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Press Release

Airbus spearheads new E2D European defence tech fund

Farnborough, United Kingdom, 21 July 2026 – At the Farnborough International Airshow, Airbus Defence and Space signed an agreement to become the anchor investor in the new E2D dual-use and defence technology growth fund. This strategic investment aims to bolster the European defence ecosystem by providing growth capital to high-tech companies across the continent, thereby strengthening European sovereignty and closing critical capability gaps.

E2D was launched in June 2026 by AVP and Earlybird, two leading European venture and growth capital firms. With a target size of €500 million, the fund represents one of the most significant Franco-German investment collaborations in the European technology sector.

“European defence faces a reality requiring scale and speed, therefore, we must actively build and expand a future tech ecosystem of suppliers and partners," said Michael Schoellhorn, CEO of Airbus Defence and Space. "Investing into E2D is adding to our internal and direct M&A steps to scale European deep-tech, keeping critical capital, talent, and intellectual property on the continent.”

The growth-stage fund targets approximately 20 companies with an average investment size of €25 million. Its focus spans critical domains including space, air, land, maritime, and subsurface, backing businesses with modern operating models and clear mission focus across both defence-native and dual-use applications. E2D has also announced its first investment in French-headquartered Alta Ares, a company developing AI-powered hardware and agnostic software for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS) missions. This follows a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between Airbus Defence and Space and Alta Ares to co-develop and integrate next-generation European counter-drone solutions into Airbus' battle management suite.

Since its establishment in 2016 in Paris, AVP has operated as an independent global investment platform dedicated to high-growth tech companies, managing more than €2.5 billion of assets. Founded in 1997, pan-European Earlybird also manages €2.5 billion, supporting early-stage companies through their growth phases with financial resources and strategic network access.

Michael Schoellhorn, CEO of Airbus Defence and Space, and Benoit Fosseprez, General Partner at AVP, sign an agreement establishing Airbus as the anchor investor in the new E2D European defence tech fund during the Farnborough Airshow. © AIRBUS - 2026

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