

There are aviation stories that read like a business case, and there are aviation stories that feel like a promise. AELO Swiss Academy, based at Locarno Airport in Gordola and with a satellite base at Lugano Airport in Agno, carries a little of both. Its current presence is not just the result of incremental growth. It was built out of a handover, a decision to keep the momentum of flight training alive after the AeroLocarno operation changed ownership, and a steady emphasis on turning training into a repeatable craft.

AELO's origin is tied directly to that takeover. A report from 2025 described AELO as having been founded after Stefano Buratti and Daniele Dellea took over the former AeroLocarno operation about seven and a half years earlier. That phrasing matters, because it frames AELO less as a brand that appeared overnight, and more as an organization that emerged when experienced operators chose to continue the mission of training pilots, then build a more structured academy around it.

From the start, the objective could not have been vague. Flight training is intensely practical. It demands aircraft availability, qualified instructional delivery, standardized procedures, and the kind of infrastructure where students can progress day after day without friction. Even if you never see the internal timelines, you can feel the operational logic in the way AELO describes its offerings and facilities today: integrated career pathways, modern training devices, and sites designed to handle training flow rather than only provide hangar space.

The handover that became a foundation

When a training operation changes hands, the biggest risk is losing continuity. In aviation training, you do not get a clean reboot. Students are mid-course, instructors have their methods, and the program's credibility depends on consistency. The AeroLocarno takeover, followed by the creation of AELO under Buratti and Dellea, appears to have been a way to protect that continuity while still moving forward with a clearer identity as an academy.

The result is what AELO is today: an Approved Training Organization under CH.ATO.0311, operating a modern fleet of 17 aircraft and offering multiple pilot training routes. Those are not cosmetic details. They are signals of an organization designed to meet regulatory expectations and handle throughput. Training organizations with real ambitions tend to expand where they can control the student experience and the training environment, and AELO's base at Locarno, plus the satellite at Lugano, suggests exactly that kind of planning.

A modern campus feeling, not just aircraft on the field

Luxury is often mistaken for excess, but in training operations it shows up differently. It looks like care for the learning environment, stable scheduling, and facilities built to reduce uncertainty for students. AELO's recent expansion narrative at Locarno reflects that sort of investment mindset.

In 2025, RSI reported that AELO opened a new site at Locarno Airport, adding 2,000 square meters of space with an investment of over 3 million Swiss francs. The size and cost are meaningful because they point to more than an office shuffle. A training academy needs room for classrooms, briefing spaces, administration, and the supporting structures that keep training moving. When an academy invests at that scale, it usually means the organization expects sustained training demand and wants a physical layout that supports it.

That same report also said AELO trains about 200 future airline pilots per year and has around 250 students in training annually. Those numbers help explain why a "new site" would matter. Even if training is distributed across aircraft and instructors, student flow still needs to be managed in real time, and space becomes an operational constraint. In my experience working around aviation training environments, the difference between a good

academy and a great one is often how well it handles that day-to-day logistics layer. Investments like this are rarely made for show.

Programs designed for career structure

AELO emphasizes an integrated approach to pilot training, including options that target different career steps. The academy states that it offers an Integrated ATPL program, PPL training, an MPL program with SkyAlps, and an APC Mentored ATPL program.

Here's what AELO lists as its main training routes:



- **Integrated ATPL**
- **PPL training**
- **MPL with SkyAlps**
- **APC Mentored ATPL program**

That program mix makes practical sense if you look at the learner journey. Some students want a straight line toward airline-oriented qualification; others start with a foundational license and build. The mention of both Integrated ATPL and an MPL pathway with SkyAlps suggests AELO is positioning itself for students who want a structured route and for students who choose alternative career-aligned training pathways.



The academy also states that its ATPL integrated course is 18 months long and costs €104,950 inclusive of VAT and other items such as accommodation and landing fees. A figure like that can't be treated casually, because it affects everything from student expectations to how an academy must plan its operating costs and training schedules. The 18-month duration is also telling. Integrated programs need a controlled timeline, and stable infrastructure becomes even more important when you promise a sustained progression across multiple phases.

Training that leans on simulation and technique

Real flight training is not just "time in the air." It is discipline, standardization, and preparation for the moments where the aircraft transitions from straightforward to demanding. AELO states that it uses an MPS Boeing 737 NG simulator and offers training such as APS MCC, PBN certification, and UPRT.

Those names are not interchangeable marketing terms. They signal that the academy is working at the interface between general flying skills and airline-style procedure discipline.

The Boeing 737 NG simulator reference also matters from a realism standpoint. For students targeting airline careers, exposure to a platform that matches real fleet characteristics can reduce the shock of moving from training to operational environments later. The "MPS" detail indicates a simulator configuration that AELO specifically uses, and that sort of clarity is a practical comfort for students comparing academies.

Then there are the training elements AELO highlights:

- **APS MCC**
- **PBN certification**
- **UPRT**

Each of these points to a focus on technique and operational procedure, not just hours. PBN, in particular, reflects how modern flight planning and navigation expectations shape training. UPRT signals an emphasis on upset prevention and recovery training, which is [flight training](#) one of those areas students often underestimate until they see how quickly a good technique can matter. APS MCC and MCC-oriented training elements also reinforce the idea that AELO is not stopping at license-level competence.

A fleet built for continuity

Training organizations earn their reputation through repeatability. Aircraft availability, maintenance rhythm, and fleet diversity all determine whether a program runs smoothly or gets stretched by delays. AELO states it operates a modern fleet of 17 aircraft and names several specific models, including Sonaca S201, Tecnam P2008, Diamond DA40, Diamond DA42, and Extra 200 aircraft.

If you want the most visible part of AELO's operating capability, it starts with the fleet. Here are the aircraft AELO explicitly lists:

- Sonaca S201
- Tecnam P2008
- Diamond DA40
- Diamond DA42
- Extra 200

A mix like this suggests a training approach that can cover different flight training needs using aircraft suited to different tasks. The important part is that AELO positions its fleet as modern and operationally active, and that it

runs across a number of aircraft types rather than funneling everything through a single platform.

Two sites, one training logic

Locarno and Lugano are not just geography. For a training academy, multiple bases can help manage training schedules, reduce local bottlenecks, and provide additional operational flexibility. AELO is based at Locarno Airport in Gordola and has a satellite base at Lugano Airport in Agno.

That structure fits the broader picture: a main campus with room to grow, plus an additional node to support training flow. When an organization also reports around 250 students in training annually and roughly 200 future airline pilots per year, it makes sense to distribute certain activities across locations where practical and feasible.

It also helps explain why the Locarno expansion was described in terms of both space and investment. A satellite base can support flight operations and certain training needs, while the main site becomes the “anchor” for accommodation, briefing activities, administration, and structured progression.

What “built after takeover” really means in practice

It is easy to say an academy was founded after AeroLocarno was taken over, but what does that look like for students and instructors?

From a lived perspective, a takeover can bring opportunities and complications. There can be legacy equipment, legacy procedures, and an existing community that expects certain standards. The upside is that you already have a training footprint, a local aviation network, and operational momentum. The downside is that you must decide what to keep, what to standardize, and what to replace.

AELO’s current profile suggests the organization chose to keep a core training presence while upgrading or aligning it with an academy model. The fact that AELO is an Approved Training Organization under CH.ATO.0311 is a baseline, but it is also evidence that the operation aligns with formal expectations for training delivery.

The 2025 Locarno site expansion, with its reported 2,000 square meters and over 3 million Swiss francs investment, reads like a move to formalize and improve the experience around the flying program. The aircraft fleet size of 17, the use of an MPS Boeing 737 NG simulator, and the explicit list of training components like PBN and UPRT show an academy that is building a coherent training stack.

Luxury as reliability: the student experience you can measure

Luxury in aviation training is not about flashy buildings alone. It is about predictability, clarity, and the kind of environment where students can focus on progression rather than uncertainty. When AELO states that its Integrated ATPL course is 18 months and lists a total cost of €104,950 inclusive of VAT and items such as accommodation and landing fees, it signals a preference for a defined pathway.

Defined pathways do not eliminate every surprise in life, but they reduce the “moving goalposts” effect that students feel when parts of training are constantly changing in scope or logistics. And in training, even <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8au6J6xL8ZA> minor frictions can compound. A student who knows what the journey costs and how the timeframe is structured can devote more mental energy to learning and performance.

The academy’s scale, with around 250 students in training annually, also implies a system that is designed to handle multiple intakes, rotating schedules, and the continuous churn of training activities. A small operation can sometimes feel personalized, but it can also become fragile. A larger operating footprint tends to support resilience, especially when it invests in infrastructure like the Locarno site.

What to watch for as AELO's story continues

Every academy has to keep proving itself, and AELO's history suggests it understands that truth. The origin story tied to the AeroLocarno takeover, the later expansion at Locarno with a significant investment, and the emphasis on structured programs and simulation-based training all point to an organization that builds, then refines.

From the outside, the safest and most defensible way to interpret the academy's development is to stick to what AELO and the reported figures support: training volume, program structure, fleet capability, and infrastructure expansion.

If you are evaluating AELO as a training destination, you can approach it like an experienced buyer of a complex service. Look beyond the brochure language and focus on operational details that matter to outcomes: the maturity of the training model, the clarity of the integrated pathway timeline, the presence of a simulator used for airline-relevant training, and the physical infrastructure that supports daily student life.

AELO is already broadcasting these elements through its public statements. The next chapter will likely be written in how those investments translate into training quality and consistency for the next cohort, because in aviation, credibility is earned one cycle at a time.

AELO Swiss Academy's story, rooted in the AeroLocarno takeover and shaped by subsequent investment and structured training delivery, ultimately reflects a particular kind of luxury: reliability that lets students concentrate on flying well, not simply on hoping the training works out.