Ready, set, AGILE

New EU funding opportunities for start-ups

25 November 2026

Bringing innovative defence technologies to market faster and making it easier for start-ups and SMEs to access the market. This is the aim of the **EU's AGILE funding programme**. It entered into force largely unnoticed on 4 November 2026 and complements existing initiatives such as the European Defence Fund *(EDF)* and the European Defence Industry Programme *(EDIP)*. A total of **EUR 115 million** is available for 2027 which eligible companies can receive subject to certain conditions, without having to raise a funding round or give up equity. AGILE aims to integrate start-ups with innovative solutions more closely into European supply chains, strengthen the defence industry and enable Europe to respond more quickly to new defence needs.

Faster from development to deployment – what is eligible for funding?

Under Regulation (EU) 2026/2387, which establishes the programme, AGILE supports in particular:

- the **rapid development of emerging and disruptive defence products**, including the components required to manufacture them. An "emerging and disruptive defence product" is an enhanced or completely new defence product that brings about a radical transformation in defence practices, including by replacing existing defence technologies or rendering them less effective or obsolete, and is expected to be fully exploitable by the end of the funded project;
- the **adaptation of civilian or dual-use technologies** for defence purposes;
- the **market introduction** and **testing** of new solutions, for example through field testing, demonstrations and cooperation with military end users; and
- **supporting measures** such as qualification and certification, access to testing and manufacturing infrastructure, skills development and networking with system integrators in the defence industry.

What do companies need to consider?

Funding is generally aimed at **SMEs**, with AGILE being particularly relevant to **start-ups and scale-ups**. To be eligible, companies must be established in **the EU or a third country associated with AGILE**, such as Ukraine, and have their executive management structures located there. To strengthen **European sovereignty**, funding also requires

that the company is not controlled by entities or states outside the eligible group of countries. This may pose challenges, particularly for start-ups with US investors. Infrastructure used for the project should generally also be located in the EU or associated third countries.

Finally, the quality and feasibility of the solution are crucial to eligibility. Particularly relevant factors are its disruptive potential, how quickly it can be put into operational use, its cost-efficiency and its specific contribution to meeting Member States' defence needs.

Although funding is generally reserved for SMEs, **larger and established defence companies** can also benefit from AGILE. The programme also aims to build and strengthen ecosystems, for example by supporting collaboration between start-ups and prime contractors, system integrators or subcontractors.

When and where can companies apply?

The Regulation provides for rapid funding with as little red tape as possible. However, companies cannot yet apply for funding for the period from **1 January to 31 December** 2027. As is usual for EU funding programmes, the European Commission will prepare a work programme to implement AGILE. Interested companies will be able to apply for funding only once it has been published and the relevant calls for proposals have been issued. Depending on the call, a short project presentation in the form of an expression of interest may initially suffice. The work programme is also intended to provide for simplified requirements for supporting documents and accelerated selection procedures.

What should companies prepare now?

Interested companies should assess at an early stage which of their solutions are suitable for funding. In particular, they should identify potential use cases and clearly set out the specific innovation and defence benefits. It is also advisable to prepare the technical, financial and corporate supporting documents required for a funding application.

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BLOMSTEIN will keep you informed of further developments. If you have any questions about AGILE, or defense and security more generally, Dr. Christopher Wolters, Dr. Katharina Weiner and Hanna Sophie Vetter and the entire team are happy to assist you.

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