International Post Corporation

Swiss Post hands over its drone operation to Matternet

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Swiss Post drones have flown across various Swiss cities as a service for hospitals since 2017. After five years of pioneering work, the company has now decided to hand over its drone project to the Californian drone systems developer Matternet. Although the autonomous drones have attracted global interest, the current regulatory environment for unmanned aerial vehicles in Switzerland means Swiss Post is unable to use the drones widely enough or operate them at a profit. With its new strategy, the company is focusing on logistics solutions in its core business and on continuing to finance the public service for Switzerland using its own resources. This strategic decision is a logical step as part of its strategy.

Swiss Post has performed pioneering work in drone logistics worldwide. In March 2017, it became one of the first companies to use drones to transport lab samples between hospitals and laboratories. This service attracted great interest from the healthcare sector. With its "Swiss Post of tomorrow" strategy, the company is placing greater emphasis on logistics solutions in its core business. The strategy is intended to help Swiss Post continue to finance a high-quality public service using its own resources.

Drone service not profitable and usage too narrow even in the medium term
In the context of this strategy, Swiss Post has thoroughly reviewed the profitability of all ongoing projects in recent months – including the drone operation. The analysis showed that the autonomous drones continue to attract interest. However, the result of the five-year operation showed that Swiss Post is not able to use the drones widely enough or make a profit while using current technology and keeping to the regulations that are in force. For this reason, the company has decided to hand over its drone project to the drone systems developer Matternet at the end of December 2022.

Matternet to continue providing service
On January 1, 2023 Swiss Post will hand over the operation to the Californian drone developer Matternet. A partner for the project in Switzerland, Matternet manufactures the drones currently used. Existing customers – the University Hospital Zurich, the University of Zurich and the Ticino EOC hospital group – will have the option of continuing to purchase the drone transport service from Matternet.

Innovation remains key for Swiss Post

Swiss Post's verdict on its five-year drone project is positive, overall. The company performed valuable pioneering work for the entire sector and for Switzerland. Innovation will remain essential for Swiss Post going forward – a dynamic Switzerland needs an equally dynamic postal service. Swiss Post's goal is to drive innovation in areas where the needs of people and companies match its mission – always with the intention of providing a public service funded by its own resources.

Source: Swiss Post

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