



Commentary on the Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security

Though the European Union has had a harmonised regulatory framework for the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (herein referred to as drones) since 2019, the increasing security concerns surrounding their operation as well as their growing significance for Europe's defence capabilities necessitates a new, more coordinated approach to managing drones and counter-drone systems (CDS). To this end, on 11 February 2026 the European Commission presented the [Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security](#), with the objective of shoring up gaps and loopholes for the internal security legislation concerning drones and to further strengthen Europe's defence preparedness. This commentary breaks down the key takeaways from the Action Plan and presents the European Enterprise Alliance's (EEA) position on its expected outcomes.

Resilience

To ensure the EU's preparedness in the face of malicious drone applications, The Action Plan highlights the need for ramping up Europe's own technological capacities and boosting internal security. For the former, the Commission calls for increased funding – through the European Defence Fund and Horizon Europe, new instruments targeting start-ups and scale-ups specifically, and incentivised private investment – as well as a five-pillar framework for enhanced technological development. The pillars are as follows:

1. Mapping of civilian and military industrial capacities to identify priority areas where funds can have the maximum impact;
2. Removing obstacles that hinder the transition from research to deployment, particularly through the expansion of testing and expertise centres and by recommending voluntary performance requirements for CDS;
3. Providing clarity for the market by introducing targeted criteria for the certification and safety of these systems;
4. Ensuring the interoperability and dual-use applications of drone and counter-drone technologies;
5. Mobilising funds for the ramping up of production at scale, possibly through the upcoming Industrial Accelerator Act.

Separate from these pillars, the Action Plan also announced the formation of a drone and counter-drone Industrial Forum. This Forum would bring together companies developing drones and CDS as well as enabling technologies, such as chips manufacturers and AI developers, to expand their engagement in public-private undertakings.

For the internal security element, the Action Plan outlines the steps that need to be taken for the successful market integration of drone and counter-drone technologies. This includes a forthcoming Drone Security Package to enhance the accountability of drone operators, the usage of trusted chips in the production of drones that align with the cybersecurity requirements under the Cyber Resilience Act, and the introduction of a “EU Trusted Drone Label” for recognising reliable civilian drones. Additionally, to enhance the resilience of Europe's borders and critical infrastructure, the Commission will also plan stress tests for responding to hostile drone actions together with Member States' authorities, support the training of law enforcement, and organise a call for interest from private entities to propose solutions to hybrid threats.

Detection

The ability to detect, identify, and track drone activities is a prerequisite for effectively mitigating potential hostile actions, and the Commission is seeking to improve this. These efforts partly rely on conventional means in the EU toolbox – such as integrating data into single display systems and fostering greater information sharing among Member States – but the Action Plan also calls for innovative solutions for increased situational awareness to be explored. This includes support for EU-based development of AI solutions with dual-use applications that can be integrated into command-and-control systems, new technologies for encrypted communications, and the leveraging of 5G telecommunications networks to broaden detection capabilities.

This last element is particularly cutting-edge as it allows for the detection of both connected and non-connected drones. Provisions for its implementation have already been included in the Digital Networks Act, and the Commission will continue to support the endeavour through an Implementing Decision on harmonising spectrum availability and the coordination of live tests in Member States.

Response

Though responding to detected threats is ultimately a Member State-level responsibility, the Action Plan lays out several means in which EU-level coordination and efforts can aid in countering drone incursions. First, in recognising that the role of NATO in responding to hostile actions is limited to only conventional threats (such as missile attacks), the Commission proposes to introduce another layer of airspace security. This would instead rely on civilian and military cooperation to address the cross-border threats of low-cost drones and would involve annual exercises for countering drones on an EU-level.

Second, the Commission pledges to provide further support for the development and deployment of CDS. To this end, there will be a forthcoming Implementing Decision harmonising the rules for how telecommunications operators are able to deploy counter measures against hostile drone actions. The Commission will also work with Member States to define priority areas for investments in developing home-grown CDS with particular support for new defence actors and will propose a joint purchasing initiative to help Member States attain the technologies required for protecting their critical infrastructure. Finally, the AI Gigafactories being established as part of the Apply AI Strategy will serve a critical role in developing the required software for European command-and-control capacities.

Beyond these initiatives targeting industry capacities, the Action Plan also contains initiatives for a greater European-level involvement in coordination. These include organising Rapid Emergency Response Teams to provide cross-border support in case of hostile drone actions, supporting agencies such as Frontex in their operating of drones and CDS in border control, and establishing a common regulatory framework for CDS operation by 2030.

Readiness

Drones and CDS have already been a central pillar in recent European defence legislation, and the Action Plan strives to reinforce this trend. While efforts such as the Priority Capability Area coordination groups and procurement under the EDIP and SAFE instruments are already underway, these will be reinforced to have a maximised impact in the upcoming European Drone Defence Initiative and the Eastern Flank Watch.

In addition to the €1 billion that has already been spent on drone technologies under the European Defence Fund and its predecessors, the Commission expects an additional €200 million to be spent on drones and CDS in the coming two years. This will be further reinforced by new instruments targeting rapid innovation such as the BraveTechEU initiative, facilitated access to private capital, and the introduction of EUDIS Tech Alliances to give operators greater insights about the demands of the Member States.

Finally, the previously announced Drone Alliance with Ukraine will connect EU producers with the battlefield and industrial experience attained in the country. Through standardised certifications and secured and diversified supply chains, this cooperation would be mutually beneficial, providing Ukraine with much needed defence equipment, the EU with battle proven solutions, and both parties the opportunity to participate in joint procurement and funding ventures.

Conclusion

The EEA welcomes the *Action Plan on Drone and Counter Drone Security*, and believe that the successful implementation of its initiatives could have a significant positive impact on European industry. The five-pillar framework for ramping up technological capacities and the accompanying drone and counter-drone Industrial Forum are particularly promising, as they have the potential to highlight the gaps where European companies may find greater demand, provide funding and market entry support, and facilitate exchanges between symbiotic aspects of the sector.

We are also encouraged by the recognition for the significant role that the telecommunications and AI industries can play in protecting Europe from drone and hybrid threats, and hope that this recognition will translate into continued and substantial support for the sectors' development of technologies with dual-use applications. Furthermore, the EEA predicts that the prevalence of joint purchasing schemes, particularly with Ukraine, has the potential to provide defence operators with much needed technologies for ensuring their safety while simultaneously enabling a more dynamic market for producers.

That being said, the Action Plan is not without its flaws. Though its presented initiatives are encouraging, their potential is entirely dependent on forthcoming proposals which may lack the ambition to deliver on these promises. We also see multiple areas in which the scope of the initiatives could already be expanded: the drone and counter-drone Industrial Forum could go beyond facilitating intra-ecosystem exchanges to also inform EU-level and national authorities about the potential capacities and supply; rather than only training law enforcement and border security in leveraging available drones and CDS, efforts could be made to encourage the uptake of these technologies; and though the Action Plan does provide a comprehensive state of play for the already-expansive role of drones in EU defence policy, additional targeted policy initiatives supporting their uptake and applications would only serve to further strengthen Europe's defence preparedness.

The EEA will continue to monitor the follow-through of the promises made in the Action Plan. We urge the European Commission and other institutions to maintain a strong line of communication with voices of industry to ensure the shaping of their initiatives are carried out in a way that maximise their potential impact. It is essential that policymakers recognise that a strengthened drone and CDS industry not only serves to maintain Europe's security, but that it can also be a catalyst for competitiveness and prosperity for the EU as a whole.