

**FUTURE
STARTS
ABOVE**



Background paper:

Military mobility in the EU – focus on aviation



Introduction

Military mobility is essential to the EU's capacity to act, its credibility, and its responsiveness. Military aviation, in particular, enables the rapid transport of troops and equipment over long distances – for military operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief alike.

Military aviation and infrastructure

Within the framework of EU and NATO planning, military mobility includes air transport using strategic airlifters, tactical transport aircraft, helicopters, and air-to-air refuelling. Key factors are:

- Rapid approvals (diplomatic clearances, customs, dangerous goods)
 - Robust infrastructure (airports, runways, handling, hangars)
 - Integration into civil airspace
- Dual-use airports and their integration into the TEN-T network are key to overall resilience.

Relevant EU initiatives

- PESCO Military Mobility: harmonisation of overflight and landing rights, uniform standards.
- EU Action Plan on Military Mobility (2018, 2022): classification of airports for heavy transport aircraft, integration into the Single European Sky.
- Military Airworthiness Harmonisation: common airworthiness standards, avoidance of duplicate testing.
- TEN-T/CEF: Financing of airports that can be used for military purposes.
- EU-NATO coordination: coordination of airspace clearances, air bridges, standard procedures.

Strategic importance & challenges

Despite progress, obstacles remain:

- Bureaucratic delays due to non-harmonised procedures,
- limited access for the armed forces to transport infrastructure,
- lack of uniform standards and deadlines,
- investment deficits in dual-use infrastructure,
- bottlenecks in specialised transport capacities.

The combination of military requirements, civilian interests, and industrial policy objectives makes military mobility a genuinely cross-cutting issue. Successful implementation of the new regulations and legislative changes will depend on the ability to align national rules with European standards, mobilise private-sector investment, and harmonise technical requirements across the EU.

Aerospace in the context of military mobility

Strategic air mobility is indispensable for:

- rapid transport of troops to areas of operation,
- transporting materials and supplies over long distances,
- medical evacuations and disaster relief.

With aircraft such as the Airbus A400M, A330 MRTT, and C295, the European aerospace industry is well positioned to meet both strategic and tactical airlift needs. Much of this capacity is dual-use, enhancing its value for civilian applications as well. The market also offers great potential for innovations such as unmanned cargo aircraft, alternative fuels and hybrid propulsion technologies.

Demands for aerospace and defence

- Formal recognition of military air mobility as an essential component of the Military Mobility Package 2025–2026, explicitly defined as a dual-use capability.
- Prioritisation of air transport-related projects in all relevant EU defence and mobility programmes (EDF, SAFE, EDIP, CEF), with secure funding.
- Integration of the industry perspective into the implementation of the new regulation and legal changes, in particular regarding infrastructure standards, certification and investment promotion for dual-use airports.
- Binding deadlines and harmonised procedures for cross-border approvals (diplomatic clearances, customs, transport of dangerous goods).
- Investment offensive in dual-use infrastructure in line with the new EU strategy for identifying critical hubs.
- Multinational cooperation projects should aim to close existing capability gaps through targeted use of European industrial expertise and by reducing dependencies on non-EU suppliers.
- Promotion of innovative and sustainable technologies (alternative fuels, unmanned systems, lightweight construction, hybrid/electric drives).
- Regular review of the new legal framework to ensure bureaucracy reduction, investment steering and mobility improvements.

About the aerospace industry

The German aerospace industry, represented by the BDLI e.V., is an integral part of the European aerospace industry. As a key strategic industry, the sector plays a decisive role in the technological and economic sovereignty of the European Union. It promotes economic growth, technological innovation and international connectivity. In Germany alone, the industry contributes significantly to GDP with over 120,000 employees and an annual turnover of over 52 billion euros.

Over the decades, Europe has worked together with industry, member states and the European Union to achieve a leading position in the aerospace industry. This must be maintained and further expanded in the face of international competition. In view of far-reaching technological, political and industrial changes, this requires sustained investment in research and innovation.

German Aerospace Industries Association

(Bundesverband der Deutschen Luft- und
Raumfahrtindustrie e.V. – BDLI)

ATRIUM | Friedrichstr. 60 | 10117 Berlin | Germany
Tel. +49 30 2061 40-0 | kontakt@bdli.de