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Vaisala News
Vaisala Helsinki
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The 10th European Gliding Championships were held in Lüsse, Germany, from July 29 to August 13, 2000. Vaisala's AW11 Aviation Reporter was installed at the Championships airfield. The AW11 measures all the standard aviation weather parameters: sky condition (cloud layer height and coverage), visibility, air pressure, temperature, dew-point, wind speed and direction.

AW11 Aviation Reporter assists at the

European Gliding Champs



The AW11 Aviation Reporter can be set up at an airfield with no more effort than it takes to install a meteorological sensor.



Last summer Tero Koivunen participated in the 10th European Gliding Championships held in Lüsse, Germany.

Tero Koivunen, a Software Engineer at Vaisala, is an enthusiastic glider pilot. He has also studied meteorology. "Maybe my gliding hobby has affected my choice of career," says Koivunen. "Since my hobby is strongly weather-related, it is certainly very compatible with the meteorological profession!"

Knowledge of meteorology is very important in gliding, especially on long-distance flights. But to succeed in competitions, too, glider pilots have to choose the right strategy, especially if the weather changes during the competition.

European gliding championships

Since he started gliding at the age of 15 in 1984, Tero Koivunen has flown between 50 and 100 hours every summer. Since 1987, he has also participated in gliding competitions. His best achievements

so far have been the award of "Finnish Master" in 1999 in the standard class, and 3rd place in the Young Nordic Gliding Championships in 1993.

Mr. Koivunen participated in the 10th European Gliding Championships held in Lüsse, Germany, last summer, coming in 21st out of 42 competitors. Says Mr. Koivunen: "Even though I didn't win, it was a valuable experience to participate in a big gliding competition."

Real-time weather info

With the help of the Vaisala Hamburg Office, the AW11 Aviation Reporter was installed at the Championships airfield. The AW11 measures all the standard aviation weather parameters: sky condition (cloud layer height and coverage), visibility, air pressure, temperature, dewpoint, wind speed and direction.

The AW11 generates accurate real-time weather reports

on the prevailing weather conditions at the airport. It integrates all the sensors and features of a complete Airport Aviation Weather Observation System in a single product. Designed for small airfields, the entire system can be set up with no more effort than it takes to install one meteorological sensor.

A speech synthesizer converts the weather information into spoken messages, making the data accessible to pilots through the built-in VHF radio and telephone network. Competition organizers also arranged for the weather data to be displayed on their web pages via PC, by making a small Perl script running on Linux.

Mastery of the weather is the key to success

Weather information is a 'secret' weapon for most gliding teams. Sometimes competition teams have their own meteorologists

to follow weather developments and inform their pilots about changes. "I think the participants were satisfied with the weather reports generated by the AW11," says Tero Koivunen.

Sailplanes are able to glide by utilizing ascending air currents or thermals. After a sailplane is towed to a starting height of 500 to 600 meters (1,700 to 2,000 feet), it will continue flying by gliding on the air currents and soaring upwards. Usually, both these techniques are applied intermittently during a flight.

New technology and flying techniques have enabled the most experienced glider pilots to fly distances of up to 1,000 km (600 miles) in favorable circumstances. ■