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New EASA drone rules: EMFU calls for clear exemptions for model aircraft flying

EU plans new measures on drone security and drone defence

Europe is witnessing a growing number of security threats and incidents caused by illegal drone operations. In February this year, the European Commission presented its “Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security” in which it announced proposals to improve identification and registration of civilian drones. Following limited consultations on draft proposals in June, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) released its proposals for new security requirements for unmanned aircraft on 18 September. These proposals introduce a registration obligation and a minimum age for pilots of all unmanned aircraft over 100 g. They require an on-board direct remote identification (DRI) function (allowing authorities to identify the pilot and the location of both pilot and aircraft) and set a maximum speed limit of 68.4 km/h. The EASA proposals also apply to model flying.

Distinguishing model aircraft from “drones”

Traditional model flying is Europe’s oldest air sport and is practised by an estimated 500,000 pilots throughout Europe. It is different from drone operations, which are the main target of EASA’s proposals. Model aircraft are flown away from people and population centres, are largely self-built and fly without autonomous flight functions and within visual line of sight. Model flying usually takes place within clubs and associations, which have a long tradition of promoting safety, evidenced by a very low accident rate. The EMFU considers that the safety and security risks of model flying differ from those of drone operations and thus merit a different approach.

Since the publication of the Commission’s action plan in February 2026, the EMFU has been advocating that drone security measures recognise the role and character of model flying in Europe. To this end, it has held discussions with EASA, the European Commission – in particular the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) – and members of the European Parliament. The EMFU’s member associations have sought dialogue with the national aviation authorities. Further discussions are planned over the next few months, including a workshop with EASA, DG MOVE and national aviation authorities in November. However, the political pressure for action and the fact that security, not only safety, is at stake are complicating these discussions.

Concessions under Article 16 and the remaining need for action

Although the EMFU was able to secure important concessions for model aircraft flying, it has several concerns about the current proposals and fears that these will disproportionately impact model flying in Europe.

A significant proportion of model flying in Europe takes place under so-called “Article 16 Authorisations”, which are authorisations granted by national authorities that set out the flying conditions for model clubs and associations. Although the new EASA proposals no longer make the application of the new security requirements mandatory for flights under these

authorisations, the EMFU considers that the arrangements for exempting them are insufficient. The EMFU urges Europe's regulators to ensure that any additional security requirements are necessary, proportionate to security and safety concerns and minimise the impact on model flying – a consideration to be made at the national level in response to concrete threats and concerns.

The EMFU considers that the biggest threats to model flying come from the new proposals for flights outside the scope of such Article 16 authorisations, under the so-called “open category”. An estimated 30% of all model aircraft flying in Europe continues to take place in this category. Depending on the scope and number of national Article 16 Authorisations, in some countries up to 100% of all flights fall under this category. The open category provides easy access to model aircraft flying for new entrants and in some countries is vital for special types of flying such as slope soaring. The EMFU questions the need for, and practicality of, subjecting model flying under this category to direct on-board remote identification requirements for all aircraft weighing more than 100 g. The EMFU also challenges the proposed maximum speed limit of 68.4 km/h. This speed limit, clearly aimed at rotor-based aircraft, is below the minimum airspeed required for most fixed-wing model aircraft to remain airborne (and not crash) and thus amounts in practice to a prohibition on flying.

The EMFU's key demand is for traditional model flying to be exempted from the requirement for remote identification and any maximum speed limits, both under Article 16 Authorisations and under the open category. The EMFU presents its position paper, attached to this press release, with concrete proposals for doing so. This position paper will provide the basis for our discussions with European institutions and member state authorities over the coming months.

About the European Model Flying Union

The European Model Flying Union represents the interests of the model flying community at European level. There are more than 500,000 active model pilots in Europe. Through its member clubs and associations in 15 countries, the EMFU represents more than 200,000 of them.

The EMFU's aim is to preserve and further develop model flying in Europe and to advocate for safe, practicable and proportionate regulatory frameworks with European institutions. In doing so, it acts as the collective voice of its member organisations and the European model flying community.

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