

Discussion Item proposal:

Defining and Regulating External Aid

Discussion Item: External Aid

The topic of external aid requires clarification and thorough discussion during the Plenary to define what constitutes external assistance in the competition.

Background and Current Practices:

- According to current rules, data flow between the ground and pilots is allowed.
- Two-way radio communication is only permitted between pilots or between a pilot and a team captain. Meanwhile, data exchange is allowed from any public source.
- In some competitions, pilots from different teams (or countries) fly together and communicate on a pre-determined frequency specified by the organizer. Although not prohibited by the rules, this could be perceived as external assistance, especially when pilots listen to other frequencies. However, the enforcement and control of this condition remains nearly impossible.

Facts to Consider:

1. In the past eight CAT1 competitions, 84–100% of participants used their FLARM devices also for tracking.
2. Pilots can modify the performance of their FLARM signal transmissions, but monitoring or controlling when, where, and how these modifications were made is challenging.
3. Organizers can only check pilots' FLARM devices within a few hundred meters, making it hard to enforce larger range adjustments.
4. The IGC tracker can be inspected by organizers or stewards even immediately before takeoff. Refusal to allow such checks should carry penalties, as precedents exist.
5. Pilots can access radar images, and data from platforms like WeGlide (Copilot), Glide and Seek, or other websites and applications, gaining information on other pilots' positions, climbs, and more. This activity is virtually impossible to control.
6. A team pilot or ground crew can intercept another team's radio communications, which is not prohibited by the current rules and is nearly impossible to control.
7. Team captains can relay critical information about other competitors' positions, plans, or climbs to their pilots. Verifying the sources of such information is highly challenging.

Key Questions:

Considering these facts, we must determine what qualifies as external assistance:

1. Is it external assistance if a pilot listens to another competitor's frequency and uses the information to complete the task?
2. Is it external assistance if a pilot uses websites to track opponents' positions, strategies, or climbs?
3. Is it fair play for a pilot to use stealth mode, or no-tracking mode, or completely disabled FLARM in a deceptive way, while still tracking others via websites or apps?

4. Is it external assistance if a pilot receives significant information through data communication from any source?

Proposed Definition of External Assistance:

External assistance could be defined as:

"Any assistance to a competitor's flight provided by another glider, other than those competing in the same class and task (before a virtual outlanding), including but not limited to providing information about position, climbs, or strategy, obtained through active or passive communication."

Key Challenges:

Once the above questions are addressed, and any of the mentioned activities are deemed external assistance, the next step is determining the way of control the compliance of such rules and how to enforce them. If something cannot be easily and reliably controlled, it may not be regulated in order to avoid unnecessary complications.

Proposal:

If certain activities cannot be controlled effectively, they should be made public and accessible to all participants. For example, adopting a model similar to Formula 1, where all communication is public. Pilots, teams, and organizers would have equal access to the same information, enhancing transparency, fairness, and the sport's appeal. Making data public could also simplify the work of IGC officials and increase audience engagement in the sport.

Conclusion:

We urge the Plenary to deliberate on this matter to provide clear definitions and guidelines for external aid. Addressing this issue effectively will strengthen the fairness and integrity of competitive gliding.
