

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004631/25
to the Commission
Engin Eroglu (Renew)
(20 November 2025)

Subject: Aircraft carriers as possible European defence projects of common interest

On 16 October 2025, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the European defence industry programme (EDIP). This programme provides, *inter alia*, for European defence projects of common interest (EDPCI). In light of the acute threat resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and hybrid attacks against Member States, the fragmentation of the European defence industry, the lack of a single market for defence equipment, and insufficient cooperation among Member States on key capabilities and strategic enablers, EDPCI are crucial to closing capability gaps, rapidly ramping up industrial production, strengthening European cooperation, acquiring strategic enablers, establishing genuine European leadership and command structures, thereby consolidating European defence capabilities.

A particularly worrying gap in capabilities in this context is the limited and fragmented nature of European aircraft carriers compared to the requirements for sustained, large-scale power projection. France is currently the only EU Member State to have an aircraft carrier equipped with catapults (CATOBAR).

1. What is the Commission's assessment of the current capability gaps as regards aircraft carriers?
2. How does the Commission view the possibility of developing a joint European aircraft carrier as a European defence project of common interest?
3. What specific steps does the Commission intend to take to explore this possibility, e.g. through an independent study?

Submitted: 20.11.2025

Answer given by Mr Kubilius on behalf of the European Commission
(28 January 2026)

The Commission stresses the need to address EU-level defence capability gaps, as guided by Member States' priorities. As sole buyers and users of defence products, Member States provide critical input for the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space, aiming to boost the competitiveness and responsiveness of the European defence industry.

While European industrial defence initiatives have not specifically targeted aircraft carriers, several technologies and systems funded by the European Defence Fund do broadly benefit naval assets.

An aircraft carrier is a major, valuable asset. Its effective deployment requires *inter alia* (i) a doctrine and concept of use, (ii) a capable aircraft fleet, with all the relevant constraints, such as trained crews, and (iii) a supporting naval fleet, such as submarines, for security and logistical aid.

Collaborative aircraft carrier in Europe demands Member States to agree on these elements, consistent with their national priorities. This implies defining the functional and technical requirements, co-financing commitments, and a common operational approach of the naval capability.

Member States' clear and collective support is crucial for considering such a topic for potential European defence projects of common interest. Should Member States wish to pursue this ambition collectively, the Commission stands ready to support them.

The Military Mobility Package presented on 19 November 2025 ⁽¹⁾ emphasises enhancing airlift capability notably by creating a Strategic Lift Reserve, allowing civilian operators to allocate transport capacities for EU or Member State use in exceptional situations. The Commission is considering concrete measures to operationalise such Lift Reserve.

⁽¹⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4466a1dc-49d8-459f-9afa-d93c4346c26a_en?filename=JOIN_2025_846.pdf.