
Cross Country Open Distance

New PG Discipline

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Original proposal in brief – New Discipline

Open Distance flying is significantly different compared to racing along fixed course:

Racing and speed tasks feature:

- direct competing with other pilots
- relatively short flights, where best pilots are often separated by seconds
- racing along known routes and waypoints
- flying with head-, side- and tail- wind, with possible multiple repetitions of certain legs and waypoints during one task

Cross-country flights feature:

- individual flying, cooperation in tough parts with fellow competitors
- long flights
- flights along individually chosen lines, often venturing into previously unknown areas
- flights scoring not speed and aggressive piloting, rather covered distance with demonstrated endurance, tactical flexibility, patience and meteorological knowledge

**These are practically two different sport types,
requiring different preparations and different skills**

Original proposal in brief – New Discipline cont.

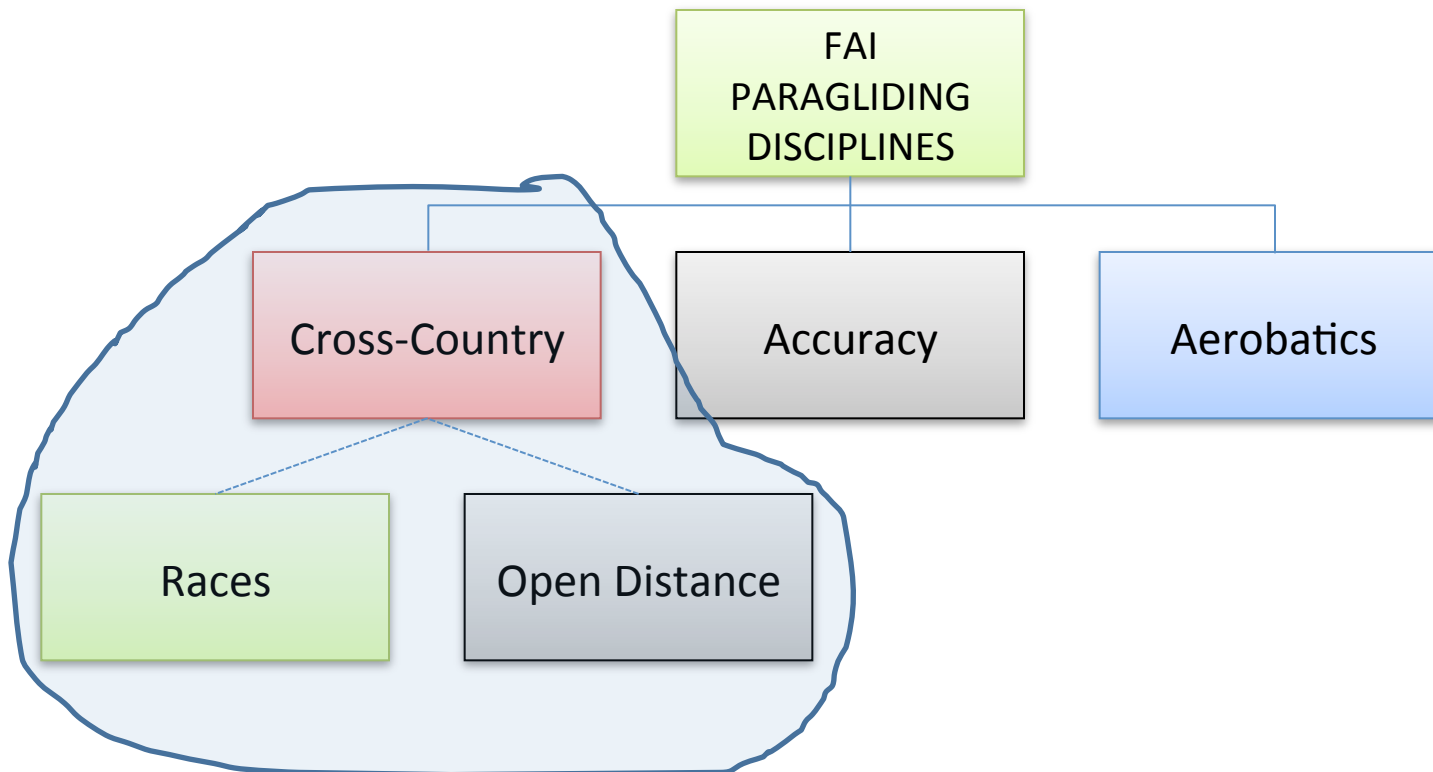
Open Distance flying is the most popular but the least acknowledged type of flying

- Open distance tasks are rarely present in FAI cat2 and not at all in FAI cat1 events
- The new discipline addresses other important aspects of free flying e.g. meteorological and tactical skills, endurance, ability to predict conditions on route etc. that are not so much covered during traditional races. The new discipline would restore the missing balance between flying fast in relatively short tasks and flying long distance.
- The number of pilots attending various online competitions like WXC, XContest or Leonardo clearly shows that Open Distance flying is the mainstay of paragliding. Acro and accuracy interest tiny fractions of pilots, yet they have their championships while the overwhelming majority has not.
- New discipline means new set of champions, teams, managers with accordingly new possibilities of obtaining grants, donations and sponsors. Similarly, it will attract to the sport many pilots not taking part in „race” type competitions, thus further increasing interest and adding new resources to the paragliding sport in general.
- New discipline will improve safety by eradication of many risks typical for racing e.g. low altitude, close to obstacles, leaside TPs, headwind racing, wrong task setting, pilots forced to fly in areas they would never choose otherwise etc.

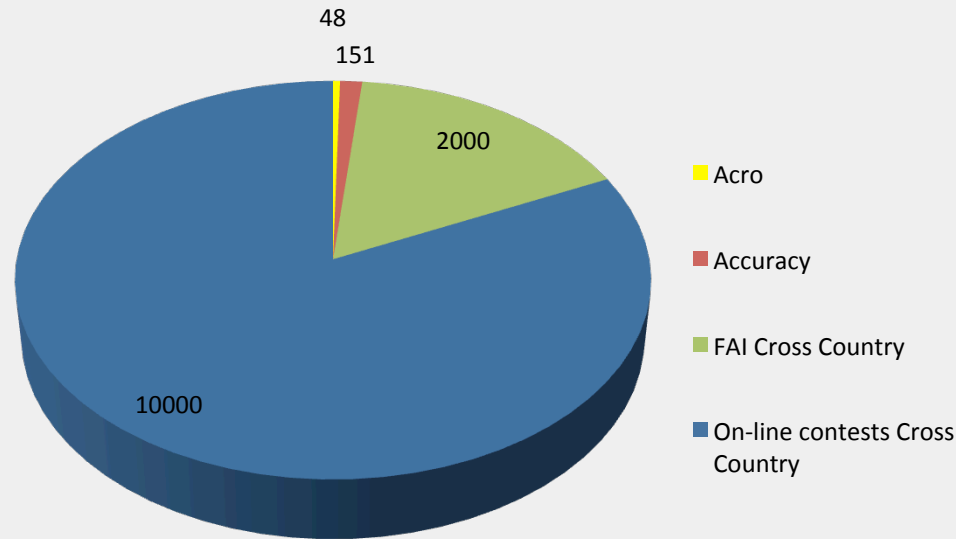
Original proposal in brief - New Discipline cont.

Currently free-flight paragliding features three sport types:
Paragliding, Paragliding Accuracy and Paragliding Aerobatics

We propose to establish 2 equally important Cross-Country disciplines:



Overview of current state 2011 worldwide



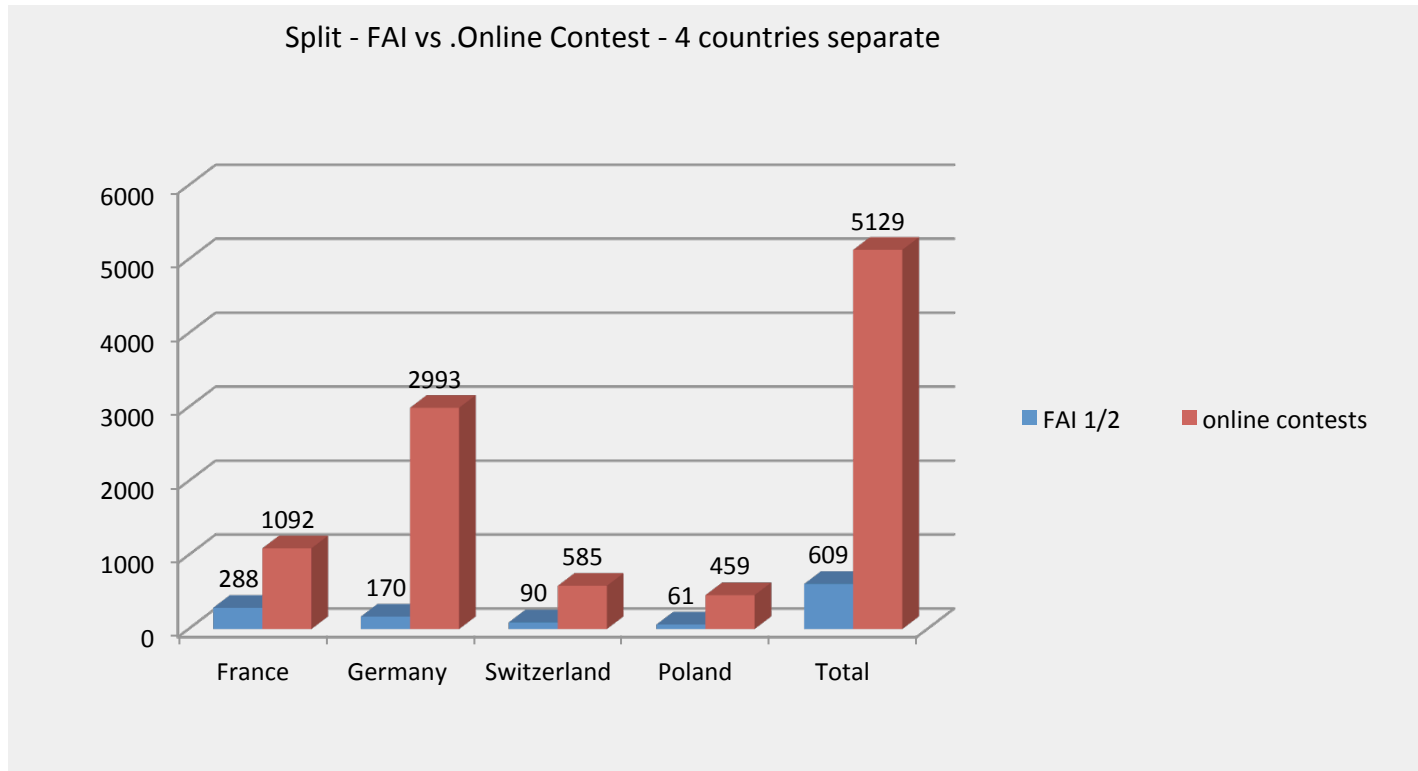
Not all online contest pilots are expected to be interested in open distance comps, yet the disproportion is huge enough to prove the need for a new discipline.

2011 - share of paragliding FAI disciplines and online contests (in % and number of pilots ranked)

Acro pilots in FAI comps 2011	0.4 % (48 pilots)
Accuracy pilots in FAI comps 2011	1.3 % (151 pilots)
Pilots in Cross Country Race FAI comps 2011	16.4 % (2.000 pilots)
Pilots in Online contests Cross Country 2011	82% (10.000 pilots)

*source WPRS

Overview of number of pilots Online Contests vs. FAI Race Competitions 2011 in 4 selected nations: France, Germany, Poland, Switzerland



2011 - Split of pilots flying FAI comps and Online Contests (selected nations: FR, DE, CH, PL) in 2011:

FAI competitions	609 pilots (12%)
Online Contests	5129 pilots (88%)

* Overall factor for the selected 4 countries is 8.4 for Online Contests. For other countries the factor is between 3.8 and 17.6 for Online Contests

Qualification Process – Allocation of places for FAI cat1

The process:

1. Organizer of the FAI cat1 reserves 80 places for top WXC pilots (absolute minimum required is finishing in top 400 of the previous WXC season, but the places are assigned according to individual results),
2. Priority places are given to all women among top 400 WXC and Top 50% new discipline XCO WPRS willing to come (there are few of them),
3. The organizer fills up to 110 pilots places with some who were unable to show good WXC results, but have good WPRS standing (filtered to include only XCO-style FAI cat 2s, thus creating XCO-WPRS)
4. The organizer looks for Nations which are not present yet and fills up remaining places with pilots satisfying at least one of the wildcard criteria.

Allocation of places



No. of places total: 150

No. qualified via WXC: 80

No. qualified via XCO WPRS: up to 30

No. wildcards: 40

Qualification Process – Wildcard Criteria

Take part in at least 2 XC-Open type FAI cat. 2 competitions, placing not less than top 75% overall each event

OR

Hold Diamond Badge level flight of 125km

OR

Be ranked in top 750 WXC twice in WXC history

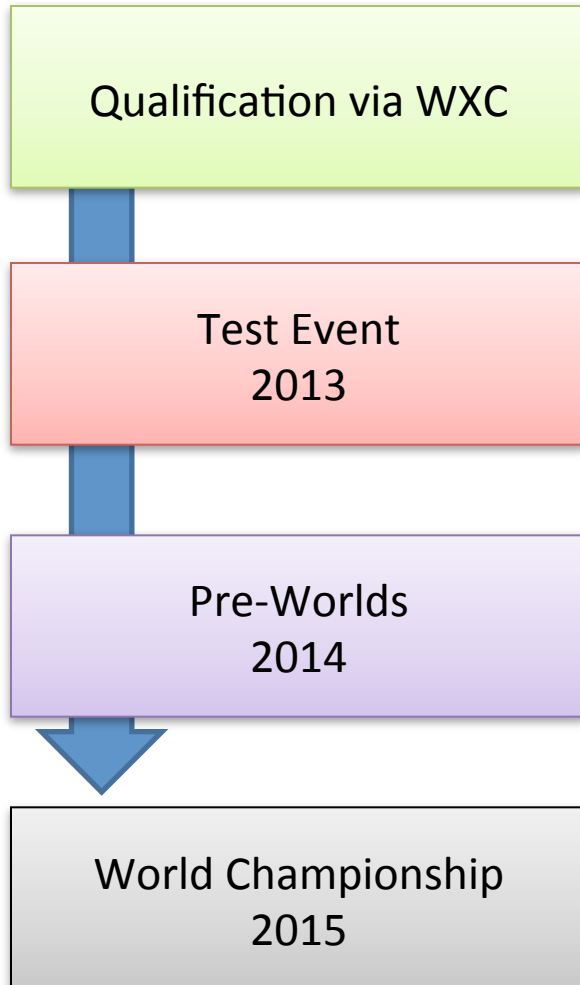
Wildcard criteria are rather liberal in order to open the competition for wider audience than current WXC/XCO WPRS semi-professional elite, creating new opportunities to new pilots.

Wildcard system allow to accept pilots from countries where flying is demanding but you can't fly long XC's, pilots who were good in the past but had an accident last season etc.

40 wildcards provide good balance between comp quality and admitting 'smaller' PG-nations who are eager to join that kind of competition, thus fulfilling FAI's standing policy of airports popularization.

(*) All women among TOP 400 WXC and among TOP 50% XCO WPRS for new discipline are allowed to enter with priority without having to fulfill other criterias

Competition format and timetable



No fixed date qualification. Pilots qualify as they fly.
All national platforms feed WXC with qualifying flights.

Fixed date, one-time event.
This event is to check pilots interest and collect feedback.
Procedures will be tested at this stage and fixed if necessary.
If ok we will continue to Pre-Worlds.

Fixed date event.
Test competition, rehearsal.

Fixed date event, every 2 years.
Interchangeably with Racing World Championship

Competition format main concerns

Why online qualification?

WXC is an existing FAI platform created to support Open Distance flying.

Given that we are living in difficult times, when time and travel become very expensive, the online qualification seems to be optimal solution for such discipline. Also, the character of open distance flying doesn't require fixed date meeting to run succesful and fair qualification process.

Retrieve system

Depending on number of pilots 2-3 buses are waiting in towns while smaller cars are picking up pilots from the area and take them to towns where buses wait.

Alternatively retrieve can be organized along the main road(s). Both options proved to be working during numerous editons of XC Open World Series and don't imply high costs.

Decision on retrieve system is always adjusted to local specifics so it's as efficient as possible.

Safety

Pilots are followed by organizers via live tracking. Devices will be mandatory on OD events.

There is option for rental too.

In case of risks (bad weather, big cities, airspaces etc) organisers give an open air file for no-go areas or set safety TP's or lines to keep pilots away from dangerous areas.

Recovery after long flights & retrieves

Pilots have ample opportunity to recover after long flights/retrieves as only best X out of Y flights count in final ranking. It's up to pilot when to take the 'day off'. Rest days can be also made mandatory by Safety Committee or competition director after several tasks in a row.

Summary

- The new discipline is in line with direction of PG sport development and will be set up according to FAI Sporting Code
- Adds new pilots to competition scene, increasing total number
- Provides new opportunities to pilots – it does not replace racing events
- Builds on differences (different skills and mindset) between Racing and Open Distance flying
- Offers real titles for real sport achievements
- Adds new sponsors and supporters to PG sport in general
- Reduces risk of accidents – no big gaggles, no wrongly set TPs or Tasks, no final glide races to goal
- Uses technology and existing platforms in order to keep costs and time of pilots to minimum
- Supports freedom of paragliding, increasing its variety and vitality

Next steps

Main parts of the puzzle already exist: electronic platforms, pilots willing to compete and organisers willing to put their effort in this kind of event.

All we need is to put them together under FAI umbrella and adjust regulations where necessary.

Following documents are being reviewed in order to include/support new discipline:

- FAI Sporting Code - Section 7B (amendments to be proposed)
- Practical Guidelines for Organisers of FAI-CIVL competitions (re-written to cover the requirements of Cross Country Open Distance)

With little effort we can make the paragliding sport even more popular !