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Press release

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UNESCO backs Airbus initiative to engineer tomorrow's world

Global 'Fly Your Ideas' contest to inspire a new wave of engineering talent

UNESCO is supporting Airbus' Fly Your Ideas challenge, a student contest which aims to inspire a new generation of engineers. An in depth report by UNESCO about future engineering capacity highlights an engineering skills gap that threatens industry and growth. Aviation is no exception. There are not enough aviation engineers currently graduating to meet industry needs and nearly half of them switch to other careers once they qualify.

Through its Fly Your Ideas competition, Airbus is offering students an insight into the world of aviation. It is one means to boost their interest in the industry. The global contest has just opened for its third season and challenges students worldwide to develop new ideas for a more sustainable aviation industry. It involves three rounds with five teams to be chosen as finalists in the summer of 2013, each with the opportunity to win a €30,000 prize. All teams are supported by an Airbus mentor during the development of their project, and new this season, an Airbus expert will offer advice at key stages of the competition.

Charles Champion, Executive Vice-President Engineering at Airbus and Fly Your Ideas Patron says, "Engineers can change the world. With Fly Your Ideas we want to excite young people about aviation and the fascinating opportunities it holds."

He continues: "Technological skills are changing and having the best technical skill isn't always enough to ensure a flair for innovation, to promote an idea, or the relationship skills required to lead multicultural teams and be effective in our global industry. Fly Your Ideas offers students from all disciplines the chance to innovate and work together in international, multidisciplinary teams. Just as we do within Airbus."

Dr Lidia Brito, Director of the Division of Science Policy and Capacity Building, UNESCO, says, "Airbus is giving students a rare opportunity to apply classroom learning in a real world environment – and with access to senior figures from the aviation industry. The Airbus Fly Your Ideas challenge is a blueprint for how industry and academia can work together to bridge the classroom-boardroom divide. It underlines the central role of engineering in creating our sustainable future and gives students a chance to experience that adventure."

The Fly Your Ideas challenge is part of Airbus' Future by Airbus– a pioneering vision of sustainable aviation in 2050. University students of any nationality or discipline – from engineering to marketing; business to science; information technology to design – are invited to participate. Proposals must address the key issues facing the industry: 'Energy', 'Efficiency', 'Affordable Growth', Traffic Growth', 'Passenger Experience', or 'Community Friendliness.'

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Airbus Press Office
1, Rond-point Maurice Bellonte
31707 Blagnac Cedex, France

Phone +33 (0)5 61 93 10 00
Fax +33(0)5 61 93 38 36
E-mail media@airbus.com

Notes to Editors

About Airbus Fly Your Ideas

The biennial contest involves three progressively challenging rounds. The winners will share the top prize of €30,000; the runners-up €15,000. Five teams will advance to the final in the summer of 2013. The winning team will be picked by a high-profile panel of judges, names to be announced later. To enter students must register as a team of three to five members at www.airbus-fyi.com.

- Fly Your Ideas registration: 19 June 2012 – 30 November 2012

This is the third edition of the biennial Fly Your Ideas challenge. The previous contest (2011) drew entries from more than 2,600 students representing 287 universities and 75 countries. 'Team Wings of Phoenix' from China's Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics won with their ground-based wind power generation system that exploits the wakes of aircraft during take-off and landing.
In addition, other possible industrial applications have been explored with some teams and universities, for example a collaborative research project into extended aircraft formations has just been completed with Stanford University following a partnership formed after Stanford were finalists in the 2009 FYI challenge. In addition, an exploratory project is underway with the 2011 finalist team from Malaysia. It is a long term process and it is too early to say if it will be possible to implement the ideas in the future.

UNESCO patronage was granted in May 2012 by Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General and supported by Mr Jean Audouze, Chairperson of the French National Commission for UNESCO. UNESCO published its report: Engineering: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities for Development, in October 2010.

Media contact :

Anne Galabert, Airbus Media Relations Manager
+33 (0) 5 67 19 04 48 press@airbus-fyi.com

Agnes Bardon, UNESCO Media Relations
+33 (0) 1 45 68 17 64 a.bardon@unesco.org

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