STRENGTHENING EASA FOR EUROPEAN AVIATION

Joint European Aviation Sector Position Paper

26 November 2026

A strong EASA – a strategic necessity for Europe

European aviation and the civil aeronautics industry are essential to Europe's connectivity, economic prosperity, technological leadership and international competitiveness. As President Ursula von der Leyen stated in her 2025 State of the Union address, "Europe's independence will depend on its ability to compete", reiterating in her 2026 address that "kick-starting Europe's economy is our number one priority" and stressing that "we have to be faster – all institutions".

Ensuring that the **European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** has the necessary resources and capabilities is an integral part of delivering on this political ambition[1]. EASA plays a fundamental role in ensuring aviation safety, supporting innovation, skills, regulatory harmonisation and international competitiveness. It **is an essential asset to maintain global leadership in certification and safety and to support Europe's aeronautics and aviation industry as a strategic sector** in an increasingly complex and fast-changing geopolitical context.

[1] See also European Commission, Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas, answer to Parliamentary Question E-001737/2026, 25 June 2026: "The most important challenge is to ensure that the Agency has the necessary resources to accomplish its related tasks in due time." European Parliament – Parliamentary Question; European Commission, Magda Kopczyńska, Director-General DG MOVE, *Wings of Change Europe*, 16 October 2026: "We also need strong certification capacity and a clear pathway from laboratory to market." European Commission – DG MOVE Speech.

This is fully consistent with the recommendations of the Draghi Report on 'The Future of European Competitiveness', which calls for greater European investment, stronger institutional capacity and coordinated action in strategically important sectors to close Europe's competitiveness gap and reduce its dependencies.

However, compared with other major aviation authorities, notably the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), EASA operates with significantly more limited financial and human resources in several critical areas. In the meantime, other global aviation systems, including China's, continue to develop rapidly.

This growing imbalance risks undermining aviation safety, delaying certification and rulemaking, constraining innovation and weakening Europe's influence in international aviation policy.

Europe cannot expect EASA to compete at eye level with other aviation authorities and support European aviation and safety without providing the resources necessary to fulfil its mandate effectively. Therefore, Europe must ensure that EASA has sufficient resources to fulfil its core safety mandate effectively, particularly its rulemaking responsibilities and the maintenance and modernisation of the existing regulatory framework.

The negotiations on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034) provide a critical opportunity to address this structural challenge.

Our three priorities

1. Strengthen substantially EU funding for EASA's core safety and rulemaking responsibilities, and to enhance aviation safety research

To function effectively as a safety agency and to be able to compete internationally with other safety regulators, EASA requires adequate and predictable EU funding for its core public-interest responsibilities. Priority should be given to addressing capacity gaps in rulemaking, operational safety, regulatory oversight, safety intelligence, regulatory harmonisation, and the maintenance and simplification of the regulatory framework. Such public-interest activities must not become dependent on fees charged to individual aviation stakeholders.

In this context, it is essential that EASA's mandate and activities remain firmly focused on aviation safety. Additional funding must not facilitate an expansion of EASA's remit beyond its core aviation safety mandate. Any new responsibilities should be considered only if supported by a demonstrated aviation safety need and an assessment of their resource implications.

Against this background, **the EU contribution to EASA under the next MFF should be strengthened** to address evidenced resource gaps in its core safety, rulemaking and regulatory maintenance responsibilities – especially with a view to certification readiness.

Furthermore, when it comes to **aviation safety research**, EASA requires appropriate resources to anticipate emerging safety challenges, address new technologies, including new entrants and types of operations, and develop the scientific and technical evidence needed for proportionate, risk based future regulation.

Therefore, **we call for stable, consolidated and multiannual funding for EASA's strengthened safety and rulemaking activities, safety research, regulatory preparedness, certification readiness and international cooperation activities**. Such funding should

enable EASA to *complement* existing and future European aviation research programmes, including Clean Aviation and SESAR. This will **ensure that European technology is brought to the market and deployed with no undue delay**, thereby maintaining Europe's international aviation leadership.

2. Provide greater flexibility to recruit specialised staff for its core certification activities

EASA must be able to recruit and retain the technical and operational expertise necessary to fulfil its growing responsibilities for its core certification responsibilities. Today, in this core area EASA is drastically understaffed compared to US FAA (280 FTEs versus 1400 FTEs).

EU administrative staffing constraints should not prevent EASA from recruiting additional experts for activities financed through industry fees and charges.

Staffing levels should evolve in line with workload and corresponding revenues. This additional capacity should deliver measurable improvements in certification and approval timelines, address bottlenecks and support regulatory modernisation, greater predictability while maintaining transparent and proportionate fees.

3. Strengthen Europe's international aviation leadership

EASA's global standing is a strategic European asset. Its participation in international standard-setting, regulatory cooperation and harmonisation is essential to Europe's safety performance and competitiveness across certification, Flight Standards and operational regulation.

EASA needs adequate resources to reinforce its international activities and maintain Europe's leading role in shaping global aviation safety standards.

This will also facilitate international acceptance of European certifications and approvals and reduce unnecessary regulatory divergence.

We call upon EU Transport Ministers to discuss EASA's future financing and resources needs at the Transport Council on 30 November 2026, sending a strong political signal ahead of the next MFF negotiations.

Statement on behalf of ***Aerospace, Security and Defence Industries Association of Europe*** *(ASD),* ***Airports Council International Europe*** *(ACI EUROPE),* ***Airlines for Europe*** *(A4E),* ***Aircraft Engineers International*** *(AEI),* ***Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation*** *(CANSO)* ***European Business Aviation Association*** *(EBAA),* ***European Cockpit Association*** *(ECA),* ***European Regions Airline Association*** *(ERAA),* ***European Society of Aerospace Medicine*** *(ESAM),* ***European Transport Workers' Federation*** *(ETF),* ***General Aviation Manufacturers Association*** *(Gama),* ***International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations*** *(IFATCA).*

* * *