsko to continue with the event at the Black Sea coast. At Primorsko we will also have aerobatic performance by the Italian trio of Luigi Franceschetti and the WLF Italian RV Team. At both events we expect Beech and Cirrus demo aircraft as well as those of some local manufacturers. We will have skydiving, aero modelling and good food and drink. There's a beautiful sandy beach is just 3km away from Primorsko Airport, so we welcome everyone to bring in friends and family for a great summer weekend."