

Report on hot air ballooning issues in Latvia, 2011.

The main task in 2011 in Latvian ballooning community was preparation to the organization of the 1st Worlds Women's, 2011. Due to continuous consolidation of the Latvia's state budget, the state's financial support was cut significantly to the sports in general and to the support of 1st Worlds Women in particular. As result as for January 31st, 2011 the state's financial support was zero. In respect to the economical situation in the Latvia we were forced to admit that at the conditions we had here we are not able to organize 1st Women World Hot Air Balloon Championship in 2011, Latvia, Valmiera, May 21-29 according to the sanction application. Latvian Aero club asked to withdraw the sanction to organize the 1st Women World Hot Air Balloon Championship 2011 in Latvia.

However the organization of the 1st Worlds Women's, 2011 was cancelled, the enthusiasm in Latvian Ballooning has not run short. We continue promote and develop ballooning in Latvia as sports and leisure. Using international funding and Exchange programs 15 volunteers from 6 different European countries were involved in the organization of the Latvian Nationals in 2011 and probably also in 2012.

To describe state's funding to the aviation I'll give some numbers. State funding to the general aviation sport in 2011 was 6000 EUR, planned amount in 2012 – 4500 EUR. From that amount the ballooning in Latvia uses 900 EUR in 2011 and 700 EUR in 2012. With the start of global economical and finance crisis the support from private sponsors dropped down to almost zero and we can hardly notice some promising changes now. Due to limited financial resources the number of participants in the Nationals decreased from 30 pilots in 2009 to 15 pilots in 2011. We will be happy to have 20 participants in the Nationals of 2012.

Latvian Ballooning federation maintains web page www.ballooning.lv where one can find some most important legal documents, list of all Latvian pilots and balloons with Latvian registration, list of competitions where our pilots plan to go and results afterwards. Information is mainly in Latvian, English version is under construction.

It is worth to mention that in the April 4, 2012 Latvian Ballooning has its 20th anniversary since the 1st hot air balloon flight in the independent Latvia took place. In the times of Soviet Union the ballooning did not exist in Latvia.

Over the last couple of years we have noticed unpleasant tendency that as a result of limited sponsorship to the event organizers, balloon clubs and particular balloon teams, the overall expenses for participation in the competitions rise and pilots are refusing to participate in the ballooning events at all or limit their participation to the minimum to be included in the National rating. Consequently less FAI licenses are required.

Proposal – to create event list of National championships in the FAI web page ballooning chapter. The information about the National Championship include date/time and place as well as organizer (sanctioned by National Aeroclub of National Ballooning federation) and contact information. The information about Nationals should be submitted by FAI CIA delegate. The purpose of the such list is to give overview of sporting events with high competition standards although they are not FAI sanctioned events and possibly to attract more competition pilots from abroad to the national events. Once Nationals are included in the list the results of the event could also be published there and available for including in the World Ranking list.

Finally, please find attached the Results of Latvian Nationals, 2011 – INTERNET link :
http://www.balticballoon.lv/2011valm/VALMIERA_FULL_RESULTS.htm

4.03.2012

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