

Consultation platform promotes interests of Belgian drone sector

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The drone sector is growing rapidly worldwide and it is booming in our country as well. To support the further development of the sector, the Belgian Civil Drone Council was created as a national consultation platform that brings together all stakeholders from the public and private sector.

There are 2,300 registered RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems) or drones in Belgium, 350 authorized operators and a handful of drone builders. The number of drones and users are constantly on the increase, as well as the commercial and/or societal applications. The sector is expanding fast and bursting with ambition.

All actors – both state and private – want to fulfil those ambitions together, but they are also aware of the challenges, especially in the field of safety. An adapted legal environment has to allow further development, but at the same time ensure the safety of goods, persons and (un-)manned aircraft, both on ground level and in the sky. The integration of civil drones for professional use in the airspace and with manned aircraft is one of the keys to success for that.

In the summer of 2020 new European rules for drones will come into effect. It is therefore time to start preparing their application in our own Belgian regulation.

Belgian Civil Drone Council

Together with the air navigation service provider skeyes and the Belgian Civil Aviation Authority, the cabinet of Minister Bellot took the initiative to create an exchange platform for continuous dialogue on technological, operational and regulatory topics. All partners want to exchange information and experiences and promote collaboration in order to take the Belgian civil drone sector to the worldwide top and to guarantee the safety of all air traffic.

The partners involved in the establishment of this Drone Council are BCAA, skeyes, the FPS Economy, the integrated Police, Defence and the Regions on the one hand and the constructors, operators, training providers, drone pilots and companies that develop and/or use drone technology on the other hand.

Working groups

In order for the activities to run smoothly and to be able to address as many topics as possible, separate working groups are created. They report to the central Executive Committee. The Belgian Civil Drone Council can deliver opinions or proposals to the public authorities and draw up recommendations for the sector, but can also organise own events so as to promote its activities within the sector and with political authorities.

Six working groups will be created at the outset:

- Operations, Regulation and Use, dealing with all operational aspects concerning operations with drones;
- Airworthiness, dealing with all technological aspects concerning operations with drones;
- Drone Integration, dealing with the progressive integration of drones in the manned air traffic;
- Security & C-UAV, dealing with all security aspects concerning operations with drones;
- Support & Promotion, responsible for all other aspects concerning operations with drones;
- Innovation, Research & Development, that will put forward proposals concerning research projects and skills needs.

The partners are expected to contribute actively and honorary but they are not expected to make any financial contributions.

Call for applications

The Belgian Civil Drone Council calls for applications for its different working groups. Every Belgian citizen, organization or company working in a field covered by a working group may request to take part in its activities. Applicants can be drone manufacturers, operators, training providers, (professional) drone pilots, companies developing and/or using the drone technology as well as academic and public institutions.

For more information and to fill in the application form,
please visit https://mobilit.belgium.be/nl/Belgian_Civil_Drone_Council

Eugeen Van Craeyvelt (Director General of the Belgian Civil Aviation Authority): “The Belgian Civil Aviation Authority pays particular attention to drones. In order to have a better idea of the relatively young and innovative drone industry and its specific needs, we regularly consult its representatives. The Belgian Civil Drone Council is the appropriate platform to develop and strengthen our cooperation with authorities, drone federations and companies. A good cooperation is indeed essential to offer the industry all the opportunities for its further development and at the same time to reach a high safety level.”

Johan Decuyper (CEO skeyes): “skeyes fully believes in the drone sector and supports it in many different ways. It is our pleasure to put our air traffic safety expertise at the disposal of the sector. Conversely, we listen to the expectations of all the actors and try to respond by offering practical support, not only with regard to information, but also on an operational level. From the preparatory stages onwards, we are already taking up our role as future air traffic controller of unmanned aircraft.”

François Bellot (federal minister of Mobility): “The Belgian drones sector is booming. Over the last few years I have met with and brought together the most important Belgian stakeholders to discuss the evolution of the technology and the further development of the drones sector. Safety and room for innovation have been the recurrent themes. It’s good that the existing cooperation, sector-wide and combining public and private stakeholders, will now be structurally organized by a platform that represents the whole of the Belgian drones sector.”

Patrick Mascart (Belgian Drone Federation BeUAS): “The Belgian Drone Federation is pleased to see that all the important actors of the industry cooperate to put in place a suitable framework for the development of these technologies of the future. The drone is already and will increasingly be an everyday tool in many industries and we are convinced that the establishment of the Belgian Civil Drone Council will make it possible for Belgium to develop a framework that will enable the efficient use of drones in the best safety conditions, allowing our country to remain one of the European leaders in this field.”

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