

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AERONAUTICS



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As Europe attempts to place itself in the driving seat of future evolution, one cannot ignore the impact the aeronautics sector has on the layers and networks which constitute our society. Global forecasts show a potential demand for some 25,000 new passenger and freight aircraft between 2008 and 2028 representing an order book value of €3 trillion. With this steady increase, Horizon 2020 (the next Framework Programme for research funding) allows us as decision makers to assess what this sector has contributed socially and economically, and the role it will take in the future.

Not only will the 21st Century usher in more fuel-efficient and comfortable aircraft but the EU's Clean Sky and SESAR initiatives will redesign the surrounding infrastructures, creating faster, more efficient and easy travel for operators and consumers alike. The game now becomes one of balancing the nature of the industry with the changing nature of society; predicting and understanding the various scenarios and ensuring that our global community will be able to undertake the necessary shift to bring about benefits for the common good as well as empowering the individual to achieve true liberty. It is about foreseeing a political vision and understanding the role that aeronautics will play in it.

Horizon 2020 is an attempt by the European Union to ensure that funding will be placed where it has the most impact. By placing funding within the scope of innovation, the framework will support efforts from 'laboratory to the market'. The European Union recognises the needs of the aeronautic sector and that this will allow for public funding to produce break through technologies. By bringing Member States closer together in cooperation, the EU can lead our continent to the forefront of a new,

greener economic model that benefits the common good. Appreciating this principle is vital to understanding why supporting the aeronautics sector is an important element, yet there is an inherent level of trust in the sector to deliver results for our civilisation.

As Europeans we are currently hindered by a triple helix of challenges. Climate Change threatens our ecosystems and the very nature of life on this planet, whilst our societal behaviour over the last century has placed what resources we have left under large amounts of strain. Our governments are now in a situation of ominous financial stress and to overcome these problems requires innovative thinking, policies and societies. Recognising the role that the

aeronautics sector plays in R&D (and therefore innovation), coupled with the societal benefits it offers to the individual, means that it is an important branch of our industrial tree.

Globally, civil aviation emitted 666 million tonnes of CO₂ (in 2008) representing some 2% of man made CO₂ emissions. The sector must bring about important changes to reduce this. Yet in doing so it will contribute to the knowledge-based society, creating highly skilled jobs where they are needed most. I am confident that the aeronautics sector will employ its innovative assets to shape a cleaner and more efficient transport system at the service of 21st Century societies.

