



A new light aircraft company for Europe is born: Sonaca Aircraft

A new light aircraft company is about to take off in Europe: Sonaca Aircraft. The company is part of Sonaca Group, well-known in the aerospace industry for engineering services and structures, with its base in Gosselies, Belgium.

Sonaca Aircraft is a joint venture, 65% owned by Sonaca Group and 35% by The Airplane Factory, the South African company responsible for the Sling two- and four-seat kitplanes.

The first aircraft will be the Sonaca 200, a factory-built version of the two-seat Sling 2 costing €175,000. It is going through European (EASA) certification with a maximum take-off weight of 750kg, and is aimed primarily at the pilot training market. First deliveries are planned for 2017.

Sonaca has reviewed the internal structures of the Sling 2, classed as a light sport aircraft (LSA) with a max weight of 600kg, to make it suitable for

the 750kg CS-VLA category. The extra weight will be useful to flight training organisations.

The Sonaca 200 will be assembled in Belgium by Sonaca Aircraft, with a four-seat version already under consideration. The 200 will have its world debut at the AERO Friedrichshafen later this month.

Pierre Van Wetter, Marketing & Sales Director of Sonaca Aircraft, said, "We met key players from all over Europe – flight schools, aero clubs and private pilots – to help define the specifications. This is when the idea of designing a single-engine two-seater aircraft dedicated to training and leisure was hatched. Our objective was to develop the most appropriate machine to meet market expectations."

A demonstration aircraft is being tested in Belgium. "The first feedback is excellent," said Van Wetter. "We are identifying the last modifications. These are mostly structural and aimed at improving

reliability, robustness and maintenance cost."

Sonaca Aircraft is also applying for EASA Design Organisation Authority (DOA) and Production Organisation Authority (POA). "The production site will be certified according to European norms," said Van Wetter. "We will be allowed, to a certain extent, to modify the aircraft without introducing new certification requests which will enable us to limit costs, to be autonomous and reactive."

Technical support after-sales service will use Sonaca Group's existing network. "As a subsidiary of the Sonaca Group, a direct supplier of Airbus, Dassault, Embraer and Bombardier, Sonaca Aircraft offers technical support of international class to its aircraft, including delivery of replacement parts and repair solutions within 48 hours in order to minimise aircraft grounding," said Yves Delatte, CEO of Sonaca Aircraft. sonaca-aircraft.com

First manned flight for electric Volocopter

The 18-rotor electrically-powered Volocopter has made its first manned flight. Alexander Zosel, managing director of e-volo, was at the controls and spoke enthusiastically afterwards.

"The flight was totally awesome," he said. "The machine was absolutely reliable, there were no vibrations, it was tremendous. I didn't wait long, I simply pushed the lever upward and the Volocopter simply sprung upward in a single bound. I mean, it didn't at all feel like there were crazy forces at work, it was all just totally light and the Volocopter immediately converted every movement I made with the joystick"

e-volo is aiming for EASA certification and production of the Volocopter within two years.

