



HELSINKI DECLARATION

“Seizing digital technologies to deliver advanced drone operations safely and securely”

Helsinki - 22 November 2017

The conference:

Welcomed:

- the progress made in delivering the regulatory framework and the commitment of the European Parliament and the Presidency of the Council to deliver, by the end of 2017, a political agreement on the high level requirements for drones;
- the ongoing consultation process of EASA on requirements for the operation of drones in the open and specific categories using an integrated risk management;
- the timely delivery of the U-Space Blueprint and the preparation of the update of the ATM Master Plan by the SESAR Joint Undertaking; and
- the launch of the first U-Space and urban air mobility projects with EU funding;

1. Industry should start delivering the drone services market

Stressed the need for EU leadership and European competitiveness to achieve further steps towards the digitalization of the economy, based on software based solutions and high quality data;

Noted that the coming months are crucial for companies to assess fast evolving investment opportunities in drone and U-Space services;

Welcomed the first initiatives of industry to demonstrate drone and U-Space technologies, such as Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS), and business cases to enable early commercial applications;

2. Timely delivery of an enabling regulatory framework

Noted with concern a growing fragmentation along national boundaries of the EU drone services market, also due to security considerations, indicating the urgent need for close cooperation between European and national authorities;

Called for the urgent conclusion to the Council / Parliament negotiations on the EASA Basic Regulation, laying the foundation for a new European legislative framework for drone services; and urged EASA to carry out all necessary follow-up work;

Confirmed the need for national and European regulators to establish the conditions for successful demonstrators;

Welcomed the opportunities to digitize procedures as much as possible, to ensure transparency and reduce administrative burdens for both authorities and operators, and to support the decarbonisation of transport e.g., by insisting on zero emission drones in the U-Space;

Invited the European authorities to come forward, as a matter of urgency, with indications of future regulatory plans which (1) are based on the need for open standards and suitable quality levels of the required information; and (2) reflect the probable roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in drone operations and U-Space provision and the ways in which drones may operate in the airspace, so that the authorities have the necessary tools to protect citizens with high levels of safety, security, privacy and environmental protection;

Stressed the need to guarantee fair access to all airspace users;

Urged for flexibility in the provision of U-Space services on the basis of local market demand and, as far as practically possible, for competition between U-Space providers to ensure that services are delivered at the best possible cost-benefit ratio while allowing fair and timely access to airspace for drone operators;

Invited security, defence and safety actors to intensify their cooperation up-front and upstream and work towards effective and standardized solutions, for example on cyber-security issues;

Called for strengthened international regulatory cooperation with ICAO, JARUS and Non-EU States;

Emphasised the need to complement the regulatory activities by effective safety promotion measures to educate and increase awareness;

3. Learn from bottom-up initiatives

Observed that public acceptance of drones relies on safety, security, privacy and environmental protection being effectively tested and subsequently deployed in "real-life" locations and scenarios;

Called for the establishment, as soon as possible, of a European U-Space Demonstrator Network, inter alia to provide a forum to share knowledge and to give feedback, based on the practical expertise of demonstrators, as the regulatory framework and standards are developed;

Considers that such demonstrators should cover all aspects of drone operations and be developed in close collaboration with local authorities, including in the context of the European Innovation Partnership - Smart Cities & Communities projects;

4. Driving and prioritizing R&D drone projects

Invited industry to further invest in projects contributing to the safe integration of drones, in particular for the 2018 edition of the ATM Master Plan being prepared by the SESAR Joint undertaking;

Stressed the importance of the role of the private-public partnership approach for R&D (including large scale demonstration of technology) under SESAR and the need to involve all innovative actors including SMEs and new entrants, as well as the need for appropriate funding under the next multi-annual financial framework in order to accelerate the pace of technology development;

5. Conclusions

Called for clear and simple rules that keep the burden for citizens, operators and authorities as light as possible, and that lower the threshold for entering the EU drone services and U-Space markets;

Confirmed the commitment of all stakeholders present to open the EU drones services market by 2019 by working in parallel and with maximum cooperation on three pillars:

1. The legal requirements for drones and drone operations, for the safe and effective use of the airspace, and for the delivery of cost-effective U-Space services;
2. Further investment in demonstrators that systematically help to open the drone services market, as well as in longer term R&D projects that prepare for more autonomous vehicles and more dense traffic; and
3. An effective standard setting process that is adapted to fast evolving digital technologies from all sectors, and uses and adapts existing standards where available.

Stressed the need for protection of citizens based on safety, security, privacy and the environment.