

Drones: guidelines for rules on commercial and recreational use and safety

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As commercial services using drones take off and their recreational use becomes ever more popular, it must be ensured that they pose no threat to public safety or personal privacy, said MEPs in a resolution passed on Thursday at the initiative of the Transport Committee.

“The key here is in the title – to ensure the safe use of drones. We do not want to tie the hands of regulators and be too prescriptive, but to provide a framework for how the Commission, EU countries and other stakeholders can proceed”, said rapporteur Jacqueline Foster (ECR, UK).

Drones, which could be used to provide various services, such as inspecting rail tracks, dams, and power plants, assessing natural disasters, crop spraying, film production and parcel delivery have great potential for stimulating economic growth and job creation, MEPs say in the resolution, which was passed by 581 votes to 31, with 21 abstentions.

But safety, privacy, data protection and liability issues must be addressed, they add.

Develop technology to ensure safety and privacy, tackle illegal use

Policies should include privacy and data protection safeguards, and drones should be equipped with ID chips and registered to make it easier to catch criminals who use them to breach privacy and data protection rules or commit other crimes. Drone ID chips would also facilitate accident investigations and help solve liability issues, say MEPs.

MEPs ask the EU Commission to support research into "detect and avoid" technologies to enable drones to avoid collisions with other airspace users or objects on the ground. Drones that can fly beyond visual line of sight must be equipped with this technology, they say.

Furthermore, "geo-fencing" technology should be developed and used to prevent drones from entering no-fly zones such as airports and power plants, MEPs add.

Easing cross-border drone sales and services

Current national authorisations for drones and their operators are not generally mutually recognised by EU member states, which hampers the development of an EU-wide market for drones and drone services as well as their competitiveness globally, MEPs note.

They therefore support Commission plans to propose EU-wide rules which would allow national authorities and other qualified bodies to handle validation and oversight activities.

Safety rules should match risk levels

As drone risks differ, depending, for example, on the size of the drone or whether areas overflown are populated,, rules should be tailored to differing levels of risk and should distinguish between “professional” and “recreational” use, says the text.

Press release

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 29.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 29.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Audiovisual material for professionals

: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/default.aspx>
- Profile of rapporteur Jacqueline Foster (ECR, UK)
: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/4553/JACQUELINE_FOSTER_home.html

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press-release/European-drone-must-conquer-the-world>
- News pages of the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom>
- Press release by the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/ecr-meps-secure-overwhelming-support-for-groundbreaking-report-on-non-military-drones/>
- Press release of the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/nc/press/press-and-release-news/press-release/article/drones-eu-parliamentarians-push-for-europe-wide-regulation-46222/>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/archives/category/gue-ngl-news>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/press/70-press-releases.html>
- News pages of the EFDD group: <http://www.efddgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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