

AW-DRONES PROJECT

WEBINAR 7/12/2021

ADDRESS BY THE FSF-MED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHRISTOS PETROU

Good morning, everybody from Cyprus, where the sky is blue, and the sun is shining!

The “Mediterranean Flight Safety Foundation (FSF-MED)” is very pleased to be part of this webinar. Indeed, a lot of our members are now attending this event.

For us to be part of the AW-DRONES project was a valuable experience in many respects. First of all, we have been able to contribute to a subject that we consider as a major challenge to aviation safety. Secondly, we have learned a lot on how a complex project like this can be managed in an effective and productive way. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Programme Manager Vladimir Cid-Bourié from the European Commission and the Project Coordinator Damiano Taurino from Deep Blue, for demonstrating such excellent management and coordination best practices.

In 2019, globally there were some 39 million flights annually, transporting 4.5 billion people. These figures do not include the flights carrying millions of tons of cargo.

Yet, despite this sheer volume of traffic and the complexity of managing it, very few accidents happen, and air travel remains the safest mode of transport.

As we all know, for a flight to take place safely, a great number of persons and organizations from different regions and countries are involved: aircraft manufacturers, international and regional organizations, pilots, engineers, air traffic controllers, airports, training organizations and many others. All these stakeholders need to act in coordinated and regulated manner, following the same regulations, procedures and standards.

The continuously increasing use of drones, presents an additional challenge to aviation safety, that needs to be addressed urgently.

Indeed, this has been recognized for some years now by all concerned: manufactures, operators and regulators alike.

One way that is generally considered as an effective tool in addressing this challenge is the adoption of common standards and regulations as regards the use of drones.

Recognising this, the European Commission very appropriately commissioned and financed the AW-DRONES project. As I am certain it will be demonstrated later on by the various speakers, this project goes a long way to address this challenge in an effective way.

We need to compliment EASA and ICAO for doing a thoroughly excellent work in developing appropriate standards and regulations as regards drones.

Nevertheless, common regulations by themselves cannot address fully the challenge.

What is also needed, is a series of additional activities, similar to those that have been developed and are used in managing commercial flights and which have contributed effectively in addressing the challenges of safety and security. For example:

- The need for an extensive public awareness campaign at global- regional-national levels towards the general public, recreational and occasional drone users, as well as commercial clients.
- ANSPs need to be involved in the development of the Drone Traffic Management known as UTM, which is required to guarantee the safety for all airspace users, especially at “boundaries”, and ensure the interoperability of the UTM and ATM systems for civil aviation flights.
- There must be clear responsibilities, between relevant authorities at national level.

- There is a need for registration of all drones and to find the most appropriate means to ensure positive identification of owners, operators, pilots, observers.
- There is a need to develop common systems by which it is possible to closely monitor the presence of drones in a regulated airspace, including Anti-collision equipment (ACAS) when integrating drones in the existing ATM system;
- Systematic safety data (occurrences) collection and analysis. Identify both traditional and new types of data required for accident, incident investigations.

I am certain that ICAO, EASA and other Organisations have already identified these needs and possibly are engaged with them.

Closing this short introduction, I would like to repeat that the use of drones constitutes a serious challenge for safety and security. It is very apparent that the AW-DRONES project will contribute effectively to meeting this challenge.
