

Comment by DARC DX & HF Contesting Committee to VIE13/C4/09

The proposal VIE13/C4/09 by NRRL to get a contest free weekend is a direct threat to the existence of the „Work all Germany Contest (WAG) “. It will withdraw the basis of the meanwhile biggest German contest event, which, with original name, has taken place since 1959. From the beginning the WAG (WADM, WAY2) has been an international contest. Formerly the WAG was organized by the Radioclub of the GDR (Member of IARU), but after the reunification of the two German states in 1990 it has become a symbol of the reunion of radio amateurs in East and West. Nowadays the WAG is a contest for all German radio amateurs and their partners all over the world.

The NRRL paper doesn't propose any alternative for the WAG regarding timing. The proposal favours a Non-Amateur Radio Organization at the disadvantage of an IARU Member Society. In its proposed form it is aimed against interests of radio amateurs organized within IARU. Members of DARC are astonished about this proposal.

To our mind such a discrimination of DARC and all other amateur radio organizations concerned that organize a contest at the weekend in question does not comply with the constitution of IARU.

Even in the background remarks the proposer admits that DARC has already introduced and performed consistently effective measures to ensure peaceful coexistence of the WAG contest and the JOTA event. DARC is of the opinion that the chosen methods are even trend-setting and a good example for similar conflicts. DARC has successfully organized a principle of coexistence of different activities on the bands. Taking into account the interests of all parties involved, harmonic cooperation should be preferred to other measures, such as a general ban of contest activities at a certain weekend, especially when an agreement has been proved successful between groups of different interests.

The specified contest free segments are respected by contest participants almost without exceptions. Reported conflicts are taken seriously by the contest committee. Confirmed violations of contest rules get sanctioned. Year by year this handling reduces reported complaints.

Whereas several years ago some incidents have been reported in a summary of the annual World JOTA report, there were none in the near past (see reports JOTA/JOTI 2011, 2012).

Example 1:

„The agreement to stop interference between the JOTA and the Worked All Germany contest (WAG) was again applied this year and worked reasonably well. ... Overall the interference is much less than in the past and the agreement is a good example of "peaceful co-existence" on the amateur-radio bands. “ (World JOTA - JOTI Report 2009).

Example 2:

„Together with the National JOTA Reports, a survey was conducted amongst NJO's, evaluating interference of the WAG contest. ... We're happy to say that only a small number of incidents were reported where contest stations did not want to observe the agreed free zones ... So until another solution can be found, the arrangement seems to work.“ (World JOTA - JOTI Report 2011)

Obviously NRRL doesn't doubt the success of the agreement between JOTA and WAG organizer. Therefore it is not comprehensible why all the efforts by DARC so far shall be punished now by a loss of the basis for the WAG.

The recommendation by NRRL would harm the process of self regulation of amateur radio and the constructive cooperation between radio amateurs. Furthermore the proposal hinders getting members by training activities during a contest. WAG is one of the rare contests which still have a SWL category and it has even a special "rookie" scoring for beginners.

See young operators at RK3DZ [#RK3DZH]:

<http://www.dxhf.darc.de/~waglog/pic2009/tn/RK3DZH.JPG.html>

Contests are not an event with a competition character alone. They have elements of improvement of technical knowledge and of HF propagation and are an essential part in the process of recruiting radio amateurs as members by such training. Even some JOTA stations have participated with enthusiasm in the WAG contest. This can be proved with the great number of logs and friendly comments received from them.

Examples of JOTA stations participating in WAG and other contest events:

OH5S operated in 2012 for the second time in JOTA and WAG. On the first day activities in JOTA and WAG were made one after the other, on the second day 2 stations worked simultaneously on different bands. Quote: "this was very successfully".

CR2EMA/J made about a dozen contacts with WAG testers.

N1S made about 60 QSOs in WAG contest 2012.

ES9JOTA made 262 contacts in WAG 2009. Quote: The operation took place from ES5TV's home station. A great contest for beginners, and the JOTA weekend was a good opportunity to introduce contesting to kids.

K3JSE (JOTA 2012): Quote: Participated in two QSO parties which gave scout a sense for contesting. Participation level was so intense some scouts actually ignored the pizza when it arrived :-)

KB3UYT (JOTA 2012): Quote: The Scouts even got a taste of contesting, since the NY QSO party was in full swing on Saturday.

W2DQ (JOTA 2012: W2DQ): Quote: We had great fun getting individual scouts on the air. We didn't manage to contact many other JOTA Stations but we did make multiple contacts with a German contest station where we used our individual callsigns to get the Scouts actual contest contacts! They loved it and I had them initial the logbook to make it "official".

TA2KN: Quote: Station on the air for jamboree but participated in the contest just to show the boys&girls a different aspect of ham radio. (WAG-soapbox 2009)

GB4BDS: Quote: Just to show JOTA and WAG can co-exist.... A WAG entry from a bored tester at a JOTA station!!! (WAG soapbox 2009)

PC2F: Quote (translated): Nice contest with no problems for the JOTA station, so a good event.

The given number of about 12 recruited new NRRL members per year based on JOTA activities during the past 40 years appears to be rather modest. To our mind the number of the mentioned 500 thousand JOTA participants is not a reasonable argument; if a figure should characterize JOTA at all, it is the number of active HF JOTA stations.

We can't understand the claim that overcrowded bands mean a massive handicap for JOTA stations during the weekend in question. The great number of reports about contacts successfully made by JOTA stations proves the opposite, as everyone can read himself on the web.

http://www.scout.org/en/information_events/events/jota/radio_scouting_library/all_world_jota_reports

DARC doesn't understand that NRRL is quoting the view of a radio amateur outside Norway in order to support the presented thesis by allowing him to describe the situation on the HF band during contests organized by CQ magazine. JOTA/WAG activities have nothing to do with the situation during CQWW contest.

CQWW contests are outside of any control by IARU, since the organizer is not an IARU member. On the other hand: the view of the quoted OM proves that a proposal to ban or to move the present date of the WAG or of other contests would only be accepted by IARU Member Societies.

An IARU decision to keep the third weekend of October free of contests organized by IARU Member Societies would not really keep the weekend free of contests as independent organizations would soon take over this date for other contests. DARC doubts that these organizers would be willing to compromise.

DARC understands the argumentation as an attempt to question the existence of contests in general for which occasional violations of rules are used as a tool. Such a view denies the right of existence of an important aspect of amateur radio. We maintain once more that the NRRL desire does not comply with the IARU constitution. The NRRL paper is directed against a Member Society that has arranged a well accepted compromise and is determined to fight any violations of well-defined rules.

Why should a contest of historical importance, with its positive effect in training and the recruitment of members, with a well-working method to avoid conflicts with another event be made impossible? Even more so as there is a high risk that the contest will be replaced by another one that might be completely out of control by IARU? The contesting interests of a high number of members in our IARU Member Societies should not be threatened by inadequate measures.

Based on arguments and information given above, DARC rejects the recommendation in VIE13/C4/09.

Furthermore DARC encourages all Member Societies to define mandatory contest segments in all HF bands in the rules of their contests, as already recommended by the IARU Region 1 conference in Cavtat. Compliance by all Member Societies would finally result in a better knowledge and acceptance of contest segments and help to reduce the number of complaints.

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Chairman DARC DX & HF-Contesting Committee

NRRL Recommendation in VIE13/C4/09:

Recommendation

In recognizing the importance of the JOTA for radio amateur recruiting, it is recommended that Member Societies and other amateur radio contest organizers seek to move contests away from the 3rd full weekend of October, in order to leave this weekend contest-free. The purpose of this is to encourage radio amateurs to assist boy scouts and girl guides to participate in the annual JOTA the third full weekend of October each year, organized by the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), and to use this opportunity to present the full width of amateur radio to the boy scouts and girl guides, as recruiting possibilities to the scouts/guides.

Recommendation CT08_C4_Rec_15:

That within the chapter 'Guidelines for HF Contest Work' of the IARU Region 1 HF Manager's Handbook, a distinct recommendation to incorporate contest free segments in the rules of contests organized by national societies and its subdivisions shall be given and made well known.

Recommendation CT08_C4_Rec_16:

The Committee recommends that Region 1 Member Societies check and put into effect rules that relate to frequency usage for the HF contests that they organise, and that the Region 1 Executive considers encouraging other IARU Regions to adopt a similar approach.