Safe use of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), in the field of civil aviation

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PURPOSE: to open the aviation market to the civil use of remotely piloted aircraft systems.

BACKGROUND: the Commission considers that opening the European market for remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) - or the civilian use of drones - is an important step towards the aviation market of the future. The European Summit of 19 December 2013 called for action to **enable the progressive integration of RPAS into civil airspace from 2016 onwards**.

RPAS technology has matured rapidly in past years and is ready to make the shift from being purely military equipment to becoming a reliable new technology for civil use.

Member States are beginning to authorise RPAS operations in non-segregated airspace to respond to market demand. In the short term, the most promising market lies in areas such as infrastructure monitoring or photography; in a longer term future, it may be the transport of goods and eventually people.

According to an industry source, the global budget forecast in terms of research and development (R&D) and procurement, including military and governmental, is expected **to grow from currently $5.2 bn to about $11.6 bn per year in 2023**. The number of jobs created through new RPAS activities in the US is estimated to exceed 100,000 by 2025. For Europe, **about 150,000 jobs by 2050** are forecast.

Currently, the US and Israel dominate the global RPAS manufacturing sector. Other non-EU countries, such as Brazil, China, India and Russia, also show potential to become strong competitors. A **strong common EU market** should offer a solid basis to compete at the global level.

CONTENT: the Communication responds to the call of the European manufacturing and service industry to remove barriers to the introduction of RPAS in the European single market. It sets out the Commission's views on how to address RPAS operations in a European level policy framework which will enable the progressive development of the commercial RPAS market while safeguarding the public interest.

The European strategy aims at **establishing a single RPAS market** to reap the societal benefits of this innovative technology and at dealing with citizens' concerns through public debate and protective action wherever needed.

The Commission recalls that RPAS applications can only develop if the aircraft can **fly in non-segregated airspace without affecting the safety** and the operation of the wider civil aviation system. To this end, the EU should:

- **put in place an enabling regulatory structure** to which the major players at the European and national levels can contribute. The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is best placed to develop common rules, using the proven EASA consultation process;

- **increase and coordinate R&D efforts** in order to keep lead times for promising technologies as short as possible (e.g. command and control; detect and avoid technologies; security protection

against attacks; contingency procedures; human factor issues such as piloting). The SESAR Joint Undertaking (SJU) (CE SESAR) is the R&D platform building the future air traffic management system of the Single European Sky. So it is uniquely placed to coordinate this R&D);

- **ensure that RPAS operations do not lead to fundamental rights being infringed**: the progressive integration of RPAS into the airspace from 2016 onwards must be accompanied by adequate public debate on the development of measures which address societal concerns including safety, privacy and data protection, third-party liability and insurance or security;

- **support market development and European industries** by recourse to existing EU instruments such as the Horizon 2020 and COSME programmes.

This strategy should **provide adequate legal certainty and offer a reliable timing**, so that industry can take investment decisions and create employment. As the RPAS market is global by its very nature, the EU will also coordinate with international partners.

The European Commission also intends to bring forward, where appropriate, legislative proposals to remove legal uncertainties that hinder the development of the European market.