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

2014/2243(INI) - 25/09/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted an own-initiative report by Jacqueline FOSTER (ECR, UK) on the safe use of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), in the field of civil aviation.

Stressing the global dimension of piloted aircraft systems and that all the Member States have some RPAS activities, either in manufacturing and/or operationally, Members considered that the RPAS sector **urgently requires European and global rules** in order to ensure cross-border RPAS development.

A **clear European legal framework** is needed to ensure investment and development of a competitive European RPAS sector. Moreover, Members believed that this framework might assist the discussions on global rule making for the use of drones.

Key issues: recalling the economic importance of this sector, Members stressed that all EU policies should take account of the following aspects:

the need to put in place suitable policies to **protect privacy and ensure data protection, safety and security**, which are proportionate to their aim while not imposing an unnecessary burden on SMEs;

the establishment of a **clear distinction between professional and recreational use** of remotely piloted aircraft;

the fact that **safety and security** are paramount for any RPAS operations and rules and that they must be commensurate with the risks.

In this regard, the report supports the **five essential principles** for future RPAS development set out in the Riga Declaration:

1. RPAS need to be treated as new types of aircraft with **proportionate rules based on the risk of each operation**;
2. EU rules for the **safe provision of RPAS services** need to be developed to enable the industry to invest;
3. **technology and standards** need to be developed to enable the full integration of RPAS into European airspace;
4. **public acceptance** is key to the growth of RPAS services;
5. the operator of an RPAS is **responsible** for its use.

Stressing the importance of **‘out-of-sight’ flights** for the development of the sector, Members considered that European legislation should favour this modus operandi.

In the long term, technical and regulatory solutions should preferably enable RPAS to use the airspace alongside any other airspace user without imposing on the latter new equipment requirements.

Future solutions: Members considered that future European and global rules on RPAS should address issues relating to:

- airworthiness;
- certification specifications;
- commercial and recreational use;
- the identity of the drone and the owner/operator;
- the approval of training organisations for pilots;
- training and licensing of pilots;
- operations;
- liability and insurance;
- data protection and privacy; 'geo-fencing';
- no-fly (exclusion) zones.

Furthermore, the report concentrated on the following points:

- **training** provided to professional users and owners of RPAS, it includes specific training on data protection and privacy;
- RPAS flying beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) must be equipped with '**detect-and-avoid' technology** in order to detect aircraft using the same airspace, ensuring that RPAS do not put at risk the safety of manned aircraft, and in addition, take into account densely-populated areas, no-fly zones, such as airports;
- Taking into account the expected economic spin-offs from this sector, the EU should favour the **development of European technologies**, for example through Horizon 2020;
- RPAS in line with a risk-based approach should be equipped with an **ID chip** and registered to ensure traceability, accountability and a proper implementation of civil liability rules;
- the use of RPAS by **law enforcement and intelligence services** must respect the fundamental right to privacy, data protection, freedom of movement and freedom of expression;
- the data protection authorities of the Member States should **share existing specific data protection guidance** for commercial RPAS.

In addition, the **Joint Authorities for Rulemaking on Unmanned Systems** (JARUS) which is an international voluntary membership body comprising national civil aviation authorities from 22 EU and non-EU countries and regulatory agencies/bodies could ensure that any future EU rules will be **coordinated with international arrangements** in other countries, through a process of mutual recognition.

Members took the view that the Parliament must establish its position prior to the Commission's adoption of its aviation package, thereby responding to the industry call for clear guidance. They called on the TRAN and LIBE committees to **arrange a joint hearing** with representatives of industry, national privacy protection organisations, the European Data Protection Supervisor, the Commission, and NGOs working in the area of fundamental rights.