Drones, the EU aims for a common shield to protect skies and infrastructure

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Drones are no longer just tools for aerial filming or industrial use: increasingly, they become a threat to public safety, with hostile overflights, airspace violations, interference with airport traffic, and risks to critical infrastructure, borders, and crowded places. In this context, the European Commission has presented an action plan to counter the threats posed by drones and high-altitude balloons, with the aim of building a more coordinated response among member countries.

A common plan: prevention, detection, and intervention

The approach is clear: more cooperation between states, greater integration between civilian and military sectors, and, in parallel, the development of a European drone industry capable of remaining competitive. The document focuses primarily on internal security but complements

the work already underway in the defense sector, aiming for structured synergies between the two worlds.

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The “European shield”: tests, certifications, and industry

Among the priorities is preparing Europe for drone-related incidents. The plan proposes:

- **A new approach to technological development** and the rapid increase of industrial production.
- **Coordinated mapping** between civilian and military sectors to attract investments and promote interoperability between systems.

On the operational front, Brussels wants to strengthen anti-drone tests through:

- **A dedicated European center of excellence**.
- **A specific certification system** for counter technologies.

To support industrial growth, a **drone and counter-drone industry forum** is also planned, designed to facilitate dialogue between institutions and companies and accelerate production.

New rules and “EU Trusted Drone”

On the regulatory front, the Commission will work on a **safety package** to update civil drone rules to meet new needs. Key points include:

- **Coordinated risk assessment** along supply chains.
- Introduction of the **“EU Trusted Drone”** label to identify equipment considered safe on the European market.

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Critical infrastructure and high-altitude threats

For the protection of strategic infrastructure, Brussels intends to:

- Provide **operational guidelines** to operators.
- Launch a **pilot project** to enhance maritime surveillance.
- Support member states against high-altitude threats, including **weather balloons** from third countries.

Detection: multisensor, AI, and 5G

Timely detection of a hostile drone is the first step to stopping it. For this reason, the plan emphasizes strengthening **situational awareness**, with systems capable of distinguishing legitimate aircraft from potentially dangerous ones.

The goal is to achieve:

- **Unique airspace visualization platforms** that integrate all available data.
- In the future, a **shared platform** for incident management.

Detection will focus on a **multisensor** approach and **artificial intelligence** software, combining different technologies to track and identify flying objects. A central role is also attributed to **5G networks**, to be used for precise and real-time tracking of drones, connected or not. To accelerate adoption, the Commission will launch a **call for expressions of interest** for field tests and experiments.

Operational responses: joint procurements and annual exercises

The responsibility for interventions remains with individual countries, but the Union wants to offer concrete support through:

- **Joint procurements** to purchase and deploy anti-drone systems.
- Development of European **AI-based command and control solutions**.
- Evaluation of **common rapid response teams** to strengthen solidarity among states.

An **annual large-scale anti-drone exercise** is also planned, to test cross-border cooperation and coordination between civilian and military components.

Borders: the role of Frontex

On the border front, **Frontex** will continue to be equipped with drones and technologies dedicated to surveillance, with operational guidelines on:

- Deployment models.
- Incident management.

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Funding and next steps

The plan is part of an already initiated path and will be accompanied by European funding through instruments such as **Horizon Europe**, **European Defense Fund**, and border management programs.

In the coming months, Brussels will open discussions with member states, industry, and the European Parliament, with the idea of adapting measures to the evolution of threats and appointing **national drone security coordinators** tasked with overseeing their implementation on the ground.

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