



**FORTY-SECOND PLENARY (TRIENNIAL) SESSION**

(Strasbourg, 9-10 July 2024)

**Agenda item 4:                   Presentation of the Focal Point reports**

**REPORT ON ECAC ACTIVITIES ON UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (UAS)**

(Presented by Mirjana Čizmarov, Focal Point for UAS)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents the report of activities in 2022-2024 on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). This domain was incorporated for the first time in the ECAC work programme in 2019.

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The Plenary Session is invited to note the main activities on UAS matters for the period 2022-2024.

## **Introduction**

1. In the 2022-2024 work programme for UAS, the high-level and broad focus of ECAC's work was maintained, with exchange and dissemination of information being the main activities carried out, avoiding duplication of activities with other organisations such as EASA, EUROCONTROL etc., and acting only where ECAC can contribute to the discussion, consistent with the aims of the original workstream first included in the work programme of the previous triennium.

2. Over this period the UAS market has continued to develop across Europe and globally: data is inconsistent across the sector, reflecting the difficulty of defining its parameters and precise indicators, but national regulators have pointed to the particular development of systems engaged in inspection of infrastructure, precision agriculture, mapping, architecture, environmental monitoring and public safety (including search and rescue). In regulatory terms, there remain differences among ECAC Member States as to how strong a focus regulators have had in field of UAS, which in turn has been driven by the level of industry demand and the types of use cases being developed. Regulatory focus continues to be strongly focused on national activities – such as the development of U-Space within specific airspace (or geographical) zones, the registration of drone users, and the automation solutions to enable these processes. Both EU and non-EU Member States have monitored closely the regulation and guidance issued by EASA in these areas and the implementation of these (or comparable approaches outside the EU) in specific national contexts.

## **Organisation**

3. The organisation of ECAC's work programme for UAS remained in line with the original decision taken in the previous triennium, with the structure based on an informal network rather than the working groups found in other domains. This approach was reconfirmed in line with expert wishes at the first ECAC workshop that took place in February 2023 (UAS-WS/1).

4. Ms Elisabeth Landrichter (DGCA, Austria) was appointed as Focal Point for UAS in December 2021 and remained Focal Point until stepping down from the role in September 2023. She was then replaced with the current Focal Point Ms Mirjana Čizmarov (DGCA, Serbia).

## **Implementation of the 2022-2024 work programme**

3. The 2022-2024 work programme's main aim was to support the development of UAS in Europe by means of participating in strategic debates on the future of UAS operations by Member States and supporting the sharing of challenges, national policies and practices among ECAC Member States, in order to draw conclusions on best possible solutions.

4. The main activity has been focused on the latter part of this aim, with workshops held in 2022, 2023 and 2024 for ECAC Points of Contact on UAS to exchange their experiences in implementing national and international regulations and managing national UAS activity. The topics covered have addressed more recently emerging issues, including the development of Innovative Air Mobility (or Advanced Air Mobility) and sustainability.

5. In 2023, the Focal Point and Points of Contact reviewed the focus areas for ECAC work on UAS and agreed as follows:

- the implementation of unmanned traffic management systems;
- including U-Space;

- complex and high risk UAS operations;
- Innovative Air Mobility and decarbonisation;
- electronic conspicuity; and
- safe and sustainable integration of UAS and manned aviation.

6. These topics include considerations from both an industry and regulatory perspective; and in the context of other aviation domains, such as safety and security. As such it is likely that future workshops will encourage greater coordination by UAS Points of Contact with colleagues working on different areas of expertise.

7. In addition to discussions conducted through the UAS Points of contact, a session of the seventh ECAC Environmental Forum (29-30 May 2024) was devoted to environmental, social and privacy aspects of UAS regulatory development.

8. Under the current work programme, Europe also delivered a working paper on flight rules for safe operations of unmanned aircraft systems in the airspace (UAS/UTM) to the 41<sup>st</sup> ICAO Assembly (27 September – 7 October 2022), in coordination with EASA and prepared through the European Safety and Air Navigation Coordination Group (ESANCG).

9. As part of ECAC's international engagement on UAS (including Advanced Air Mobility), the topic has been discussed during the formal bilaterals between the Coordinating Committee and US authorities' delegation. In 2023 information was exchanged at the CC/US meeting (CCUS/27, Washington, 30-31 May 2022) on the evolution of UAS regulations and practices in the US and in Europe, including key safety issues relating to occurrence reporting and remote ID registrations. In 2024 (CCUS/28) ECAC exchanged information with the US on the developments in Advanced Air Mobility in terms of market, political and operational implications for the aviation sector.

10. No specific UAS communications (e.g. a UAS Bulletin) were published under the current work programme period and calls for articles in 2023 did not produce sufficient materials for a full publication.

11. For the remaining period, and in line with the current work programme, consideration is being given to establishing an ECAC Policy Document to capture high-level guidance and best practices in relation to State implementation of different UAS regulations. The aims of this work are to support ECAC Member States in developing regulatory capacity in UAS domain, and to provide direction for ECAC to organise future work under this field. The feasibility and scope of this document are still to be determined and the outcome of discussions at the next UAS workshop (date and location to be confirmed) will be reported to Directors General at their meeting at the end of this year (DGCA/163, 18 December 2024).

### **Action to be taken**

12. The Plenary Session is invited to note the main activities on UAS matters for the period 2022-2024.