Unifly Shaping Drone Space with Luciad at the Core of its Innovative Platform

Developed with Luciad technology, Unifly's innovative drone management platform allows drone users to safely plan and fly UAV in today's commercial airspace.

The popularity of drones led to a new problem for pilots and air traffic controllers - dozens of near misses between planes and drones every year. Enter a team of aviation experts and engineers with a vision. The leaders of Unifly created a way to facilitate integration of drones into the manned aviation system.

Unifly's innovative platform allows users to see reserved airspaces and no-fly zones to safely plan their UAV routes.

Unifly, based in Antwerp, Belgium, specializes in drone traffic management and drone operations. The company is a spin-off of the Flemish technology research institute VITO. Unifly's leadership includes a unique mix of air traffic controllers, licensed professional pilots and software engineers.

Founded in August 2015, the company introduced a cloud-based software platform for unmanned air traffic management just eight months later. Unifly already has attracted more than 1,000 registered users, 30 percent from outside Europe.

In November 2016, Terra Drone, a major Japanese drone operator and system integrator, invested 5 million euro in Unifly. The company now is the most well-funded unmanned traffic management software business in Europe.

How Unifly's system works

The concept is simple. The real-time position of a drone operation is shared into the aviation system. This makes it possible for air traffic controllers and pilots to intervene if a dangerous situation arises.

The Unifly app interfaces with the manned air traffic management world – Luciad's world. Luciad, whose clients include Boeing, Airbus, NATO and Eurocontrol, helped Unifly build a system compliant with international aviation

standards. Luciad developers worked directly with Unifly to launch the product in the shortest possible time.

No need to reinvent the wheel here! Unifly puts information into the manned air traffic managements system, then retrieves data relevant to drone pilots. The result - excellent coordination between unmanned and manned aviation. There are features for private drone users, professional users, policing bodies, aviation authorities, air traffic controllers and drone manufacturers.

"The platform has been enthusiastically received by all stakeholders in the aviation industry!" Kegelaers says.

In a European competition for air traffic management software in early 2016 Unifly finished second in a field of 81 contenders. Airbus, another Luciad partner, finished first.

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Mark Kegelaers,
CEO of Unifly

Unifly and Luciad: A Great Partnership

Unifly facilitates the flow of information between drone pilots and operators and the manned air traffic system. More information equals fewer accidents.

"We help air navigation service providers know where drones are," says Mark Kegelaers, CEO of Unifly. "In addition, drone users can be informed about the regulation of aviation - where they can fly and not and where it is safe to fly."

Unifly used existing technologies created by Luciad to build the platform.

"Luciad has been instrumental from the beginning of the development of our project," Kegelaers says. "One of the big challenges is to take complex aviation data and present that to end users who have no knowledge of aviation. Thanks to Luciad, we created a welcoming environment for beginning aviators."

What Next?

Unifly is the leader in Europe for sales of software for unmanned air traffic management.

"This is a product that is important for the safety of aviation worldwide," Kegelaers says.

Unifly will use the investment from Terra Drone to build an international sales force. The company says it "aims to become the de facto standard for professional drone operators."

Luciad leads the industry in the development of situational awareness applications. We create applications from start-to-finish and also partner with companies like Unifly to provide our expertise to new products.

Contact us

For more information, please contact us at:

✉ marketing.us.gsp@hexagon.com

📱 +1 877 463 7327

🌐 https://go.hexagongeospatial.com/contact-us-today

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