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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The European Parliament adopted by 581 votes to 31, with 21 abstentions, a resolution on 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.

The absence of harmonised rules at EU level might impede the development of a European drone market, given that national authorisations are generally not mutually recognised among the Member States. According to Parliament, a **clear European legal framework** is needed to ensure investment and development of a competitive European RPAS sector. Moreover, this framework might assist the discussions on global rule making for the use of drones.

Key issues: recalling the economic importance of this sector, Parliament 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 resolution supports the **five essential principles** for future RPAS development set out in the Riga Declaration, that is:

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. The question of identifying drones, of whatever size, being crucial, Members underlined that solutions should be found which take into account the recreational or commercial use to which drones are put.

Future solutions: Parliament supported the development of **a clear, harmonised and proportionate European and global regulatory framework on a risk-assessed basis**, which avoids disproportionate regulations for businesses that would deter investment and innovation in the RPAS industry, whilst adequately protecting citizens and creating sustainable and innovative jobs.

Thorough risk assessment should be based on the **'concept of operations' established by the EASA** and should take into account characteristics of the RPAS (weight, scope of operation, speed) and the nature of their use (recreational or professional).

Concerned over potential illegal and unsafe uses of RPAS, Members called on the Commission to **support the development of the necessary technology** to ensure safety, security and privacy in the operation of RPAS.

Parliament considered that future European and global rules on RPAS should address the following points:

- rules at EU and national level should **clearly indicate the provisions applicable to RPAS** in relation to the internal market and international commerce (production, sale, purchase, trade, and use of RPAS) and the fundamental rights of privacy and data protection;
- any person operating an RPAS should be made aware of the **basic rules applicable to the use of RPAS**, and that those rules should be specified in a notice for purchaser;
- **training** provided to professional users and owners of RPAS should include 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 or nuclear plants;
- RPAS 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.

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.

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 states (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 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.