



Trendsetting results from the final event of the innovation project AirConnect-NF - about the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and flight taxis in North Frisia

Enge-Sandef 26.05.2020

On 19th May, the internal project completion meeting for the AirConnect-NF feasibility study took place. The feasibility study highlighted the topics of UAS aviation and the perspective use of flight taxis in North Frisia. Due to the current corona situation, the project final meeting was held in the Rathaus in Leck in a small circle within the project team and with members of the local and federal parliament.

Special times require special measures. Since Corona, strict precautions have also been taken within project work. However, a project standstill was out of the question for all project participants. For example, the internal project completion meeting of the AirConnect-NF innovation project, which is funded by the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, was successfully held in a small round, in compliance with all hygiene regulations.

The emergence of a virus and the subsequent entry ban for tourists on the North Frisian islands showed once again how useful it is to set up projects like AirConnect-NF. Finally, the feasibility of using electric unmanned aerial vehicles and, in perspective, air taxis, is to be investigated to analyse the possibility of deploying from the mainland - the former military airfield in Leck- to the islands.

"Great opportunities for Germany", said Astrid Damerow, Member of the Bundestag, opening the event and referring to the action plan presented on 13th May by Federal Minister of Transport Andreas Scheuer. She highlighted the importance of innovation and vision in structurally weak regions such as North Frisia. These words were also followed by the head of the department, Ingo Böhm, who is fully behind the project with the Amt Südtondern. Ralph Hirschberg (EurA AG Schleswig-Holstein branch, project management) also welcomed the action plan, which "is fully tailored to our project, as it focuses on cross-border work in the UAS aviation area".

"Almost 1.5 years have passed from the project idea to the present day," said Melissa Körner (also EurA AG, project management) looking back happily on the past project period. And also Werner Schweizer, mayor of Klixbüll, explained once again how the idea of the project originated and how the process up to the intermunicipal application as well as the positive cooperation with Tinningstedt's mayor Dirk Enewaldsen and Leck's mayor Andreas Deidert resulted. The commercial sector of short-haul flights between Denmark and Germany from the perspective of the state of Schleswig-Holstein has so far not been taken into account to a limited extent. An airfield located near the border and the coast offers the potential and the unique selling point to become an optimal hub for tourism and short-haul flights.

Guideline-based expert interviews with Steve Wright (Professor at the University of Western England / UWE), Jakob Jensen Prühs (Manager for the UAM system at Naviair) and Christian Klit Johansen (Deputy Director of the Centre South Danish University) provided the project team with access to new knowledge and experience from both European countries. So it could be concluded that installed test rooms & real laboratories in Denmark and Great Britain are already successfully established to test the technology of UAS. Test series are very expensive, legally difficult to obtain and have to be planned and defined in detail before testing can take place. This can take a very long time. Companies in the UAS industry and research institutions have no other option today than to use these test fields/real laboratories, as the legal



framework in Europe does not allow anything else. The goal in the future should be to eliminate the need for a test field or a real laboratory. Tests should be made possible where it is really relevant for the application. Certification measures and investments must be made simpler and faster so that start-ups have a chance to survive or establish themselves in the market.

Current projects also show that there is a lot of potential in the field of medical care. Denmark is a pioneer in many areas. In the future, cross-border cooperation on this topic should be strengthened even more. Due to only a few no-fly zones that have been analysed by experts and due to low traffic volumes, the North Frisian area is well suited for tests with unmanned systems. Experiment clauses, flight corridors and flight restriction areas can be measures for the implementation of a UAS test field. Interesting results were also obtained by the RWTH Aachen University, which, among other things, compiled a market overview of existing and currently planned air taxis as well as a compilation of performance characteristics within the project.

Core aspects of a survey concerning the needs analysis of UAS and perspective flight taxis in the form of anonymised questionnaires showed that 75% of the respondents were in favour of similar projects that would promote the establishment of such special flight zones in the circle. According to the participation of a medical facility, there would be no general objections to the use of UAS and the possibilities with air taxis in telemedicine, for situation picture recognition in the event of disasters or accidents, for sea rescue and for freight transport on hospital premises or urgent laboratory equipment, and they would also be used by the facilities if they were sufficiently technically and legally mature. Application and reaction time in the medical sector could be reduced considerably by the new technology.

Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to the planned use of UAS and air taxis. Especially air taxis are seen as critical because the added value for the individual private person is questioned or there are still safety and cost concerns. A significantly increased education of the population could give new impulses and turn the concerns into support.

"There will be an innovation boost for society through drone flight technology," said Hartmut Röder of GKU's Standortentwicklung. "Drone flight technology will bring high social and economic benefits in many areas of application, including the optimization of quality and efficiency in the areas of application as well as savings in time and costs.

All lectures of the event were filmed. Corresponding videos will be available on the project homepage in the coming weeks. Nevertheless, the project team would also like to give all interested parties the opportunity to participate personally in a public final event planned for 15th September this year - if the situation allows it. A registration link can be found on the homepage www.airconnect-nf.de.

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