

Whirly-Girls Extend Their Representation within Europe

Words and pictures Renate Buchner



Left to right: Bettina Schleidt, Mona Seeberger, Evi Schmidt-Kraenzle, Lena Maier, Dee von Allmen, Katja Kammerer, Renate Buchner

A passage from the book, 'Infinite Game' by Simon Sinek, a New York bestselling author, describes in a most excellent way or manner the driving force behind the Whirly Girls International Women Helicopter Pilots organization: "The true value of an organization is measured by the desire others have to contribute to that organization's ability to keep succeeding, not just during the time they are there, but well beyond their own tenure."

The hovering symbolizes a special meeting of female helicopter pilots, multifaceted and creative thinking women, who live in camaraderie, exchanges their ideas and give their support to encourage the aviation industry



Left to right: Dee von Allmen, Charly Graf (Leocopter) at the Safety Conference

be more receptive to women. "We will be showcasing Whirly Girls for the next upcoming European Rotor Event and will keep in touch with the show organizer," said Dee Von Allmen, WG # 1985, representative of the European Whirly Girls Group, underlining her plan for the next year.

Dee Von Allmen is one of numerous Whirly Girls members who are highly committed in the helicopter industry. Dee is Training Director at Leocopter Air Services and develops seminars and safety conferences in collaboration with Claude Vuichard. She also organized a special offer for active members of ten 3-day passes to encourage current Whirly-Girls members to attend the European Event Show.

Prof. Dr. Bettina Schleidt, WG#1307, was one of the initiators of the successful premiere of the Helicopter Safety Forum at the European Event. Her aim is to create understanding, from an expert view, in her field of aviation psychology. Bettina is both an aviation psychologist and a commercial helicopter pilot.

Safe Helicopter Operations was a seminar designed to take the human factor into account when flying a helicopter. Other Whirly Girls members represented at the conference were Dee, as the moderator, and Bettina herself, as an experienced speaker. In addition to Bettina, Charly Graf (Leocopter), Mona Seeberger (BHS Aviation), John Franklin (EASA) and Andreas Hennig (HeLi-Flight) were speakers. The seminar aroused great interest among pilots from different regions and countries at the European Rotor Event. The location (Stage 1) in which the seminar took place, was surrounded by new models

of helicopter, all of which made a pilot's heart beat faster. The European Whirly Girls Group emphasized the strengthening the network of Whirly Girls members and the need for more scholarships to support female helicopter pilots with initial or advanced training. Women as pilots are still very rare and make up around only 7% of certificated pilots (this includes both fixed wing & rotor craft) worldwide. Specifically, taking Europe as an example France, Sweden and Finland exceed the average with from 7,5% to 12,00% of female student pilots in comparison Germany with 6,9% according to the information by Statista from September 2021.

There are a number of reasons why this percentage has barely changed in many years. However, there are strong indicators in the industry that the number of female pilots is increasing and will continue to do so for the next decade.

Whirly-Girls International Women Helicopter Pilots is headquartered in the USA and currently has over 2,100 members global, and the number is growing. In September 2021 the Whirly-Girls announced that Bristol Group want to contribute \$5,000 to the Whirly-Girls Scholarship Fund to assist women aviator in their career development. The Whirly-Girls' reputation for scholarships is highly recognized and has partners such as Airbus, MD and Bell, to name just a few. Its aim is to support female pilots on their way in the helicopter industry. Every year, the Whirly-Girls International Women Helicopter Pilots awards many separate scholarships valued, in recent years, at more than \$175,000 USD.