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Italy special: Engineering strength in depth at Aerosoft

By Murdo Morrison

Evidence of the strength in depth of the aerospace sector in southern Italy can be found at Aerosoft, a design engineering house based in Naples, but with offshoots in Toulouse, Turin and Turkey and a sales office in Seattle, USA. Engineers at the company have developed and stress-tested structural parts of some of the major aircraft programmes, including the **Airbus A380** and **Boeing 787**.

Spun off as a separate business in 1992 by software entrepreneur and chairman Francesco Floro Flores, Aerosoft also works in the automotive, rail and naval sectors, but aerospace represents about 60% of its business. Although not a manufacturer as such, Aerosoft's success comes from its engineers' experience and knowledge of the entire production process, says Flores. "It's not just about design. We have all the competences to design and develop the part and also support it during the production phase."

The company's clients include Alenia Aeronautica - for whom it designed the fuselage section 46 and auxilliary box on the **Boeing** 787, as well as the section 15 forward lower unit for the **Airbus** A380 and the upper deck cargo door on its freighter version. It was behind the wing box on the Alenia **Aermacchi** M346 jet trainer and is developing the doors for the yet-to-be-launched Piaggio P1XX jet.

It has 40 engineers in Toulouse, currently working on elements of the **Airbus A350** for **EADS** Sogerma and Latécoère - the only Italian company, it says, to be contracted on the widebody programme. A German design centre will open next year and Aerosoft is seriously considering a move into Brazil to tap opportunities with **Embraer**.

Aerosoft's work on the 787 has seen it broaden its involvement in composites. With backing from the Campania region, it is investing E10 million (\$16 million) in a new centre near Naples to produce composite structures, particularly doors. It will open in 2012 and will mark the company's first venture into actual manufacturing.

