

Pégase Aerospace Cluster



New Tracks of Growth for Aeronautics and Space Industry

Among the main priorities of the Pegase aviation and space cluster is to come up with firm ideas for setting up a French civil unmanned aircraft system (UAS) industry. The keen interest shown in aircraft which fly with no human crew on board indicates that there are potentially considerable new openings in the aerospace industry. Since being named a «competitiveness cluster» in July 2007, Pegase has written, and then started to follow, a technological road map to open up this high-stakes sector.

Do we need to recall that the UAS has many properties, such as range, endurance, and all sorts of sizes, that make them very popular for military users and above all for civil users such as firemen, police, farmers and researchers ? In spite of strong demand for them, the civil UAS market is opening up with difficulty. It is not a question of lack of supply. In many countries, machines are being developed that are very advanced technically and designed for military applications, and more and more for civil requirements such as watching for forest fires, taking aerial photographs, and even inspecting engineering structures.

Pegase has decided to work on the reasons why the civil UAS market is so static. Chief among these is the difference between supply and demand on one hand, and regulatory requirements on the other hand. Potential uses of UAS are very restricted largely because their operations are not yet covered by general aviation regulations. This is why the first significant measure undertaken by the aerospace group was to bring together, in September 2008, senior specialists in legislation and in air traffic control, representatives of large industry groups, research centres, and small and medium enterprises, around one major question: what about civil UAS regulation?

This «educational» workshop has enabled dialogue between the regulatory authorities and the many small companies working on UAS projects, that have started developing these aircraft without being fully aware of the related regulations. The major obstacles encountered by UAS were discussed throughout two days during which there were talks, round table discussions and exhibitions of products.

Joint recommendations were put forward and entered in a «UAS sector» report published in Spring 2009. With this work and a roadmap proposed by Pegase, the cluster plans to become a leader in making suggestions to the authorities responsible for air traffic regulation, and to take part in producing rules specific to unmanned aircraft traffic. This is also the means the group has selected for presenting more widely its roadmap for developing a UAS sector.

The arrival of the civil UAS market is just a question of time, as many national and international regulatory authorities, as well as UAS designers with their new ideas, are preparing for the arrival of these aircraft in the airspace. In the meanwhile, Pegase aims immediately to position itself in the growing market by developing the first applications authorised in the

current legal framework, for a start, but also by explaining how to export these aircraft. At the same time, the group is encouraging buying the technology that is essential for making UAS safe, with the «see and avoid» function in particular, as the prime requirement for enabling them to fly in the same airspace as traditional aircraft is to remove technical obstacles that would otherwise prevent their increase in reliability.

The Pegase aeronautics and space cluster is organised to detect and make a reality of growth opportunities in the aviation and space fields. Innovation, access to market and sustainable development are the drivers of Pegase.

This cluster brings together the aerospace companies in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region, which includes Eurocopter, Thales Alenia Space, and Dassault, and also numerous laboratories and SMEs.