

# Programme for agile and rapid defence innovation (AGILE)

2026/0078(COD) - 25/03/2026 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish the Programme for Agile and Rapid Defence Innovation (AGILE).

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: in recent years, the European Union has made substantial progress in strengthening defence research and development. The European Defence Fund (EDF) is the Union's flagship defence R&D programme and plays a central role in fostering structured, long-term and cooperative defence R&D across Europe. There is a need to enhance the EU's capacity to support rapid, high technology-readiness-level defence innovation that responds directly to the urgent capability development needs of Member States.

Despite promising defence innovations, there is a **gap between development and operational deployment**. This can slow the scaling of breakthrough solutions, limit the emergence of new defence players, and delay the translation of innovation into capabilities for armed forces. To address this specific gap, the EU Defence Industry Transformation Roadmap proposed the establishment of a programme for rapid and agile defence innovation (AGILE).

CONTENT: this proposed Regulation establishes the Programme for **agile and rapid defence innovation** (AGILE Programme) for the period from **1 January 2027 to 31 December 2027**.

The Programme aims to support the rapid innovation capacity of SMEs, including innovative start-ups and scaleups, with a view to supporting the rapid delivery of emerging and disruptive products and technologies for defence address the most recent and fast evolving challenges faced by Member States' armed forces, in particular those stemming from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, with a focus on cost-efficiency.

AGILE will:

- introduce a **more agile and responsive approach** to defence innovation support, tailored to the rapidly evolving needs of the EU's defence sector;
- adopt **simplified methodologies and processes**, including on governance, selection, evaluation and award procedure, and eligibility assessment, to enable faster decision-making and reduce administrative burden (both for applicants and for the Commission). This streamlined approach will facilitate swift support for innovative defence solutions;
- focus on **providing targeted support to single entities**, particularly SMEs, including innovative startups and scaleups, which are often at the forefront of innovation. This approach will not only simplify the application and funding process but also enable more direct and effective support for these key players in the defence innovation ecosystem. More specifically, AGILE will aim to operate with an unprecedented time-to-grant of just **four months** and for technologies to reach defence forces between **1-3 years**. It will support between 20 and 30 projects, providing up to 100% funding for all eligible costs. It will also

include a retroactive clause for companies to claim expenses incurred up to three months prior to the closing of the call for applications, to facilitate quick innovation.

### ***Monitoring***

The implementation of AGILE will be closely monitored throughout 2027, with a focus on its ability to deliver rapid, high-impact defence innovation. The Commission will carry out a targeted evaluation at the end of the implementation period to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and EU added value. The results and lessons learned could inform thinking on future EU defence innovation programmes within the context of the Commission's proposals for the Multiannual Financial Framework from 2028 onwards.

### ***Budgetary implications***

Given the current stage of the MFF 2021-2027, the availability of new funding sources is limited. Consequently, the financing of the Programme relies on internal reallocations within the existing MFF.

The total funding allocated to the Programme from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2027 is EUR 115 million, which will be financed entirely through redeployment of resources from existing programmes under the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS). It creates no additional financial burden on Member States or the EU budget, and its impact is confined to a specific segment of defence stakeholders, primarily innovative SMEs, including innovative startups and scaleups.