

Project summary

COPAL has the objective of providing the European scientific community with an unique research aircraft platform, capable of reaching and operating in any remote area in the world and offering a heavy-payload for integration of large panoply of instruments for research in environmental and Geo-sciences. It will offer an unprecedented opportunity to countries that are not yet operating research aircraft to develop expertise in airborne measurements and participate to international multidisciplinary experiments.

The Consortium includes 10 national research funding institutions, a SME and, a pan-European law firm. Among the national institutions, 6 are research councils, 3 are meteorological services supporting research, and one is a national aerospace research institution. 7 participants are members of the EUFAR network of European aircraft operators for research in Geo-sciences.

User requirements will be refined and translated into specifications for aircraft performance and modifications for research. The acquisition, modification, and maintenance costs will be precisely quoted. Procedures will be defined for the selection of the aircraft and data management operators. A network of academic centers of excellence and SMEs will be constituted for the development and airborne certification of innovative instruments for the community aircraft. New governance schemes will be elaborated for evaluation of access proposals and allocation of time slots, which reconcile the Pan-European use of the aircraft, with national authority in term of scientific programming.

These activities will be coordinated with EUFAR, with the operator of community research aircraft in the USA, and with the other Preparatory Phase studies, especially those with points of similarity with COPAL, such as the research vessels. They will supply with technical and logistic solutions the research institutions which will develop a new organizational model for the COPAL European distributed infrastructure.