

The spoken word will be applicable

Speech EHA Chairman at Swiss Rotors 2022 in Payerne

M. le Conseiller d'Etat  
Geschätzter Roland  
Dear Colleagues

When I look at the exhibition hall, I feel nothing but pride on what we have achieved as a vertical lift industry. Helicopters, as we can see here, have led the way. More than 80 years ago, Igor Sikorsky took the first flight in a helicopter as we know it today. A world without the capability to take-off and land vertically is unthinkable. Now drones rise to the challenge and aim to bring our industry to a new level. Urban Air Mobility, fast delivery of time critical products in dense urban environments and providing a reconnaissance platform in critical situations and emergencies promise innovative applications in the third dimension.

Let me share with you some themes that will shape our industry and that we as European Helicopter Association are working on: Innovation, regulation, and collaboration.

We live in exciting times. We are witnessing the birth of a new sector in aviation with promising possibilities. The use of the third dimension will be rewritten for generations to come. With ingenuity and flexibility, you have made many innovations possible, and in addition, many ideas, I am sure, are still waiting to see the light of day. I tip my hat to all of you creative inventors.

However, UAM project proponents do not yet have definitive answers to offer regarding the sustainable applicability of electric flight. We should use concepts as inspiration but also be honest enough to recognize the fact that we have a long way to go. To identify transformational solutions that will meet these demands, additional innovations are necessary. Just transferring breakthroughs from the automotive industry will not be enough. In air transport we need to adhere to higher standards and protocols. As in every initial growth cycle we will see many projects falter while the best designs become fully developed.

The helicopter industry has grown in size and maturity. During the last eight decades it has built up knowledge and skills in design, production, fleet support, and training but has also come to understand design limitations of a helicopter for it to still be operated economically. It has also shown solutions for limiting the environmental impact regarding noise abatement and decarbonization. For example, sustainable aviation fuel is already a reality. The helicopter with its unique multi-role capabilities

is here to stay and I look forward to new uses and innovations for the Swiss Army Knife in aviation.

As we live the excitement, it is easy to forget that we need to align these initiatives with our stakeholders and the environment we operate in. As we combine technologies to form new products, we need to be sure that these technologies will remain available once the product reaches a certain state of maturity.

Given the current discussion of 5G technologies and Radar altimeters, it is crucial to commence discussions with the telecom industry to ensure that the 5G network will remain accessible; be it for the use of tracking, steering or the exchange of data with objects in flight. How can we ensure the safety of third party individuals on the ground? What if the telecom industry will not allow the use of 5G technology for “Beyond Line of Sight” flights?

As you develop your ideas, I urge you to look at and connect with the helicopter industry and use the knowledge gained to your maximum. We all will shape this industry and it is now that we need to lay the foundation for it. Keep innovating, trying new approaches and boldly go where no drone has gone before.

Regarding regulation: Weeeeelll ... production and certification rules for drones, and, to an even higher degree Urban Air Mobility ventures, will increase. Just as when designing a helicopter where you have to show how you plan and develop each part, so the drone sector will become more regulated. The times when you were able to print a replacement part in your 3D printer will slowly come to an end. More stringent testing and accountability will be required.

On the operational side, drone operators and pilots will also have regulation to follow and fulfill. The helicopter industry, especially small to medium operators, as other speakers will talk about later, have made some painful experiences regarding the implementation of regulation in their day-to-day activities. They have learned to deal with these limitations but still: a significant part of management is absorbed to make sure that compliance is maintained. Reducing administrative burdens for small and medium size helicopter operators is one of the most important topics on my agenda.

Given the European context, it can be quite challenging for individual companies to orient themselves what requirements need to be followed and which regulation is applicable. Going at it alone seems not to be a viable option. Let’s therefore collaborate and share information on the latest developments affecting our industry. We must build up structures and processes where we are able to connect, agree on common positions and convince our stakeholders and regulators. There are many voices in Europe that have interests different than those of our industry.

To be successful, the only option is also to speak with one voice and put our efforts behind common initiatives.

The European Helicopter Association already plays a key role in these activities. EHA and its members are regularly in policy meetings with EASA, Eurocontrol and European regulatory working groups. We are able to bring in the perspective of the vertical flight industry. We coordinate with OEM's, GAMA, CANSO, UAV DACH and many other associations to make sure that you find an inspiring environment as free as possible from restrictions. Where they are necessary, we encourage common sense solutions.

EHA is THE European VTOL association that brings all aspects of vertical flight under one roof. European Rotors last year made its mark and we are proud to have provided a forum to all members of the VTOL community. Come to European Rotors in Cologne this November and see for yourself.

As a conclusion, only together, with our combined strength, are we able to shape the discourse and submit proposals that not only benefit our sector of aviation but that of our partners as well. Rest assured that I will fight for all members in this sector.

I invite you, therefore, to join our ranks and participate in this enterprise. I look forward meeting you today on the show floor and in the future to work with you.  
Thank you very much