



ARPAS-UK ALL NEWS, DRONE INDUSTRY, DRONE TECHNOLOGY, DRONE TECHNOLOGY SIG

European Drone Companies, Where are Your Patents? by HGF Ltd

25 February 2026

Article by John Hawtree - HGF Limited - Intellectual Property Specialists

With significant consolidations occurring in the drone and eVTOL sectors, some European companies look set to miss out through a failure of IP strategy.

Innovations and technology often account for the greatest share of the value of a business. Patents are typically a critical factor in demonstrating and realising that value. When the time comes to seek investment or an exit, ownership of a patent portfolio, commensurate with the size and nature of a business, is usually key to securing a successful outcome. Such a portfolio gives an investor or buyer confidence that the benefits of R&D investment can be realised. Without it, innovations and technology are far more vulnerable to being taken by third parties. This typically results in loss of competitive advantage and worse, to a competitor that has not had to invest in the R&D to realise the benefit.

The regard in which a patent portfolio is held can be seen in industry examples. As reported here in October, US based Archer aviation won a competitive tender to acquire the 90+ patent family portfolio of Germany's struggling Lilium Air Mobility for a reported €18M. In March 2025, Germany's Volocopter, which has its own portfolio of 70+ patent families, was acquired from insolvency by China based Wenfang Group (see here). For our previous thoughts on the patent portfolios of Lilium and Volocopter and their potential value (especially to a business with operations in Europe and/or the US in the case of Lilium and China in the case of Volocopter) see our article here. Meanwhile, in November 2024, GoPro sold a sizeable drone related patent portfolio to Skydio in an all US deal (see here).

As the drone and eVTOL sectors mature, significant industry consolidation is occurring. A selection of recent examples include Airbus acquiring AeroVel, (which has its own portfolio of US patents and patent applications) BAE Systems acquiring Malloy Aeronautics, Robinson Helicopter acquiring Ascent AeroSystems, Team UAV joining PDG Aviation Services, Red Cat acquiring FlightWave Aerospace Systems, Delair acquiring Squadrone-System and the acquisition of Sentient Vision Systems by Shield AI.

Consequently, more now than ever it is important for innovative drone and eVTOL companies to generate and maintain a strategic patent portfolio to demonstrate their value for inward investment and/or M&A approaches.

Yet patent filing data suggests that over the last decade, numbers of drone related patent applications from companies of major European countries combined, are only on a par with those originating from Japan, well behind those originating from South Korea and the US and dwarfed by those originating from China.

Whilst there are doubtless outliers, it is concerning that so many European innovators will be vulnerable to loss of the fruits of their R&D labour and being valued below their potential at a time of industry consolidation.

The process of securing a patent might cost £5–20k over a number of years, but the potential value of such a patent in protecting monopoly rights to an important technology can of course be orders of magnitude higher. At present, this seems to be a dangerous blind spot for a significant number of European companies.



John Hawtree | Patent Director at HGF Ltd

Patent Director at HGF Ltd and head of the firm's aerospace group. With nearly two decades of experience – including four years at Rolls-Royce – he specialises in protecting innovations

across aviation, uncrewed systems, and advanced technology sectors. **Connect with John on LinkedIn**



HGF Ltd – Patent & Trade Mark Attorneys

HGF provides a full range of intellectual property services, including patent and trade mark acquisition, portfolio management, appeals, and related support.

Email HGF

Visit their website

**Find
more articles**

**Join
ARPAS-UK**

Share the Post:



[← Previous](#)

[Next →](#)

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Latest Articles

Inspiring the Future Workforce

26 FEBRUARY, 2026 • 4 MIN READ

European Drone Companies, Where are Your Patents? by HGF Ltd

25 FEBRUARY, 2026 • 3 MIN READ

UK MOD Opens Call for Evidence on Autonomous Systems Regulation – A Key Moment for Drone Innovators

UKDI Phase 3 Innovation Competition: A Major Opportunity for Drone-Tech SMEs

24 FEBRUARY, 2026 • 1 MIN READ

[See More Articles](#)



© 2026 ARPAS-UK The UK Drone Association

All Rights Reserved

Company No. 08509797

CONTACT US

membership@arpas.uk

+44 0203 985 0904

71-75 Shelton Street

Covent Garden

London WC2H 9JQ

LINKS

[Code Of Conduct Policy](#)

[Conflicts Of Interest Policy](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Media & Social Media Policy](#)

[Refund Policy](#)

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA

