



European Commission Launches European Network of U-Space Demonstrators

In Antwerp, Belgium, EU Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc today launched the European network for drone demonstration projects. The network will become a forum to share knowledge on how to keep drone operations safe, secure and green. It will focus on the critical matter of U-Space.

Commissioner Bulc said: «Drones are a key part of the future of aviation and will become part of our daily lives. All players can mutually learn from practical expertise on how we can keep drone traffic safe, secure and green in the public space. That exactly is the purpose of this EU wide network.»

Already today, drone and U-Space projects deliver concrete results on how to fly drones safely and how to make the developing U-Space system more reliably robust. Yet these U-Space projects are only sustainable and will only attract additional investment, if the proposed solutions are compatible with the European framework. That is why the European Commission has taken the initiative to establish a European Network of U-Space Demonstrators to support these projects.

The network is a cooperation of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), SESAR Joint Undertaking (SJU) and EUROCONTROL. The network will focus specifically on projects with a clear business case that build on mature technologies, but need some further operational and regulatory demonstrations before starting commercial operations. The network would also support the competent national authorities in the EU with the processing of the numerous applications that are expected once commercial businesses will be started.

Erwin Verstraelen, Chief Digital and Innovation Officer, Antwerp Port Authority, Belgium said: “Innovation and digitization are crucial, if our harbour is to stay sustainably competitive in the long term. Drones will become indispensable in the near future, not least in our port, to support our role as operator and regulator. Furthermore, in our role of community builder, we facilitate the use of drones as much as possible for all stakeholders. Given the particular nature of our port, this has to be done in a safe manner. Through our participation in this network, we are confirming our pioneering role and ambition to be an open and innovative hub that institutionalizes new technologies.”

Marc Kegelaers, CEO of Unify, Belgium said: “This European Network of U-Space demonstrators is a first: all stakeholders of this new industry are invited to work with the regulator to explore how a solid regulation can be built to enable the European drone services market. We are excited about the prospect of contributing our international experience to this initiative. The safe integration of drone traffic is crucial.”

Johan Decuyper, CEO of Belgocontrol, Belgium said: “The drone sector is making us re-invent ourselves as airspace manager, and deal with new types of airspace users. Rather than standing on the side-lines, we believe it is important to be a driving factor in this evolution. Yet we cannot and will not ignore the safety challenges that go along with it. The only way of dealing with this properly is to innovate, to adapt and to pave the way towards automation where we can, and in a safe and secure way. This also includes the drafting of new EU laws on the use of drones. Therefore we welcome initiatives as is announced here today. We are looking forward to fully collaborate with the platform.”

An overview of the Network’s activities will be presented at the RPAS CivOps 2019 conference in Madrid, Spain on 23 & 24 January 2019 – www.rpas-civops.com



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