

Press release

A RACE FOR AUTONOMOUS DRONES

Leipzig, December 5, 2023

The Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation (SPRIND) is calling for participation in the SPRIND Funke "Fully Autonomous Flight". The aim of this innovation competition is to develop fully autonomous drones that can fly safely even under adverse conditions and in the face of a range of disruptive factors. The teams will demonstrate their technology in a race of autonomous drones at Erding Air Base in the fall of 2024.

Logistics and mobility are among the cornerstones of our economy and society. A declining pool of skilled workers combined with high and growing demands on mobility and logistics, especially in rural areas, calls for new approaches. Unmanned, largely manually controlled aircraft are already an important addition in many areas of application, such as the maintenance of industrial plants or in surveying technology. Fully autonomous flight could open up further fields of application, ranging from logistics and delivery services to rescue missions, inspections and long-term monitoring in agriculture. This in turn could be a first important step towards the vision of autonomous of passenger transportation. There is no doubt that flight systems without pilots will profoundly change our (urban) transportation systems in the near future and unleash their disruptive potential.

The Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation SPRIND is therefore calling on talented teams to participate in this competition and send their drones into the race. Teams from all over Europe and other NATO member states are eligible to participate.

The SPRIND Funke has a duration of nine months in two stages. In the 2.5 months of stage 1, SPRIND supports the participating teams in the theoretical demonstration of the autonomous flying system with up to 70,000 euros. Stage 2 provides up to 80,000 euros for the development of a prototype and the final participation in the "Drone Race" at Erding Air Base. SPRIND will support up to 15 teams in stage 1 and up to 12 teams in stage 2.

The application deadline for this SPRIND Funke is January 14, 2024.

The teams will be supported, advised and networked with experts by SPRIND for the duration of the innovation competition. The Erding Air Base provides the teams with a unique test site that can be used for test flights before the race in fall 2024. This is made possible by a collaboration between SPRIND and the Soldier Innovation Lab. Further information can be found at <https://www.sprind.org/en/challenges/funke-fully-autonomous-flight/>

About SPRIND Challenges

SPRIND Challenges and SPRIND Funken are innovation competitions in which the participating teams receive quick and unbureaucratic financial support to develop solutions for the major social and technological challenges of our time. In the SPRIND Challenges, the teams compete in a multi-stage competition. At the end of each stage, the teams' work is evaluated and only the best remain in the competition and receive further financial support to develop their idea further.

Like its big sister SPRIND Challenges, SPRIND Funke is an innovation competition for people with radically new ideas - but with a much shorter duration. The primary aim of SPRIND Funke is to quickly demonstrate new, ground-breaking technologies.

SPRIND

About SPRIND

The Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation (SPRIND) was founded in 2019, with its registered office in Leipzig. The sole shareholder is the Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Action (BMWK). SPRIND fills a gap in the German innovation landscape: it finds new, groundbreaking technologies for the major challenges of our time, while ensuring that the value created by the resulting companies and industries remains in Germany and Europe. SPRIND is financed by funds from the federal budget. It is managed by Rafael Laguna de la Vera and Berit Dannenberg.

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