European Union Aviation Safety Agency

I am into drone racing and/or flying drones with goggles (FPV) ‘open’ category

As a drone racer, which category and subcategory of operation do I fall under?

Answer

Normally drone races are organised by clubs and associations. In such cases, they may have received operational authorisations from their National Aviation Authorities in accordance with Article 16 of Regulation (EU) 2019/947, which also covers the organisation of such events.

If, instead, you want to conduct a race that is not within a club or association and with no spectators (in this context meaning uninvolved persons, see the definition above) present, you will fall under the **‘open’ category** and you can operate under subcategory A3.

Last updated:
14/10/2020

Link:
https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/faq/116510

Is flying with goggles (first person view) authorised in the 'open' category?

Answer

The Regulation allows you to fly without keeping direct eye contact with the drone, provided you have a person next to you, a UA observer, keeping direct visual contact with the drone, scanning the airspace to make sure that you do not endanger other parties (e.g. aircraft or buildings or persons). **The UA observer must be located alongside you so they can immediately communicate with you** in case they see an obstacle, and give you instructions, such as to immediately land the drone.

Regulatory reference: Article 4(d) of EU regulation 2019/947.

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Link:

https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/faq/116511

Are spectators allowed in the 'open' category?

Answer

When operating in the ‘open’ category, **flying over uninvolved people is not allowed**, so there must not be any spectators. See also the explanation on uninvolved persons under ‘understanding EU Regulations 2019/947 and 2019/945‘.

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Link:
https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/faq/116512

Is beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operation possible for flying drones with goggles (first-person view (FPV)) operation?

Answer

NB **This answer applies only to non-racing FPV operation.**

One of the conditions to operate in the open category is for the remote pilot to keep the drone in **visual line of sight (VLOS)** at all times. There are only two exceptions where VLOS is not strictly applied:

- when using the follow-me mode with a drone with C0 or C1 label or below 250 g; and/or
- when operating in first person view (FPV) and using an **unmanned-aircraft observer** that is always looking at the drone.

It is important to note that the open category catalogues all lower-risk drone operations **without the need for prior authorisation**; this lighter provision is compensated by more restrictive conditions of operation.

FPV googles by nature do not allow to have a wide field of view to see potential threats around the drone, so they do not enable VLOS. Hence, the requirement for an **unmanned-aircraft observer** for any FPV operation when operating in the open category. The **unmanned-aircraft observer** must look at the drone and be alongside the remote pilot so that the **unmanned-aircraft observer** can immediately inform the remote pilot in case of any threat around the drone.

With the above conditions, you are allowed to fly FPV in the open category. However, you need to be mindful of the risk to hit a person or other aircraft.

If you want to have a drone race in FPV, spectators are not allowed; please note that drones with a speed higher than 19 m/s are only allowed to operate in open subcategory A3 (far from people). Therefore, in case you want to have spectators, the FPV race should be conducted in the specific category (including standards scenarios). For more information, please refer to the following FAQ: I am into drone racing and/or flying drones with goggles (FPV) 'open' category | EASA (europa.eu).

For standard scenario (STS) 2, nothing prevents the remote pilot to fly in first person view when:

- an **airspace observer** scans the sky; and
- the remote pilots is assisted by an **unmanned-aircraft observer**.

The same person may be the **airspace observer** and the **unmanned-aircraft observer**, if that person complies with the requirements imposed for the two observers.

For STS 1, it is correct that at the moment, operating in FPV is not possible since the remote pilot is required to maintain VLOS.

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Link:

https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/faq/140037