



*Fédération  
Aéronautique  
Internationale*

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# About FAI

## Introduction to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale

**FAI – The World Air Sports Federation**

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**The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, FAI - The World Air Sports Federation, was founded in 1905. It is a non-governmental and non-profit making international organisation with the basic aim of furthering aeronautical and astronautical activities worldwide, ratifying world and continental records and coordinating the organisation of international competitions. After more than a century of steady growth, FAI is now an organisation of some 100 member countries, forming a strong network linking all those who participate in air sports worldwide.**

- 2012 FAI Annual Report: [www.fai.org/downloads/fai/2012\\_FAJ\\_Annual\\_Report](http://www.fai.org/downloads/fai/2012_FAJ_Annual_Report)

## **Introduction to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale**

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### **1. The Origins**

At the start of the 20th Century, the pioneering flights of pilots such as Clement Ader, the Wright Brothers and Santos-Dumont, the proliferation of aeronautical competitions, and increasingly rapid technological advances marked the real birth of the modern aviation era.

A small group of visionary men recognized the need for an international federation to coordinate and give direction to the rapidly growing aeronautical activity.

On 10 June 1905, Count Henry de la Vaulx, Vice-President of the Aero-Club de France, Major Moedebeck of the German Airship League and Fernand Jacobs, President of the Aero-Club of Belgium, gave a presentation to the Olympic Congress of Brussels on their proposal for a « Fédération Aéronautique Internationale ». The Delegates received the idea warmly, and to demonstrate its support, the Olympic Congress adopted the following resolution: *“This Congress, recognizing the special importance of aeronautics, expresses the desire that in each country, there be created an Association for regulating the sport of flying and thereafter there be formed a Universal Air Sports Federation to regulate the various aviation meetings and advance the science and sport of Aeronautics”.*

On 12 October 1905, an international aeronautical conference was convened in Paris. After two days of debate, the representatives of Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United States adopted the entire package of proposed Statutes. The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale was founded on 14 October 1905. From its inception, the FAI defined its principal aims as being to *“methodically catalogue the best performances achieved, so that they be known to everybody; to identify their distinguishing features so as to permit comparisons to be made; and to verify evidence and thus ensure that record-holders have undisputed claims to their titles.”*

A century later, in spite of the emergence of new technologies and of several air sport disciplines, the objectives of the FAI as expressed in its Statutes have essentially remained the same. Today, FAI's Statutes describe its aims and objectives as follows:

- *To make evident the essentially international spirit of aeronautics as a powerful instrument for bringing all people closer in mutual understanding and friendship regardless of political, racial or religious considerations, thereby helping to create international good will and thus build a better and more peaceful world.*
- *To promote physical and moral qualities, technical knowledge and skill as basic to astronautical activities and air sports.*

- *To bring together the air sports men and women of the world in international competition.*
- *To educate young people through sport in the spirit of mutual understanding and friendship.*
- *To co-ordinate its Members' separate efforts to further aeronautics and astronautics throughout the world.*
- *To ensure adequate access to airspace for all who wish to fly.*
- *To provide a forum for the exchange of information and discussion of mutual problems with other elements of civil aeronautics.*

## 2. Organisation

To fulfil its objectives and meet the evolving needs of each air sport and area of activity, the FAI has constantly adjusted its organisational structure. Today, the FAI comprises the following elements:

- The General Conference, the supreme policy-making body, defines the aims of FAI, determines its Statutes and By-Laws, and elects the President and the Executive Board. The General Conference convenes once a year.
- The Executive Board is the principal executive body of FAI, responsible for implementing the policies and decisions made by the General Conference.
- The Air Sport Commissions control the activities of the different disciplines governed by FAI: Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Amateur-built and Experimental Aircraft, Ballooning, General Aviation, Gliding, Hang Gliding and Paragliding, Microlight and Paramotor, Parachuting, Rotorcraft and Astronautical Records (see paragraph 7a below).
- The Technical Commissions control non-sporting activities such as Aviation and Space Education, Aviation Medicine, Environmental issues (see paragraph 7b below).

The member nations of FAI are represented by their "National Air Sport Controls" (NACs). At the General Conference, voting powers are held by FAI Active Members and by the Air Sport Commissions.

In addition to the statutory elements listed above, an FAI Expert system, which includes 6 Expert Groups, has been established. The FAI Expert Groups are persons with expertise in specific areas who are called upon when there is a need for technical expertise. They are appointed by the FAI Executive Board and are on stand-by and assignments are only carried out „on demand“ (see paragraph 8 below).

The FAI Regional Vice Presidents are appointed by the FAI Executive Board to increase the management resources of FAI and provide the Executive Board with a tool for effective regional presence and a mechanism to promote air sports in a particular region.

The FAI Vice Presidents of FAI consist of the Vice Presidents representing Active Members and the Presidents of the Air Sport Commissions.

The FAI Head Office is managed by the Secretary General, who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the federation. In 1998, after 93 years in Paris, the FAI moved its headquarters and Secretariat to Lausanne, the Olympic Capital.

## 3. Championships & World Air Games

The awarding and supervision of international competitions is one of the main tasks of FAI. The rules – the Sporting Codes – drawn up by the Air Sport Commissions are used by national members to organise numerous competitions each year. World championships for each sport and discipline are generally held every two years, alternately with continental championships. Every year, over 30 world or continental championships are listed on the FAI Sporting Calendar ([www.fai.org/events/events-calendar-and-results](http://www.fai.org/events/events-calendar-and-results)), and many other sporting events such as Grand Prix, Cups and miscellaneous international competitions are organised in accordance with FAI Sporting Codes.

The first World Air Games took place in 1997 in Turkey, the second in 2001 in Spain. In 2009, the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAI World Air Games held in Turin (ITA) opened new perspectives and was the first multi-disciplinary air sport event bringing together the various air sports and sharing the same venues. The new format of the World

Air Games is a combination of elite competition and spectacular demonstrations, at which top athletes are invited to compete for the title of "World Air Games Champions" – the Champions of the Champions. The World Air Games will become FAI's flagship event and will be held every two years. Further information on the World Air Games is available at [www.worldairgames.org](http://www.worldairgames.org).

#### 4. World and Continental Records

Since the beginning of aviation, pilots have always tried to surpass themselves, to fly further, faster and higher. A pilot often needed great determination and courage just to take-off, let alone to put his aircraft through its full paces and try to push back the frontiers of the possible. Even today, adventurers such as non-stop round-the-world balloonist Bertrand Piccard often still venture into uncharted territory.

New technology enables constant progression in aviation records, and generates useful spin-off applications: for example, the pressurized cabin invented by Professor Auguste Piccard to carry out the first flight in the stratosphere in 1931 – a world altitude record – today allows millions of passengers to travel comfortably on board aircraft that fly at the outer edge of the atmosphere.

Drawing up rules, and controlling and ratifying aeronautical and astronautical World and Continental Records still represent an important part of FAI activities. Since the first flights were recorded in 1906, some 16'000 World Records have been registered by FAI to date. Every year, FAI receives between 200 and 300 world record claims, and approximately 90 % of these attempts are ratified as new world records.

Charles Lindbergh's historical flight across the Atlantic Ocean, and Yuri Gagarin's first human flight into space are amongst the great aeronautical and astronautical achievements recorded by FAI. All air sport disciplines are represented in the FAI World and Continental Record Archives, from human-powered flight at one extreme, to space flight at the other ([www.fai.org/records](http://www.fai.org/records)).

#### 5. Education

More than fifty years ago, the FAI established an Aviation & Space Education Commission to raise public awareness and understanding of air and space activities, especially amongst young people. Conscious that young people represent the future of aviation and air sports, the Commission developed several programs aimed at explaining flight, and raising the interest of young people in the highly demanding and motivating air sports and aviation careers.

Experience shows that teachers and pupils have a latent interest in aeronautics. When correctly integrated into traditional school programs, themes relating to aviation and space add a new dimension to the teaching of history, geography and physics. The educational material made available helps teachers to create a stimulating and motivating environment for their pupils. FAI also runs an annual Young Artists Contest and the "FAI Recommended Museum" scheme ([www.fai.org/education](http://www.fai.org/education)).

#### 6. Awards

Prestigious medals and diplomas allow FAI to give public recognition to those who have made outstanding contributions to aeronautics and astronautics, especially in the field of sporting aviation. Many of the recipients honoured by FAI have had their names closely associated with the history and developments of aeronautics and astronautics ([www.fai.org/awards](http://www.fai.org/awards)).

#### 7. International Commissions & Air Sports

##### a) Air Sport Commissions

Competitions and related activities are administered and developed by the FAI's Air Sport Commissions :

- The FAI Air Sport General Commission (CASI) seeks to further the development of air sports and keeps current the General Section of the FAI Sporting Code. [www.fai.org/general-air-sport](http://www.fai.org/general-air-sport)
- FAI Aerobatics Commission (CIVA) : [www.fai.org/aerobatics](http://www.fai.org/aerobatics)
- FAI Aeromodelling Commission (CIAM) : [www.fai.org/aeromodelling](http://www.fai.org/aeromodelling)
- The FAI Amateur-Built & Experimental Commission (CIACA) : [www.fai.org/amateur-built-and-experimental-aircraft](http://www.fai.org/amateur-built-and-experimental-aircraft)
- FAI Astronautic Records Commission (ICARE) : [www.fai.org/astronautic-records](http://www.fai.org/astronautic-records)

- FAI Ballooning Commission (CIA) : [www.fai.org/ballooning](http://www.fai.org/ballooning)
- FAI General Aviation Commission (GAC) : [www.fai.org/general-aviation](http://www.fai.org/general-aviation)
- FAI Gliding Commission (IGC) : [www.fai.org/gliding](http://www.fai.org/gliding)
- FAI Hang Gliding and Paragliding Commission (CIVL): [www.fai.org/hang-gliding-and-paragliding](http://www.fai.org/hang-gliding-and-paragliding)
- FAI Microlight and Paramotor Commission (CIMA) : [www.fai.org/microlight-and-paramotor](http://www.fai.org/microlight-and-paramotor)
- FAI Parachuting Commission (IPC) : [www.fai.org/parachuting](http://www.fai.org/parachuting)
- FAI Rotorcraft Commission (CIG) : [www.fai.org/rotorcraft](http://www.fai.org/rotorcraft)

b) Technical Commissions :

- FAI Aviation & Space Education Commission (CIEA) : see paragraph 5 above ([www.fai.org/education](http://www.fai.org/education)).
- The FAI Medico-Physiological Commission (CIMP) studies all medical and physiological factors influencing human performance and behaviour in air sports. ([www.fai.org/medical](http://www.fai.org/medical)).
- The FAI Environmental Commission (EnvC) provides information on the environmental impact of aviation on nature, and establishes codes of conduct for practising air sports disciplines while respecting the natural environment ([www.fai.org/environment](http://www.fai.org/environment)).

## 8. FAI Expert System

The FAI Expert System is consisting of the following Expert Groups ([www.fai.org/structure/expert-groups](http://www.fai.org/structure/expert-groups)):

- Airspace
- Navigation
- Safety
- Regulation
- IT
- Technology

Other Expert Groups are currently under consideration.

## 9. FAME

FAI Air Sports Marketing and Events (FAME) is the exclusive marketing agency established and owned by the FAI ([www.fame.aero](http://www.fame.aero)).

FAME's objectives include to:

- Develop innovative air sport competitions and new event formats
- Promote and facilitate the organisation of such competitions and events
- Provide marketing and promotional services, advice and support to any structure involved in the development and promotion of air sports and primarily for the FAI
- Provide support and services in developing and managing sponsorship and partnership programs
- Carry on any financial, commercial or industrial activity directly or indirectly relating to its purpose
- Establish branches or subsidiaries in Switzerland and abroad
- Participate in any undertakings having a direct or indirect connection with its purpose
- Grant loans or guarantees to shareholders or to third parties, if to do so is beneficial to its interests

## 10. Sponsorship

In May 2012 the FAI signed a long term sponsorship agreement with the prestigious Swiss watch company Breitling ([www.breitling.com](http://www.breitling.com)).

Breitling, a renowned brand whose headquarters are in Grenchen, Switzerland, became the first ever Global Sponsor of the FAI and carries the status of the Official Watch of the Federation. Rights include a general presence in FAI world and continental championships as well as a series of dedicated sole and exclusive programmes designed exclusively for Breitling, such as the Breitling Milestones Trophy and the Breitling Youngsters Award ([www.fai.org/awards/fai-breitling-awards](http://www.fai.org/awards/fai-breitling-awards)).

## 11. FAI in the World Community

Represented at the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), FAI takes an active part in the decision-making process relating to flight safety, pilot training and licensing, and air space regulations.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) recognised the FAI as an Olympic federation in 1985, and three disciplines – gliding, parachuting and hang gliding/paragliding – are potential Olympic sports.

The FAI is a member of SportAccord ([www.sportaccord.com](http://www.sportaccord.com)), of the Association of IOC Recognized International Sports Federations (ARISF), and of the International World Games Association (IWGA). Since 1997, sport parachuting has been part of the official program of the IWGA World Games ([www.worldgames-iwga.org](http://www.worldgames-iwga.org)). Parachuting Canopy Piloting and Paragliding Accuracy featured in the programme of the 2013 World Games, while AeroMusicals (Aeromodelling) was present as a demonstration sport ([www.fai.org/events/iwga](http://www.fai.org/events/iwga)).

## 12. FAI and the future

Just like their predecessors who, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, envisioned the huge potential of aeronautics and founded the FAI, today's decision-makers are already planning how FAI will face future trends and challenges.

One of FAI's main priorities is to encourage new recruits to take up air sports, and to improve the visibility and attractiveness of these sports to the media, the general public and young people. Among FAI's long-term projects are the exploitation of FAI's aeronautical heritage and fund of expertise, the further development of the World Air Games concept, and the encouragement of new technologies.

## 13. To learn more about ...

... FAI activities: Please consult the various Internet links provided throughout this document, as well as those listed below:

- News : [www.fai.org](http://www.fai.org)
- Statutes : [www.fai.org/fai-documents](http://www.fai.org/fai-documents)
- Sporting Codes : [www.fai.org/fai-documents](http://www.fai.org/fai-documents)
- National Member organisations : [www.fai.org/members](http://www.fai.org/members)
- Air Sports : [www.fai.org/about-fai/decision-making/1453-fai-commissions](http://www.fai.org/about-fai/decision-making/1453-fai-commissions)
- Competitions (Sporting Calendar & Results) : [www.fai.org/events/events-calendar-and-results](http://www.fai.org/events/events-calendar-and-results)
- World Air Games : [www.worldairgames.org](http://www.worldairgames.org)
- World Records : [www.fai.org/records](http://www.fai.org/records)
- FAI Awards : [www.fai.org/awards](http://www.fai.org/awards)
- Young Artists Contest : [www.fai.org/ciea-projects/fai-young-artists-contest](http://www.fai.org/ciea-projects/fai-young-artists-contest)
- « High Flyers, A Century of Sporting Achievement in the Air » : <http://fai.officialshop.ch>
- FAI eSHOP : <http://fai.officialshop.ch>

... flying: Please contact the national organisation representing FAI in your country. The complete list of FAI Members is available at [www.fai.org/members](http://www.fai.org/members).

We thank you for your interest in air sports and invite you to discover the camaraderie, enthusiasm and passion of all those in FAI and its member organisations, who form the international air sports community.

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