

European Aviation Safety Agency

By Patrick Goudou , Executive Director



The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is the centrepiece of the European Union's strategy for aviation safety. Our mission is to provide the highest common standards of safety and environmental protection in civil aviation, and promote them worldwide through close working relationships with counterpart organisations across the world.

The Agency's tasks include:

- Drafting aviation safety legislation and providing technical advice to the European Commission (EC) and the Member States;
- Monitoring the uniform implementation of said legislation in all Member States through inspections, training and standardisation programmes;
- Directly issuing certificates or approvals in the specific cases established by the EU legislator;
- Coordinating the European Community programme on the safety of third country aircraft operating at EU aerodromes (SAFA);
- Performing data collection, analysis and research to improve aviation safety.

Based in Cologne, EASA today employs more than 500 professionals from across Europe, whose high qualification positions EASA as Europe's centre of excellence in aviation safety. The EASA system provides aviation industry with common specifications, cost-efficient regulatory processes and a single point of contact. Progressively these benefits will be extended to UAS manufacturers, operators and related providers of communication services.

Since the Agency's creation in 2002, the scope of our work has increased significantly. In 2008 the EU legislator entrusted us with new responsibilities in the safety regulation of air operations, flight crew licensing (FCL) and the authorisation of third-country (non EU) operators. At the end of 2009 the second extension of the Agency's responsibilities included Air Traffic Management (ATM), Air Navigation Services (ANS) and the safety of aviation operations at aerodromes.

As regards the first extension, after the publication of Notices of Proposed Amendment (NPAs) in 2008 and early 2009, the Agency envisages to deliver its Opinion on FCL and medical requirements (i.e. proposed EU common rules) to the EC in 2010, for adoption the subsequent year. This first set of rules will only cover pilots of manned aircraft. In 2011 the Agency plans to deliver the Opinions on air operations ("EASA-OPS"), again covering operations of manned aircraft. The last Opinion related to the first extension will cover the safety of third-country aircraft operating in, out or through the airspace of the EU Member States. While these rules will only cover "traditional" manned aircraft crews and operations, their existence will provide the necessary platform which will be progressively expanded to follow the developments of the state of the art. This will be the case for UAS crews and operations, but also e.g. for tilt-rotor operations or for commercial Sub-orbital Aeroplanes (SoA).

With the second extension the Agency has now the safety responsibility across the whole aviation system. The first

EASA Opinion on ANS Providers will be published in 2010. Subsequent Opinions will cover the total range of services in the EASA's Basic Regulation, as well as the operation of aerodromes and certification specifications for the aerodrome infrastructure. This initial work should be terminated by 2013 and, again, UAS will not be included. But, once more, these rules will provide the basis to be amended in due time, in order to allow full integration of UAS, under safe provisions, in non-segregated airspace.

Turning to specific UAS matters, it is first necessary to demonstrate that the "machine" can safely move in the air, in controllable conditions (i.e. airworthiness). Secondly, civilian UAS have to be under the operational control of a properly qualified flight crew and under the legal responsibility of an air operator. This is sufficient to mitigate the risk for third parties on the ground, when the Unmanned Aircraft flies into segregated airspace. Therefore the Agency has published in August 2009 a "policy" for the airworthiness approval of UAS (based on the established Agency's certification specifications - CSs) and has already received a number of applications for UAS in its remit (with a mass of 150 kg or more). The second step will be the activation of a multi-disciplinary task on UAS flight crews and operators, which will be harmonised with the approach proposed by ICAO in the UAS "Circular" expected in 2010.

At a later stage, once industry will have brought to maturity the "detect and avoid" technology, more rules for the integration of UAS in the ATM environment will be developed. It is interesting to note in this respect that, according to a study contracted by EASA in 2009, it could be envisaged to allow, under proper safety oversight, communications for UAS to be provided by an organisation different from the UAS operator (e.g. a SATCOM ANS Provider).

EASA remains committed to develop proportionate safety regulation for UAS in cooperation with other organisations and stakeholders.

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