

Aviation training has a particular kind of luxury to it, the quiet kind you notice only when everything is well designed. Clear procedures, reliable training flow, aircraft that are ready when you are, and simulator time used with discipline rather than treated as a box to tick. That is the atmosphere AELO Swiss Academy projects at its base in Locarno, with a satellite footprint at Lugano. The academy is a Swiss operation located at Locarno Airport in Gordola, Switzerland, and it also runs from Lugano Airport in Agno, supported by an Approved Training Organization status under CH.ATO.0311. For candidates, the promise is straightforward: build real pilot skill on aircraft, then refine judgment, workload management, and standard callouts through MPS simulation.

The reason this pairing matters is simple. Aircraft training teaches you the real world, with all its variability. A good simulator teaches you how to respond when the real world becomes busy, ambiguous, or unforgiving. AELO's approach stands out because it deliberately links both sides of the training spectrum, backed by a modern fleet and an MPS Boeing 737 NG simulator, rather than treating simulation as a separate universe.

Where the training sits: Locarno, Lugano, and a purpose-built footprint

AELO Swiss Academy's primary base is at Locarno Airport, with operations at Lugano Airport as well. That geographic setup matters more than it sounds. When training is distributed across sites, the value is not only logistical. It also enables continuity of operations, so scheduling pressure does not always land on one location. Candidates feel this as steadier progress, fewer "waiting around" moments between training blocks, and smoother transitions between stages.

In 2025, AELO opened a new site at Locarno Airport. RSI reported the new premises include 2,000 square meters of space and an investment of over 3 million Swiss francs. That is the kind of signal you can read in practice: new space typically means updated facilities, better capacity, and the ability to support training numbers without stretching resources thin.

RSI also reported that AELO trains about 200 future airline pilots per year and has around 250 students in training annually. Those figures point to a system built to run, not a boutique operation that survives on occasional cohorts. At the same time, luxury in training is not about exclusivity alone. It is about consistency, and consistency comes from process.

The fleet, the runway, and why "modern" is more than marketing

AELO states it operates a modern fleet of 17 aircraft. Among the types listed on its website are the Sonaca S201, Tecnam P2008, Diamond DA40, Diamond DA42, and Extra 200. A fleet like this typically supports both foundational training and more specialized phases, because different aircraft let instructors shape different learning outcomes.

But what stands out for candidates is the sequencing. Training becomes comfortable when the program moves through stages with aircraft that match the lesson, rather than forcing a single type to carry everything. When students know what to expect, they can focus on skills: scan discipline, energy management, pattern planning, radio work, and procedure accuracy.

There is also a human side to aircraft variety. People learn differently. Some candidates need repetition to lock in airspeeds and configurations. Others need variety to keep their attention sharp and their mental model flexible. A multi-aircraft fleet can support both, as long as the training organization has the judgment to keep it coherent.

Two worlds: aircraft training and MPS simulation

The heart of this article is the pairing, and AELO's use of MPS simulation sits at the center. AELO states it uses an MPS Boeing 737 NG simulator. Even if you have never flown a Boeing 737 NG in your life, you can understand the logic. Airlines train around standardized procedures and workload models. The most difficult part for many candidates is not "knowing what to do," it is doing it under pressure, while communication, performance thinking, and systems awareness stay synchronized.

MPS, as a concept, emphasizes performance and procedural fidelity at the point where it matters most: managing flight paths, automation behavior, and cockpit workflows during realistic scenarios. The value is not that the simulator replaces the aircraft. It is that it compresses the learning curve by giving structured repetition of complex moments, including those that might be rare in real flying.

AELO's website also points to training offerings that sit naturally on the operational side of the airline pipeline. The academy states it offers training such as APS MCC, PBN certification, and UPRT. Those items are not "extra credit." They fit the exact transition many candidates struggle with: moving from pure flight handling proficiency into airline-style operational discipline, where the cockpit becomes a system of tasks rather than a sequence of isolated maneuvers.

A luxury approach: progression you can feel in your body

Luxury training is not about plush lounges, although facilities certainly matter. It is about how time feels. When you move from aircraft sessions into simulator blocks, the transition should feel like continuity, not a hard reset.

In a well-run program, you do not just learn procedures. You learn how to think in procedures. You learn how to brief without over-briefing, how to respond without improvising, and how to maintain calm when the plan changes. Students often recognize this only after a few sessions, because the improvement is subtle. One day, radio calls land in the right places. Another day, scan patterns tighten. After that, the simulator stops feeling like a test and starts feeling like deliberate practice.

AELO's structure supports that kind of continuity by combining integrated aircraft training pathways with MPS-based operational skill building. Even without describing every internal step of the program, the publicly stated elements show a clear philosophy: build fundamentals on aircraft, then translate them into airline-ready habits with simulation focused on relevant training outcomes.

Training pathways at AELO Swiss Academy

If you are trying to picture what candidates actually go through, the simplest way is to look at the training tracks AELO publicly describes. AELO states it offers an Integrated ATPL program, PPL training, an MPL program with SkyAlps, and an APC Mentored ATPL program.

Here is what that variety implies in practice. Integrated ATPL is typically designed for candidates aiming toward airline eligibility through a structured progression. PPL training focuses earlier-stage piloting fundamentals. MPL with SkyAlps indicates a modern pathway aligned to airline operator needs. APC Mentored ATPL suggests an experience-based or mentorship component that helps candidates refine toward a commercial and operational level.

What the Integrated ATPL program looks like on paper

AELO states its integrated ATPL course is 18 months long. The academy also states the cost is €104,950 inclusive of VAT and other items such as accommodation and landing fees.

That pricing detail is important because “training cost” is often vague, but here it includes concrete components. It also gives you a boundary for planning. When candidates budget, surprises are what erode confidence. A program that explicitly includes accommodation and landing fees reduces the risk of unpleasant gap costs later.

If you are evaluating whether the training feels premium, this is where transparency tends to show up. Luxury is not only the environment, it is clarity in commitments.

Where MPS simulation changes the learning curve

Aircraft time teaches fundamentals, but simulator time teaches something slightly different, and students only realize it once they notice the pattern of their mistakes.

In a simulator block, you often revisit the same phases of flight repeatedly. That repetition is not for memorization. It is for building automaticity in briefing, mode management, callouts, and decision timing. The MPS Boeing 737 NG setup is directly relevant because it aligns with airline workflows rather than generic training scenarios.

AELO also references training topics that sit close to the heart of modern airline operations, including:

- APS MCC
- PBN certification
- UPRT

You can interpret these offerings without exaggerating their scope. “MCC” typically relates to multi-crew operational training, and PBN certification aligns with procedure-based navigation concepts that are central to how modern airspace works. UPRT relates to upset prevention and recovery, a topic where simulator realism and procedural discipline matter because you are practicing response logic, not gambling with comfort.

The trade-off: simulator realism vs. Simulator discipline

A useful truth about any simulator, including an MPS setup, is that realism is only half the equation. The other half is how strictly instructors treat it like operational training.

In the best training organizations, scenario design is purposeful. You are not just “flying randomly in a box.” You are repeating the same standard calls, the same logic for configuring, the same method for recognizing deviations early. If instructors loosen standards because “the simulator is forgiving,” students carry that looseness into aircraft time. That is an edge case where quality can quietly degrade even if the equipment is excellent.

AELO’s emphasis on MPS Boeing 737 NG and its operational training outputs suggests a focus on discipline. Still, the experienced candidate instinct is to verify it in practice, ask how scenario learning objectives are tracked, and observe whether instructors correct habits promptly or let them slide.

What the AELO growth story signals about operations

Training volume and facilities are not abstract metrics when you are the one scheduled in the program. RSI reported that AELO trains roughly 200 future airline pilots per year and has about 250 students in training annually. That scale is meaningful for two reasons.

First, it generally means training infrastructure, scheduling processes, and instructor availability are actively managed rather than improvised. Second, it means the organization has to care about standardization, because with more students, inconsistent methods become more visible.

RSI also reported that AELO was founded after Stefano Buratti and Daniele Dellea took over the former AeroLocarno operation about seven and a half years earlier. That detail matters because it frames AELO as a continuation and transformation of an existing aviation base, rather than a sudden start-up with no operational roots. Diamond Aircraft later described AELO as a premier European aviation academy and said it has been training pilots since 1985, with headquarters at Locarno Airport. In 2026, Diamond also noted AELO joined Diamond's DATC network.

When a training academy can credibly claim long training heritage and still invest in new facilities, you often get the best of both worlds: institutional learning and operational continuity, plus room to modernize.

Living the integration: what good transitions feel like

If you have ever moved between different <https://ch.linkedin.com/company/aero-locarno-sa> training environments, you know how easily progress can stall. You learn something in an aircraft session, then the next simulator session asks you to perform it differently. If the training organization has not designed the transition, students spend energy relearning rather than progressing.



A well-integrated model, the kind AELO appears to pursue with aircraft training and MPS simulation, reduces friction by aligning objectives. Aircraft time builds procedural foundations and sensory discipline. Simulator time then builds structured operational responses, especially in multi-crew logic and procedure-driven tasks.

Luxury, again, is in the friction level. When training feels expensive but fair, it is usually because the program is coherent. The €104,950 integrated ATPL cost, stated as inclusive of VAT and items such as accommodation and landing fees, can only be justified if the learning flow stays tight. That is why equipment and infrastructure are only part of the story. The other part is the coaching and the training logic connecting each phase.

How to evaluate AELO Swiss Academy as a serious candidate

You might be deciding between programs, or you might already be leaning toward AELO and want to confirm it fits your profile. With any aviation academy, the evaluation should focus on how training quality is maintained over time, not how it looks in a brochure.

One practical approach is to look for consistency signals: stated course length, clear training track descriptions, publicly listed aircraft types, and credible simulation and training outputs. AELO offers several of those signals openly: integrated ATPL length of 18 months, defined overall cost for that program, a fleet list that includes Sonaca S201, Tecnam P2008, Diamond DA40, Diamond DA42, and Extra 200, and an MPS Boeing 737 NG simulator.

To keep your evaluation grounded, you can also ask yourself whether you want a program that is built around integrated progression toward airline readiness, rather than assembling your path in scattered blocks. If that's what you want, the presence of APS MCC, PBN certification, and UPRT training offerings suggests the academy is not treating airline operations as a late-stage add-on.

If you want a quick way to check whether you are being sold a story or offered a system, consider this short set of prompts.

- Does the program connect aircraft learning to simulator objectives, or does it treat them as separate worlds?
- Are the simulator sessions tied to operational training outcomes like MCC, PBN, and upset recovery, rather than generic practice?
- Do aircraft sessions match the developmental needs of the stage you are in, supported by the fleet types listed?
- Is the training supported by infrastructure capacity, such as the reported 2,000 square meters and investment at the Locarno site?
- Are the published commitments, like integrated ATPL length and pricing inclusions, specific enough to plan around?

The bottom line: luxury is coherence, not just equipment

AELO Swiss Academy sits in a strong position because it combines what candidates actually need at different points in training. You get aircraft training supported by a fleet of 17 aircraft types listed by the academy, and you get MPS simulation built around a Boeing 737 NG platform. You also get training elements that map to airline operational reality, including APS MCC, PBN certification, and UPRT.

Layer onto that the evidence of scaling and investment. RSI's reporting of around 250 students in training annually, about 200 future airline pilots per year, and the Locarno expansion with 2,000 square meters and an investment above 3 million Swiss francs suggests an academy managing throughput while investing in capacity. Diamond Aircraft's description adds a separate layer of credibility about heritage and training prominence, including the statement that AELO has been training pilots since 1985 and operates from Locarno Airport.

If you are choosing a program, the question is not whether the academy has simulation, or whether it has aircraft, or even whether it has an impressive facility. The question is whether the training system makes sense in motion. In that respect, AELO Swiss Academy's combination of aircraft training and MPS simulation is not just a selling point. It is the kind of coherence that helps students progress with less friction, more confidence, and a clearer path toward airline-style competence, under the AELO Swiss Academy name.