COMMENT:

**I**

t seems that our sport has finally woken up to the world membership problem. The chart on page 19 spells it out graphically - we are down another 1.7% during 2011, but putting it more plainly - **we have lost 10,000 pilots in five years.**

The USA realised the problem is greater than very few appreciated and are doing something about it. The European Gliding Union has a meeting planned just as we go to press to address the problem and it is to be hoped that they take on board the simple inexpensive idea unveiled at the SSA convention early in February. (See page 42).

Perhaps IGC delegates might now acknowledge that championships/competitions are not the life and soul of the gliding movement. Less than 5% of our world membership have ever been to a championship, let alone competed in one.

Getting this year's statistics has been harder than usual. When you don't get a reply from an IGC delegate after repeated requests, one can't help wondering how on earth some are appointed to the role and why? But we press on!

The increase in the number of sailplanes per annum has slowed. I would imagine that the Blanik problem is partly responsible for this situation. (Unfortunately there seems to be only one new club sailplane available as a replacement at a cost these small clubs can afford).

The fatality report is alarming. An increase of six fatalities over the previous year. Germany, France and USA have safety issues. These three countries, with the largest pilot population make up 55% of the total fatalities.

The total number of clubs world wide has declined (marginally). It is encouraging to see several countries that have increases in the number of clubs (whilst not the number of members).

Congratulations to the Netherlands on their membership increase.

We have used 2010 figures for the United Kingdom as they are unable to provide their totals until midway through the year. We got a revision of their totals for 2010 in mid 2011 This meant an update to 2010 to record a decrease of 1300 members in that year.

Let's hope that the roll out of the USA membership idea makes a difference to next year's numbers.

***John Roake***

***20.02.2012***COMMENT:

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