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# Europe Air Sports Association

**Europe Air Sports and Model Aircraft: a Lesson in Cooperation on Matters of Common Interest**

**By Graham Lynn**

### What is Europe Air Sports?

Europe Air Sports (EAS) is the association co-ordinating European regulatory matters for National and European Air Sports Organisations. Established in 1988, EAS was registered in 1995 in The Netherlands, as a non-profit Association, and is affiliated to the FAI. The current Membership incorporates the National Aero Club Organisations of 24 States, including most of the Member-States of the European Union, plus the European Gliding, the European Hang gliding & Paragliding, the European Microlight & the PPL/IR Organisations. Through this structure, EAS represents the interests of some 650.000 sport and recreational airspace users involved in aero modelling, amateur built aircraft, ballooning, gliding, hang- and paragliding, microlight aircraft, parachuting and powered flying! A Board, a Secretary-General and a Programme Manager manage EAS. Technical Officers and the Air Sports Organisations perform the activities required to analyse and respond to the regulatory initiatives and also to create original documents and positions. Technical Officers also provide the expertise for air display, airspace (operations), airspace (equipment), airworthiness and maintenance, licensing, medical, operations, flight safety, and the environment. More recently the Board have established a new position of Technical Officer for UAS, to advise members of developments in this area of aviation. This organisation therefore ensures the best possible coverage of all air sport and regulatory expertise from all Member Nations.

### Model Flying: 100 years of History

Model flying as a sport and recreational activity can trace its roots back to the early days of the 20th Century. Much of the early development in model flying was undertaken in parallel by the pioneers of "full size" aircraft design, manufacture and flight. Not surprisingly, therefore, most of the early generation model aircraft were "free flight" models with any power being provided by rubber motors or CO2 powered engines. "Free flight" and "control line" model flying still remain popular today but it is the advances made in radio control technology that led to the rapid increase in participants both in sporting and recreational model flying.

### Model Aircraft and "Light" UAS (ULAS).

Clearly the development of UAS's, with a mass of up to 150 kg, is likely to follow closely that of model aircraft; however, our activities with radio controlled "powered" aircraft tend to be undertaken within a 500 m radius of the launch point and "within visual range" of the pilot. Whilst that may provide an acceptable starting point for "light" UAS (LUAS) in the immediate future, it will not come as a surprise to many when the LUAS community starts seeking permissions to operate "beyond visual range" of the operator, in a manner similar to that envisaged for their larger counterparts. However, that move forward may incur some considerable cost to the LUAS community because it would seem inconceivable that such flights would be authorised without a LUAS being equipped with a proven and robust "sense and avoid" system. It therefore follows that the needs of the LUAS community may appear much greater than that of the model flyer in the long term.

Within model flying we have collectively developed our activities around the use of relatively low frequency equipment operating at a very low power (nominally 100mWerp). This has proved to be perfectly adequate for "within visual range" operations in the areas that we operate from. It will be very interesting to see what effort the LUAS community puts into securing an allocation of frequency spectrum to support their intended use. From a model flying perspective I can find no immediate evidence to show that the LUAS community have done anything along these lines; I do hope they are not relying on the model flying community to include them within their frequency requirements! Indeed, I recall only too clearly that when the use of the 2.4Ghz band for model control was being questioned within the EU , the model flying community rallied round and mounted a strong case for its retention, which was successful. However, the LUAS community were noticeably absent from the "hearing" and not a single LUAS company submitted any form of support for the retention of the band. One must assume, therefore, that they have no further interest in this band, but they still seem to be using it!

On a similar theme, for some time now Eurocae Working Group 73, "Sub Group 4" has been developing the "Guidelines" for the operation of LUAS within visual range of the operator. As a model flyer I would be quite dismayed if we were involved in the inception of a new "flight" concept, similar to that of LUAS operations, and there appeared to be so little tangible support for the work associated with the development of the "rules", from the vast majority of potential users. One can only assume that many of these users either do not appreciate the importance of this work or have, with blind faith, put their trust in others to do the spade work for them!

Without doubt the LUAS community is embarking on a most interesting and potentially complex process, where, if I understand the aim correctly, it is to secure an approval to fly LUAS in both un-segregated (controlled) and Glass G airspace as an equal partner with "manned" flight, This will, no doubt, prove to be a very difficult concept for many in the "manned" flying community to accept, especially and until a proven "sense and avoid" system for LUAS has been developed, and even then there will be much convincing to be done in respect of proving an equivalent level of safety. So does the LUAS community now have in place a robust and effective "Management" structure to deal with the many "common" issues to be faced in operating LUAS both "within" and "beyond" visual range of the operator. If there is then it is less than evident at this point in time! Consolidation, coordination and cooperation in matters of common interest was something we learnt in model flying many years ago. It certainly has played a major part in the successful development of our sport.

### The Future

For the future, model flying will continue to provide an excellent form of sporting and recreational activity for the vast number of people who participate worldwide. Naturally, we will monitor with keen interest the development of LUAS as, I am only too willing to concede, some aspects of what may be developed to support that concept, may well have a read across to model flying in future years! The LUAS community may well experience difficult times ahead in securing their goals but then nothing thought worthy of achieving was ever easy to achieve.

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