

There's a particular kind of momentum you feel when a training school decides to stop being "a place where people learn" and starts acting like "a place that shapes careers." With AELO Swiss Academy, that shift didn't land all at once. It began with two people making a deliberate choice: keep the flying spirit alive in Locarno, then build something sturdier around it.

In AELO's case, that origin story circles back to the same decision. According to RSI, AELO director Stefano Buratti said the organization began when he and Daniele Dellea decided to take over the old AeroLocarno flying club. That detail matters, because it explains why AELO's early steps feel grounded. Instead of starting from a blank slate somewhere else, the push came from working with what already existed, then steering it toward the needs of future airline pilots.

What follows is a look at those early moves, the practical decisions behind them, and how the rebranding and expansion into a new site at Locarno Airport fit into a broader training ambition.

Taking over what already works

When you hear "take over the old flying club," it can sound like a business footnote. In reality, it is often the hardest kind of beginning, because you inherit real constraints. Assets, schedules, relationships with the local aviation ecosystem, and the expectations of students and instructors already moving through the system.

Buratti's account, as reported by RSI, anchors AELO's start to a shared willingness between him and Dellea to step in and do the ongoing work, not just the visionary part. That kind of partnership is not glamorous, but it's how most flight training operations stay healthy over time.

You can also see the same practical mindset reflected later, when AELO began operating from a newly inaugurated site at Locarno Airport. RSI reported the school renovated a dedicated hangar as part of that move, with an investment of more than CHF 3 million. Even without getting lost in engineering specifics, the signal is clear: training is only as good as the daily environment that supports it. A hangar renovation is not a marketing line. It's a commitment to having the space to run reliably.

That pairing, people who take over something real, then reinvest into infrastructure, is the through line of AELO's early development.

From Aero Locarno to AELO Swiss Academy

If you were around the European flight training scene in early 2024, the rebranding was the visible moment. AFM reported that Aero Locarno rebranded itself as AELO Swiss Academy in February 2024.



A rebrand can be anything from a change of logo to a shift in how training is organized and marketed. What helps here is that the rebrand is also consistent with RSI's reporting about AELO inaugurating a new site at Locarno Airport and investing in a dedicated hangar. In other words, the name change wasn't floating in isolation. It landed alongside physical expansion.

That matters because flight training is operationally heavy. You are dealing with training aircraft availability, staff scheduling, maintenance realities, and student timelines. A new identity works best when it matches capacity and facilities, otherwise it feels like branding without substance.

AELO's story doesn't just mention "change." It pairs rebranding with an operational upgrade at the airport area in Locarno, Ticino, Switzerland.

Why the location at Locarno feels central, not incidental

AELO Swiss Academy is described as being based in Locarno, Ticino, Switzerland, operating in the Locarno Airport area. That's not a detail you include unless the airport presence matters. For a school that trains future airline pilots, proximity to an established training environment can reduce friction: less traveling, more consistent scheduling, and a tighter link between daily operations and the student journey.

RSI specifically points to the new site and the hangar renovation at Locarno Airport. Combined with the investment figure of more than CHF 3 million, it reads like the airport location was part of the strategy from the beginning, not just a geographic coincidence.

And there's another number worth holding onto. RSI reported that AELO trains about 200 future airline pilots per year at the new site, and that roughly 250 students are in training annually overall. Those are not tiny pilot numbers. They imply the school is not running a hobby scale. It is building enough throughput to make training pipelines real.

So when you connect the dots, the early steps become clearer: first, take over and stabilize the existing flying club element. Next, reorganize under the AELO banner. Then, invest in the airport infrastructure needed to handle training volumes year after year.

The "early steps" are also about approvals and structure

A lot of people picture early growth as planes and instructors, and those are obviously central. But the operational credibility of a training academy also depends on how it is approved and how its programs are

formally structured.

AELO's website states that the academy is an Approved Training Organization and lists approval code CH.ATO.0311. That sort of approval framing is a foundational piece of the school's ability to run structured training programs within the regulatory expectations that apply to flight training.

It's also the reason early decisions by Buratti and Dellea carry weight beyond the local origin story. Taking over an older club and then moving toward formal training structure suggests a shift from a club atmosphere to an academy workflow.

Even the program length reinforces that the school is thinking in training timelines, not casual instruction. AELO's website says it offers an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program. That is a concrete commitment in duration, and it requires systems that can plan forward, keep students aligned with milestones, and maintain operational stability across months.

An integrated ATPL track doesn't just need enthusiasm. It needs a schedule you can actually hold.

Programs that hint at two different career entry points

AELO's website also states it offers a SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program with a job guarantee. That detail is significant, because it indicates the academy is designed to serve a particular entry pathway that is connected to a defined airline pathway.

Now, it's worth being precise about what can and cannot be assumed. We know the website says job guarantee, and we know the program is called SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program. We do not know the internal terms or conditions from the provided context. Still, the existence of a specifically branded airline-associated MPL program tells you AELO is not only offering generic training. It is aligning training with a route into airline operations.



So in the early steps from Aero Locarno to AELO, you can sense two goals coexisting:

1. Train a broader set of future airline pilots through an 18-month integrated structure.
2. At the same time, provide a specific MPL route tied to SkyAlps, with the promise of a job guarantee as stated on AELO's site.

That combination is often where academies differentiate themselves. Students and parents want clarity about career trajectories, not just flight hours.

More than student pilots, instructor training as a backbone

When a training organization matures, it starts caring intensely about the quality pipeline of its instructors. That includes both training students and keeping the instructional team robust and up to date.

AELO's LinkedIn presence says it offers ab-initio and instructor training, including FI, CRI, STI, IRI, and MCCI. It also states AELO is Switzerland's leading provider of Sphair courses.

Those are the kinds of statements that suggest the academy's early steps were not just about launching flights. They were about building a training ecosystem where instructors can be formed and maintained. It's a sign of organizational depth, because instructor training is not a side activity. It directly influences the consistency of how standards are delivered to new cohorts.

Again, we should stay grounded in what is verified: we know AELO's LinkedIn says these things. We do not have independent confirmation within the provided context about "leading provider," so it is best understood as a claim made by AELO's LinkedIn presence rather than an independently measured statistic. Still, the mention of a set of instructor-related training types offers a practical picture of the academy's scope.

Scaling training without losing the local identity

One of the quiet challenges in aviation training is scaling while keeping training culture coherent. It is easy for growth to dilute standards if the operational rhythm changes faster than the quality controls.

AELO's reported annual throughput provides some context for how scale is being handled. RSI says about 200 future airline pilots per year are trained at the new site, with roughly 250 students in training annually overall. Those numbers imply the academy can handle multiple students through continuous training cycles and still keep enough capacity to operate at a busy airport environment.

You can also read those figures as a hint of a managed progression. If you train around that order of magnitude, you do not have the luxury of improvisation. You need established scheduling and training workflows, which loops back to why approvals, infrastructure, and instructor pipeline matter.

The early steps, then, are not just the story of Buratti and Dellea deciding to take over a flying club. The early steps also include building the conditions where a larger pipeline can function reliably at Locarno Airport.

The new site isn't just a building, it's a message

RSI's report about the new site includes that AELO inaugurated it and renovated a dedicated hangar, with an investment of more than CHF 3 million. Even without reading pilot-expo.com the technical design notes, you can interpret what that kind of renovation usually enables in practice.

Hangar space affects how flexibly a school can manage aircraft readiness. It affects how maintenance and daily operations are paced. It affects the ability to plan, rather than scramble. That planning, for students, becomes schedule confidence. For instructors, it becomes fewer disruptions. For the training operation as a whole, it becomes smoother cycles.

When you connect that to the timing, the rebranding in February 2024 and the inauguration of the new site align as phases of a deliberate growth plan.

It's also worth noticing that AELO is described as operating at the Locarno Airport area. That is the kind of operational location that tends to become a cornerstone of training identity. You are not just "in Switzerland" as a

generic statement. You are in a specific airport environment with the ability to carry out training at a meaningful scale.

A careful note about the “1985” claim

AELO’s website says it was established in Switzerland in 1985. But the verified context here also flags that this is a self-published claim, and that it should be treated cautiously unless independently verified.

This is a good example of how early steps in an organization’s story can be interpreted in multiple ways. You could have a long heritage in aviation activity somewhere in the background, but without independent verification, the safest approach is to respect the claim as a statement without overcommitting to a specific historical timeline.

For readers, the practical takeaway is simpler: whether the organization’s roots go back decades or grew more recently, the confirmed points of momentum are the takeover described by Buratti, the February 2024 rebrand, and the 2024 investment and new site inauguration at Locarno Airport.

So what did Buratti and Dellea actually do first?

From the verified context, the earliest clearly documented move is the one Buratti described: he and Daniele Dellea decided to take over the old AeroLocarno flying club.

That decision is the seed. It likely provided continuity of aviation activity and access to an existing aviation community around Locarno. It also created a base to build from, rather than trying to start from scratch.

Then, over time, the organization emerges as AELO Swiss Academy, rebranded in February 2024 from Aero Locarno. The school then inaugurated a new site at Locarno Airport and invested more than CHF 3 million renovating a dedicated hangar.

Finally, the academy’s offerings as presented on AELO’s website and LinkedIn complete the picture: approval as an Approved Training Organization with code CH.ATO.0311, an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, and a SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program with a job guarantee. Add instructor training capabilities listed on LinkedIn, including FI, CRI, STI, IRI, and MCCI, plus Sphair courses.

Put together, you get a coherent arc from local takeover to formalized academy operation, and from operation to infrastructure investment.

What students and partners likely notice first

If you are a prospective student or a partner looking at the early steps of a training school, the story matters in a very grounded way. People want to know whether the academy runs consistently, whether training pathways are clear, and whether the environment supports the schedule.

AELO’s public details suggest it focuses on clarity and structure. There is an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program. There is an airline-linked SkyAlps MPL route with a stated job guarantee. There is formal approved training organization status with CH.ATO.0311. And there is an airport-area site investment large enough to suggest active capacity building.

Here is what that likely translates into during everyday operations:

- Students can be positioned into a multi-month plan rather than short-term, fragmented instruction, given the 18-month integrated structure.

- Airline pathway clarity is emphasized through the MPL program association with SkyAlps.
- The academy's ability to maintain throughput is implied by the reported annual training volumes.

And for instructors, the presence of instructor training categories and Sphair courses mentioned on LinkedIn suggests the school is building its internal capability, rather than relying only on external sourcing.

A short reality check on growth

One reason stories like this are worth digging into is that they reveal the trade-offs behind the headlines.

If you increase training capacity, you need more than planes. You need space, scheduling discipline, and staff readiness. AELO's hangar renovation investment of more than CHF 3 million, along with the move into an inaugurated site at Locarno Airport, fits that reality.

If you offer both integrated ATPL and airline-associated MPL routes, you need careful student flow management so that resources are not always stretched. The reported throughput at the new site and overall students in training annually hints that AELO is actively balancing those demands.

And if you claim to offer instructor training routes like FI, CRI, STI, IRI, and MCCI, plus Sphair courses, you need training quality controls and experienced personnel capable of delivering that instruction. That is not a minor add-on. It becomes a backbone for sustaining training standards across cohorts.

In other words, the early steps toward AELO are also early steps toward operational seriousness.

The early story still shows up in what AELO offers

Sometimes, an organization's origin story becomes a museum piece, told once and then forgotten. In AELO's case, the early steps seem to echo through the current public profile.

The takeover described by Buratti and Dellea is a local decision, rooted in Locarno's aviation reality. The rebranding in February 2024 is the outward marker of transformation. The investment and new dedicated hangar at Locarno Airport is the operational marker. And the program structure, approval code, and the availability of instructor training are the continuing markers.



SKY
ATPL Integrated Student

CAPTAIN JOE
AELO Pilot Recruitment Coach

Even the way AELO frames training, with a defined 18-month integrated ATPL program and a SkyAlps MPL program with job guarantee stated on its website, fits the idea that the founders wanted more than basic instruction. They wanted a system that connects learning to outcomes.

Where AELO seems to be heading, based on the confirmed facts

It's always tempting to extrapolate beyond what we can confirm, but you can still make a careful, defensible observation: AELO appears to be building a training platform with multiple connected lanes.

On one lane, AELO trains about 200 future airline pilots per year at the new site, and roughly 250 students annually overall. That suggests sustained training capacity.

On another lane, AELO offers an 18-month ATPL integrated structure, which points to long-term program planning.

On a third lane, it offers an airline-associated MPL program with a job guarantee statement, which points to career pathway emphasis.

And on the lane of sustaining quality, it lists instructor training types and Sphair courses through its LinkedIn presence.

These lanes are what you would expect from an academy that has moved past the earliest novelty stage and into a maintained operational identity.

If you want to understand AELO, start with the decision

It's easy to focus on the bigger milestones: the February 2024 rebrand, the inauguration of a new site, and the more than CHF 3 million hangar renovation. Those are the visible points.

But the most revealing part of AELO's early steps is the decision Buratti described: he and Daniele Dellea took over the old AeroLocarno flying club. That choice frames everything else.

It says the school's growth didn't start with a blank sheet. It started with a commitment to continue something real, then elevate it into a formal academy operation with approvals, structured programs, instructor training capabilities, and a purpose-built presence at Locarno Airport.

If you're watching AELO's story unfold, that is the thread to keep in your mind. The foundation is not only a timeline of upgrades. It is the early willingness to take responsibility, invest in infrastructure, and build a training pipeline that can carry real numbers of students through the path to airline flying.