



Notice of Proposed Amendment 2023-106

in accordance with Article 76(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139

Ground Handling Requirements

RMT.0728

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This NPA proposes an EU regulation on ground handling and subsequent amendments to Regulations (EU) 965/2012 on air operations and (EU) 139/2014 on aerodromes. The purpose is to ensure a level-playing field for organisations providing GH services in Europe and to establish a baseline for the safety of these services.

The NPA includes a regulatory framework for a scalable management system, covering the management of safety, safety culture with a strong just culture component, minimum training standards for GH personnel based on development of competencies, a maintenance programme for the ground support equipment used, and general safety requirements for the provision of GH services. The GH regulation should rely on a continued use of industry standards and good practices and should enable their implementation on a voluntary basis. Their importance for the harmonisation and standardisation of GH operational procedures is more relevant than in any other aviation domain, therefore EASA proposes a new approach for the acceptance of industry standards used for GH services.

This NPA also includes oversight requirements for competent authorities, with a particular focus on cooperative oversight, which becomes a crucial element for an efficient oversight of pan-European GH organisations.

Amendments to Regulations (EU) 965/2012 and (EU) 139/2014 are proposed to address mutual exchange of safety-relevant information among the stakeholders involved in GH activities and enable smooth integration of the new management system elements required under the GH regulation. This NPA also presents proposed amendments to Reg. (EU) 2022/1645 (security management), to include the GH domain in its scope.

The proposed new rules are expected to provide a level-playing field in the GH domain, harmonise the provision of GH services in the EASA Member States and ensure end-to-end safety of aviation operations. The future GH rules are expected to ensure a consistent feedback loop on safety reports from authorities to organisations, a better understanding of the safety risks and assessment of mitigation measures, with the ultimate effect of improving the overall flight safety.

REGULATION(S) TO BE AMENDED

- [Regulation \(EU\) No 965/2012 \(Air OPS\)](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 139/2014 \(ADR\)](#)

ED DECISIONS TO BE AMENDED/ISSUED

ED Decisions issuing the AMC/GM to support the implementation of those Regulations

AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS

National competent authorities, ground handling service providers (GHSP), aircraft operators, aerodrome operators

WORKING METHOD(S)

Development	Impact assessment	Consultation
By EASA with external support from a GH expert group	Detailed	Public (2022): published draft rules, 1 webinar Focused (2023): EASA Advisory Bodies, GHSP, DGELG

Related documents / information

- [GH Roadmap and Concept Papers](#) supporting the decision to start RMT.0728 (conference, March 2019)
- [ToR RMT.0728](#) issued on 22.11.2019
- [Working Paper containing draft regulation, AMC&GM](#) published in May 2022
- [Website \(information\) related to the GH webinar](#) organised on 30 June 2022 as focused consultation

PLANNING MILESTONES: Opinion publication: Q4 2023

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1. About this NPA

1.1. How this regulatory material was developed

This rulemaking activity is included in the 12th edition of Volume II of the European Plan for Aviation Safety (EPAS) for 2023–2025¹ under Rulemaking Task RMT.0728.

EASA developed the regulatory material in question in line with Regulation (EU) 2018/1139² (the Basic Regulation) and the Rulemaking Procedure³, and in accordance with the objectives and working methods described in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this RMT⁴.

EASA developed the regulatory material with input from a group of ground handling experts (approximately 40 persons) representing all affected stakeholders: ground handling organisations and associations thereof, commercial and non-commercial aircraft operators and associations thereof, aerodrome operators and associations thereof, trade unions, competent authorities. Online and in-person meetings had been organised since 2019 until and including 2023, throughout the entire rulemaking process.

First consultation:

The first draft of the regulatory material was consulted between 1 June and 30 September 2022 by written consultation with the EASA Advisory Bodies, the organisations represented in the group of GH experts, and the public. A webinar in this sense was also organised on 30 June 2022⁵.

EASA received comments from interested parties, including industry, national competent authorities (NCAs), and social partners. The comments were reviewed and duly considered them in drafting the version presented in this NPA.

EASA continued to work on the draft rules with the GH expert group that has provided support and input since 2018, from the first steps of the GH Roadmap, as well as with additional experts in individual GH activities, as needed during the various phases of the rule development.

Second consultation: This focused consultation with the Advisory Bodies and the GH expert group is the last one before Opinion publication. The comments received will be considered for the preparation of the final version of the Opinion.

¹ <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/document-library/general-publications/european-plan-aviation-safety-2023-2025>

² Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency, and amending Regulations (EC) No 2111/2005, (EC) No 1008/2008, (EU) No 996/2010, (EU) No 376/2014 and Directives 2014/30/EU and 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 552/2004 and (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EEC) No 3922/91 (OJ L 212, 22.8.2018, p. 1) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1535612134845&uri=CELEX:32018R1139>).

³ EASA is bound to follow a structured rulemaking process as required by Article 115(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139. Such a process has been adopted by the EASA Management Board (MB) and is referred to as the 'Rulemaking Procedure'. See MB Decision No 01-2022 of 2 May 2022 on the procedure to be applied by EASA for the issuing of opinions, certification specifications and other detailed specifications, acceptable means of compliance and guidance material ('Rulemaking Procedure'), and repealing Management Board Decision No 18-2015 (<https://www.easa.europa.eu/the-agency/management-board/decisions/easa-mb-decision-01-2022-rulemaking-procedure-repealing-mb>).

⁴ [Terms of Reference of RMT.0728](#)

⁵ <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/newsroom-and-events/events/webinar-eu-ground-handling-regulation#group-event-materials>

1.2. How to comment on this NPA

The draft regulatory material is hereby submitted for focused consultation to the EASA Advisory Bodies and the Ground Handling expert group.

Please insert your comments in the Excel sheet provided with this NPA and submit them to ground-handling@easa.europa.eu.

The deadline for the submission of comments is **30 September 2023**.

1.3. The next steps

Following the consultation of the draft regulatory material, EASA will review all the comments received and will duly consider them in the drafting of the Opinion and the related AMC and GM.

The comments will be reviewed by EASA with the support of the ground handling expert group who have provided expertise since the beginning of RMT.0728.

Then EASA will issue an Opinion proposing a draft (EU) Ground Handling Regulation, as well as proposed amendments to Regulations (EU) No 965/2012 on air operations and (EU) No 139/2014 on aerodromes. The Opinion will be submitted to the European Commission, which shall consider its content and decide whether to issue a regulation on ground handling and the amendments to the other two EU Regulations mentioned above, as proposed in the Opinion.

Following the adoption of the delegated regulation on ground handling and the amendments of the Air Operations and Aerodrome regulations, EASA will issue a Decision with the related acceptable means of compliance (AMC) and guidance material (GM) to support the implementation of the Ground Handling Regulation and the amendments to the Air Operations and Aerodrome regulations. When issuing this Decision, EASA will also provide a summary of the comments received and information on who engaged in the process and/or provided comments on the draft AMC and GM during the consultation, how such engagement and consultation was used in rulemaking, and how the comments were considered.

2. In summary — why and what

2.1. Why we need to act — issue/rationale

Basic Regulation prerequisites

Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (The Basic Regulation, BR) contains provisions on the establishment of new requirements for ground handling. Consequently, EASA was tasked to draft the new rules for the GH domain.

According to the BR definition, ground handling means ‘any service provided at aerodromes comprising safety-related activities in the areas of ground supervision, flight dispatch and load control, passenger handling, baggage handling, freight and mail handling, apron handling of aircraft, aircraft services, fuel and oil handling, and loading of catering; including the case where aircraft operators provide those ground handling services to themselves (self-handling)’.

Art. 37 (Organisations): ‘2. Organisations responsible for the provision of ground handling services and AMS at aerodromes subject to this Regulation shall **declare** their capability, and the availability to them of the means, to discharge the responsibilities associated with the services provided in compliance with the essential requirements referred to in Article 33.’

Art. 62 (Certification, oversight and enforcement): ‘That national competent authority shall also be responsible for the oversight and enforcement tasks with respect to organisations responsible for the provision of ground handling services or AMS at that aerodrome.’

Annex VII Essential requirements for aerodromes:

‘2.1 Responsibilities of the aerodrome operator: (...)’

(f) **the aerodrome operator shall establish arrangements with** other relevant organisations to ensure continuing compliance with the essential requirements for aerodromes set out in this Annex. Those organisations include, but are not limited to, aircraft operators, ANS providers, **ground handling service providers**, AMS providers and other organisations whose activities or products may have an effect on aircraft safety; (...)’

4. Ground handling services

4.1. Responsibilities of the ground handling services provider

The provider of ground handling service is responsible for the safe operation of its activities at the aerodrome. The responsibilities of the provider are as follows:

(a) the provider shall have all the means necessary to ensure safe provision of service at the aerodrome. Those means shall include, but are not limited to, facilities, personnel, equipment and material;

(b) the provider shall **comply with the procedures contained in the aerodrome manual**, including those in relation to movements of its vehicles, equipment and personnel and the risk related to aerodrome operations in winter, at night and in adverse weather conditions;

(c) the provider shall provide the ground handling services in accordance with the procedures and instructions of the aircraft operator it serves;

(d) the provider shall ensure that manuals for the operation and maintenance of ground handling equipment are available, applied in practice and cover operation, maintenance and repair instructions, servicing information, troubleshooting and inspection procedures;

(e) the provider shall use only adequately trained and qualified personnel and shall ensure the implementation and maintenance of training and checking programmes to ensure the continuing competence of all relevant personnel;

(f) the provider shall ensure that its **personnel is physically and mentally fit to execute their functions** satisfactorily, taking into account the type of activity and in particular its potential safety and safety-related security impact.

4.2. Management systems

4.2.1. As appropriate for the type of activity undertaken and the size of the organisation, the provider shall implement and maintain a **management system** to ensure compliance with the essential requirements set out in this Annex, **manage safety risks and to aim for continuous improvement of this system**. Such system shall be **coordinated with the management system of the aerodrome operator**.

4.2.2. The provider shall establish an **occurrence reporting system** as part of the management system under point 4.2.1 in order to contribute to the aim of continuous improvement of safety. Without prejudice to other reporting obligations, the provider shall transmit all occurrences to the reporting system of the aerodrome operator, the aircraft operator and, if relevant, to that of the air traffic service provider. The occurrence reporting system shall be compliant with the applicable Union law.

4.2.3. The provider shall develop a ground handling service manual and operate in accordance with that manual. Such manual shall contain all necessary instructions, information and procedures for the service, the management system and for service personnel to perform their duties.'

EASA initiated a Ground Handling Roadmap in 2018, consisting of 3 phases:

Phase 1 – fact finding and analysis of the current situation at the time through surveys, interviews and social dialogue with the affected stakeholders (aerodrome operators, aerodrome associations, GHSP, air operators, and air operator associations).

Phase 2 – GH Roadmap and 6 Concept Papers based on an analysis of the situation in 2018 (published on the) and a consultation workshop in March 2019. More information about Phases 1 and 2 can be found on the [EASA website](#).

Phase 3 – Rulemaking. After the workshop in March 2019, EASA started the work on rulemaking task RMT.0728 'Ground Handling Requirements'. The [Terms of Reference](#), stating the issue and objectives, were published on 22 November 2019. After more than a year's pause caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, work on the ground handling requirements was resumed mid-2021 and the revised timelines for the deliverables of RMT.0728 were published in [EPAS 2022-2026](#).

2.2. Description of the issue

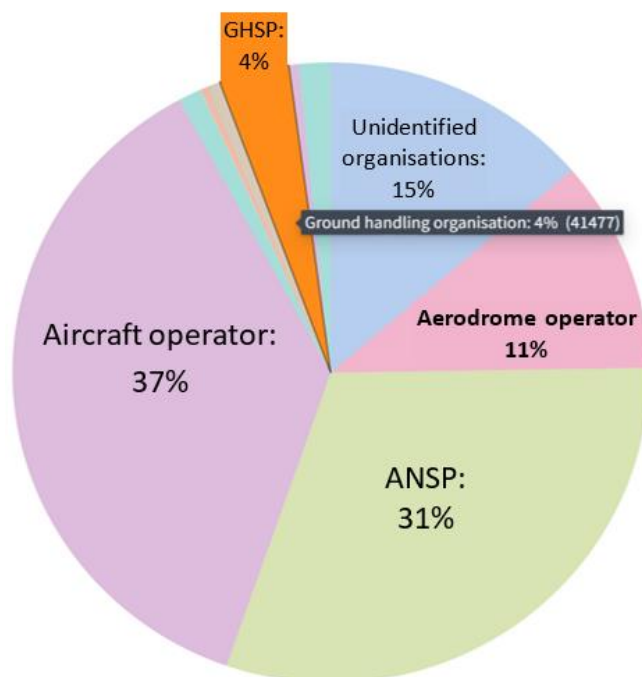
1. Safety culture and safety reporting

Based on the mandate established by the Basic Regulation that EASA shall develop safety requirements for ground handling services, and in order to have a clearer picture of the safety dimension under discussion, EASA started an analysis of the safety elements in GH activities, which were already highlighted in the safety risk portfolios published in the past 5 issues of the EPAS.

The statistics of safety reports recorded in the ECR database of the European Commission for all aviation domains since 2015 (the year when Regulation (EU) 376/2014 became applicable. This regulation applies also to GH organisations) have revealed the following generic information (see Figures 1 and 2):

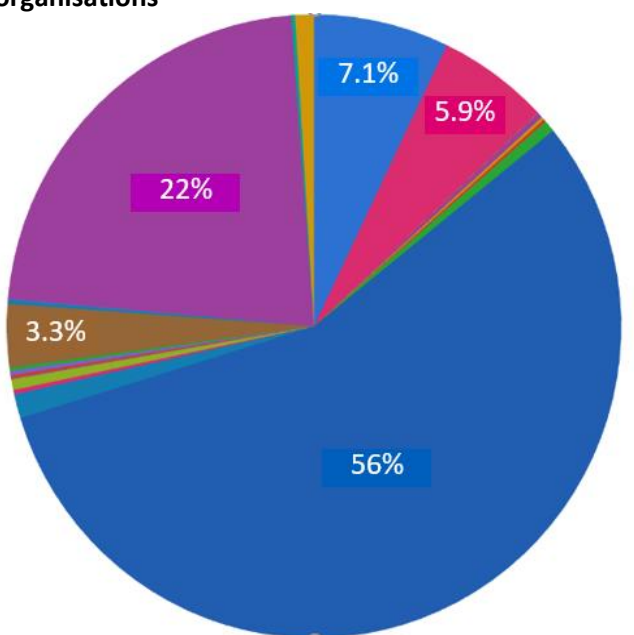
1. Only 4% of all reports can be attributed to GH organisations with certainty. Th 4% identified to be reported by GHSP are mainly fed by a few EASA MS (see Figure 2).
2. For 15% of the reports, the origin of the reporting entity could not be established and therefore remains unknown. This remains a limitation of the interpretation of these data.
3. The graph does not indicate how many self-handling aircraft operators and how many aerodrome operators providing GH services were among the reporters.

Figure 1: Reporting per type of organisation, all reports in all aviation domains since 2015:



The chart below indicates the rate of reporting in the EASA Member States, without indicated which State has the highest number of reports and which one the lowest. The imbalanced reporting ratio at EU level should be noted:

Figure 2: Reporting ratio per EASA MS, representing the 4% of reports submitted by GH organisations



Several hypotheses can be projected to explain the imbalanced reporting and the very low number of reports (4%) coming directly from GH organisations; however, the limitations highlighted in the above paragraphs should be kept in mind:

- No traceable follow-up of reporting from GH organisations. Reporting of occurrences without a follow-up action to improve safety brings no safety benefit in itself. The feedback loop from the competent authorities to the reporting GH organisation is practically inexistent and not supported by a regulatory framework. This might lead to less reporting since there are no consequences to not reporting – either positive or negative;
- Today, aircraft operators are fully responsible for the safety of GH services provided to them; this may be perceived as a responsibility of the aircraft operator first (and perhaps only), since any responsibility for the GH organisation providing the services is not identified in any aviation regulation, and less of the GH organisation;
- Insufficient reporting culture, insufficient safety culture among GH organisations;
- Lack of a just culture in the ground handling sector;
- Reports submitted by GH organisations being registered in the ECR with the competent authority as the reporting entity;
- Complicated channel of reporting, poor reporting tool, unclear/inconsistent taxonomy, multiple reporting obligations to multiple entities, all leading to the opposite of the intended purpose – no reporting instead of more reporting.

Consequences of a low safety culture do not necessarily lead to a higher number of casualties. Luckily, it is extremely rarely that ground handling occurrences lead to catastrophic events like an aircraft crash. Considering also the intense activity on the ramp and the high number of employees working in GH on ramp handling activities, the number of fatalities and serious injuries is rather low. To give credit where credit is due, Industry has been self-regulating for many years and the level of safety in

aircraft handling has significantly improved in the last 20 years. Nevertheless, casualties and serious injuries still occur in ground handling operations; safety events also still occur (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed safety review of ground handling occurrence reports), which means there is room for improvement of the current situation.

Simply put, the severity of safety occurrences i.e., the number of injuries or fatalities in GH, may not be the most appropriate indicator for the level of safety in GH operations. There are other, more appropriate indicators, and perhaps the most relevant is the number of occurrences resulting in damage to the aircraft and vehicles on the apron, which is very high. Fatalities and injuries occur as well, though not in numbers comparable to an aircraft crash.

As shown by statistics, damages to the aircraft during ground handling activities generate costs by millions of euros/dollars every year. But those damages are caused due to some errors. In reality, a high number of aircraft damages is a strong indicator of multiple other factors or causes that become visible only upon further analysis of the events leading to aircraft damage. The analysis of those errors will indicate the real cause of those damages, which could be human factors (lack of awareness, fatigue, pressure, lack of proper training, deviating from the operational procedures,) organisational causes (poor quality management, poor maintenance of equipment), and the list may go on. These are in fact the real safety issues laying behind the multi-million-dollar costs for aircraft damage.

Indicators such as the highest staff turnover in the aviation industry (turning to an annual 70% or even 100% turnover rate post-Covid with some GH organisations operating in Europe) coupled with the business urge to remain competitive and minimise the costs where possible might contribute to an increased level of safety risk to the entire flight and ground operation. Safety in aviation is as strong as its weakest link. The Covid-19 pandemic was a revealing agent, a 'litmus test' for the sustainability of the GH industry, which helped revealing the real situation in GH.

Despite the recognisable efforts of Industry to self-regulate, the desired level of standardisation of procedures and training is not yet consistently achieved. With SMS being implemented only on a voluntary basis, a minimum SMS awareness cannot be ensured. For GH organisations providing worldwide services the SMS is not alien concept; safety awareness and safety culture are well embedded in their organisations. Unfortunately, this does not always happen at a smaller level; providers of GH services at only one aerodrome or a reduced number, operating locally, which struggle to survive a strong competition, are less familiar with the SMS concept, if at all. Moreover, responsibility for the safe provision of GH services has always been with aircraft operators, as contractors of services, and less with ground handling organisations providing the ground handling services. Aircraft operators should no longer bear alone the burden of responsibility for how safely the GH organisations provide the services. The ground handling sector is as an active contributor and a key player to aviation safety, and this role should be acknowledged as such.

For more details on safety data, please see section 2.1 of Appendix 1 to this NPA, Regulatory Impact Assessment.

2. Oversight

In most of the EASA Member States today, the only regulatory framework for competent authorities to conduct any direct oversight of GH organisations is the Groundhandling Directive 96/67/EC published in 1996, which has a different scope – to regulate market access of GH organisations to

certain aerodromes. The GH Directive is differently transposed into the national legislations of the Member States. Consequently, there are different bodies responsible to verify the implementation of the GH Directive, and in some States the competent authorities responsible for safety oversight are not involved at all in this ‘monitoring’ or ‘verification’. The GH Directive was intended to regulate market access, not safety of GH activities, although in some Member States the national legislation transposing the GH Directive does cover safety of operations to some extent, in lack of more proper legal tools for safety oversight. Other Member States perform a minimum oversight indirectly, using other existing regulations for the domains with which GH has safety interfaces: the Air Operations Regulation and the Aerodrome Regulation. In another Member State, all GH organisations wanting to be granted access at an aerodrome must prove they have been accredited through an industry auditing programme for conformance with industry standards.

Member States also use the provisions of Regulations (EU) 965/2012 on air operations and (EU) 139/2014 on aerodromes to conduct an indirect oversight of GH activities through the requirements on contracted services applicable to aircraft operators and respectively aerodrome operators.

The audits and inspections performed mostly by aircraft operators under the applicable requirements of the Air Operations Regulation and several also by aerodrome operators under the Aerodrome Regulation or, as the case may be, national implementation of the GH Directive, aim at achieving and maintaining an acceptable level of safety of the ground handling services. However, the efficiency of those audits can be improved, as evidence shows some extreme (but not singular) cases of large GH organisations spending 178 days a year in audits (over 1/3 of a year), whose results are 80% identical with each other and not able to show any new safety items that the GH organisation is not already aware of via its internal audits.

In conclusion:

1. There is no harmonised oversight of GH activities and GH organisations across the EASA Member States.
2. There is no minimum level of safety in GH, as the SMS is not mandatory and organisations apply an SMS only on a voluntary basis. The level of safety estimated from submitted reports may be inaccurate, as the reporting culture, safety culture and accuracy of reporting has not been assessed consistently and there is no feedback loop for reporting coming from GH organisations.
3. The minimum level of training for GH personnel is not ensured and not standardised except for organisations that apply industry standards, and it is verified only under the contractual conditions with the aircraft operators. Compliance with the training elements included in the Aerodrome regulation is verified by the aerodrome operator, and this is the only training standardised at EU level. ensured,
4. There is a high number of industry audits performed yearly to a GH organisation. This has been confirmed by large organisations and even aircraft operators on many occasions in conferences and during meetings with the expert group supporting EASA in the development of the draft rules. Out of 100 stations, an average of 625 external customers, authorities, aerodrome operators, etc. the audits conducted in a year result in a little less than 5,000 man/hour. In other words, any GH service provider is subject to more than 6 audits per year per station, i.e., one every two months, generating a non-productive time requirement of around 50 man/hours⁶.

⁶ Data provided by the ground handling experts who supported EASA in the development of the draft GH rules of RMT.0728.

For all the reasons identified above, it is considered that a regulatory framework is necessary to ensure the implementation of a scalable SMS for all organisations providing GH services, to support organisations to implement and foster a safety culture, to apply a training programme that aims at developing adequate competencies in personnel, and to establish the ground for a future risk-based oversight of GH services and organisations.

2.3. Who is affected by the issue

The affected stakeholders are as follows:

1. **Ground handling service providers (GHSP)** providing services at aerodromes that are covered by the Basic Regulation. These could be either large organisations providing a wide variety of GH services or smaller organisations (of various business types) providing only one or a reduced number of GH services. The range of GH activities and organisations providing GH services that are proposed to be covered by the GH Regulation is detailed in the draft Cover Regulation. Those organisations will have to submit a declaration to their competent authority, by which they commit to discharge the responsibility for the safe provision of GH services.

As an additional but necessary clarification, GH organisations providing services in more than one Member State and having a principal place of business in a non-EASA State are more affected than the other GH organisations. Please see Section 2.5, particularly points 9 and 17 for more details.

2. **Aircraft operators, both those providing self-handling and those not providing self-handling, to a different extent.** The Basic Regulation includes aircraft operators performing self-handling in the scope of the ground regulation. This means that those aircraft operators are also subject to compliance with the future GH Regulation. To keep the rules proportional, only self-handling CAT operators of complex-motor-powered aeroplanes are proposed to be included in the scope of the GH regulation (see Section 2.6 for more details). Aircraft operators performing self-handling are not expected to duplicate their management system, but only integrate the new GH elements for compliance with the GH Regulation into their existing management system.

The aircraft operators that do not provide self-handling will also be affected but to a different extent.

As per Annex VII Essential Requirements for aerodromes to the Basic Regulation (pt. 4.1.(c)), the GH organisation must provide services in accordance with the aircraft operators' procedures and instructions. Not all aircraft operators are required to develop such procedures according to the current Air Ops Regulation: for example, NCO operators (non-commercial operations with other-than complex motor-powered aircraft) are not required to have an operations manual or ground handling procedures. This remains unchanged, but in the case when the GH organisation does not have access to the GH instructions of the aircraft operator, it will apply its own operational procedures. The same is expected to happen when the aircraft operators use the GH services of a provider at an aerodrome on an ad-hoc basis or without a contract. Although the ultimate responsibility for the aircraft safety remains with the aircraft operator, the responsibility for the safety of the GH service provided will have to be clearly defined and allocated to the right stakeholder.

3. **Aerodrome operators.** Today there are many aerodrome operators that also provide GH services. They will be affected by the new GH rules as well. Like in the case of aircraft operators performing self-handling, those aerodrome operators performing GH activities will not have to duplicate the already existing elements of their management system, but only to integrate the new GH elements into the existing structures.

In addition, as per BR Annex VII Essential Requirements for aerodromes (pt. 4.1.(b)), the GH organisation will have to comply with the procedures contained in the aerodrome manual, including those related to movements of its vehicles, equipment and personnel, as well as the risk related to aerodrome operations in winter, at night and in adverse weather conditions and training on specific activities (e.g., foreign object debris, driving of vehicles, etc.). The future GH requirements will be aligned with the aerodrome requirements, and clear lines of responsibilities will be drawn in this area as well. Also in this case, the GH requirements will ensure an interface between the GHSP and the aerodrome operator, to avoid duplications and confusions as to who is responsible for what.

4. **Competent authorities.** The competent authorities apply a national system of oversight and a cooperative oversight system for the GH organisations providing services under the oversight of more than one competent authority, in more than one Member State. The proposed regulation includes provisions for competent authorities that will standardise the oversight of the GH organisations at EU aerodromes. Competent authorities will have to train their inspectors to perform GH oversight, develop adequate procedures, apply an oversight planning cycle, and ensure that all the declarations from GHSP are correctly and timely reflected in the future Repository of information (per Article 74 of the Basic Regulation).

2.4. What we want to achieve — objectives

The overall objectives of the EASA system are defined in Article 1 of the Basic Regulation. The regulatory material presented here is expected to contribute to achieving these overall objectives by addressing the issues described in Section 2.1.

The specific objectives of this proposal are to:

- establish a level-playing field for the provision of GH services and organisations providing them at EU aerodromes within the scope of the Basic Regulation;
- ensure a minimum level of safety for GH activities by establishing SMS requirements and a management system for organisations providing GH services;
- provide a legal framework to support GH organisations in developing and fostering a safety culture;
- enable the development of effective interfaces for safety risk mitigations arising from GH activities by GH organisations, aircraft operators and aerodrome operators, including the exchange of safety-relevant information;
- ensure minimum training standards for GH personnel, focused on their continued competence;
- reduce the number of audits to GH organisations currently performed by aircraft operators under the current OPS requirements on contracted activities;

- establish a system for competent authorities to perform oversight of GH organisations and their activities, with particular focus on cooperative oversight and provide a ground for a future risk-based oversight.

While the drivers for any action in this context remain safety and level playing field, the efficiency gains would undoubtedly be advantageous. In a risk-based oversight environment, measurable safety improvements are automatically followed by a reduction of oversight pressure. An increase of trust in the other organisations' management system would bring efficiency gains that will benefit all organisations involved in GH activities.

Moreover, extending the concept of an integrated management system to the GH sector aims at enhancing the confidence in GH organisations as equal partners in the aviation safety chain.

At the same time, putting the GH operations on the European safety map helps to give proper recognition to the importance of the GH domain in the broader safety picture in aviation.

2.5. What were the stakeholders' views on the first draft published for consultation

During the webinar organised on 30 June 2022 on the first draft regulation, EASA received approx. 200 questions and prepared answers with the intention to publish them as FAQ. However, upon further work on the first draft and to avoid confusions, it was decided not to publish the FAQ because the answers no longer corresponded to the updated text that was prepared for the second consultation.

EASA also received approx. 1000 comments on the first draft rules published in 2022 from all the stakeholders affected by the proposal: GH organisations – small and large –, a GH association (ASA) representing the largest GH organisations in Europe and worldwide but also smaller GH organisations, aircraft operators, associations of aircraft operators, both commercial and non-commercial (IATA, ERA, IBAC), workers' federation (ETF), aviation sector representation (FNAM/CSAE), aerodrome operators, aerodrome operator association (ACI), and competent authorities.

All comments were reviewed and considered during the rule drafting, to improve the first published version.

The stakeholders' major comments submitted during the public consultation in 2022 can be summarised as listed below. Most of the comments are addressed in the proposed rules. The remaining open comments are expected to be addressed once the implementation of the GH Regulation begins and the system starts to settle down and the affected stakeholders gain more experience with the new regulation.

Details on the proposed solutions can be found in Section 2.6 'How we want to achieve it'.

1. Commentators showed significant support of the following elements of the draft GH Regulation:

- The total system approach and integration of GH in the aviation safety chain.
- Formal recognition of GH as a safety-critical domain in aviation.
- Introduction of SMS requirements for GHSP.
- Ensuring a level playing field and a minimum safety level in the GH domain.
- Introducing a regulatory framework for the development and fostering of a safety culture within GH organisations.

- Significance and introduction in the rules of interfaces between aerodromes, aircraft operators and GH organisations.
- Equal treatment in sharing safety relevant information and data between GH organisations, aircraft operators and aerodrome operators.
- Requirements for oversight will ensure a consistent approach to a minimum level of safety in GH.
- Focus on the safety culture, with a transparent communication, the just culture component and training of personnel will improve the reporting culture of GHSP.
- Alignment of the GH Regulation with the other existing EU aviation regulations (ADR and Air Ops).

2. Stakeholders also expressed the following major concerns:

- Concerns raised by Industry:
 - Competent authority inspectors may not be experienced enough to perform GH audits and good and experienced inspectors are hard to find. It takes time to build competency of personnel.
 - Multiple declarations submitted to many competent authorities by the same GH organisation operating in many EU Member States are overly burdensome, administratively bureaucratic and inefficient;
 - New requirements for oversight will be costly and will require many resources.
 - Language proficiency proposed rule is too prescriptive, not performance-based, not adequate to the GH needs.
 - Which operational procedures take precedence if they are overlapping or contradicting: the aerodrome operator's, the aircraft operator's, or the GHSP's?
 - The operational requirements are too granular and too prescriptive. This would hinder the application of industry standards, which are updated every year with lessons learned from daily operations and new technologies. This concern was raised particularly by large GH organisations and aircraft operators.
- Concerns raised by GH organisations:
 - The new regulation will bring more audits for GH organisations, with the additional layer of oversight from competent authorities in an industry already suffocated by audits (which, to some organisations, can take up to 178 days/year).
 - Multiple declarations submitted by a pan-European GH organisation to many competent authorities will be overly burdensome as a bureaucratic measure.
 - Competent authority oversight results may not be recognised by aircraft operators.
 - Difficult to have harmonised approach to audits by many competent authorities to the same GH organisation. Without a perfect cooperative oversight, the multiple declaration system will not work.
 - Sharing of safety relevant information will not work if this is required only from GHSP. Similar rules must exist also for aircraft operators and aerodrome operators.

- Concerns raised by competent authorities:
 - Impossibility to perform oversight to all GH organisations in a State within an oversight cycle.
 - Difficulty to implement cooperative oversight, ensure the same interpretation of the rules, agree on findings on the same issue raised on multiple aerodromes where a pan-European GH organisations provides services. The responsibilities of competent authorities involved in the oversight of the same pan-European GH organisation should be very clearly identified to avoid overlapping and duplication of audit scope.

3. Stakeholders' main recommendations and suggestions for improvement of the first proposal can be summarised as follows:

EASA should:

- Aim at achieving global standards in GH operations.
- Ensure the rules do not provide the possibility for competent authorities to introduce national differences in their oversight approach. Aim for a harmonised implementation of the regulation and oversight.
- Solve the administrative burden of multiple declarations submitted by pan-European GHSP to many competent authorities and being subject to the same oversight by many competent authorities.
- Standardise the audits of competent authorities to ensure harmonisation of GH operations.
- Ensure clear and consistent responsibilities among aircraft operators, GHSP and aerodrome operators.
- Apply a performance-based approach.
- Focus on defining the safety objectives of the rules (the 'what') and leave the method to achieve them (the 'how') to the Industry.
- Enable application by Industry of industry standards and good practices to demonstrate compliance with the rules.
- Accountability for certain GH services more clearly expressed.
- Declarations required also by aerodrome operators providing GH services.
- Include more from the ICAO Doc 10121 (Ground Handling Manual) into the GH rules.
- Align the rules more with the recognised industry standards.
- Amend R.139/2014 (ADR) and R.965/2012 (OPS) for equal treatment in sharing safety data.
- Clarify the regulatory regime for aircraft operators using non-complex aircraft and performing self-handling.
- Establish a reasonable transition period.
- Have a pragmatic approach, even though it sometimes means that the GH Regulation may not always be aligned with the other EU regulations with which it interacts.
- Ensure that competent authorities consider audits performed by Industry in their oversight to show compliance with the GH Regulation.

- Ensure that the results of competent authority oversight are made known to the aircraft operators and aerodrome operators, to help reducing the number of audits performed by them to GH organisations.

2.6. How we want to achieve it — overview of the proposed new (EU) GH Regulation

The draft GH Regulation is structured as follows:

- *Cover Regulation*, which includes several articles that define the scope and the main responsibilities of GH organisations and competent authorities.
- *Annex I (Part-GH.DEF)*, which contains the definitions of terms used in the Regulation.
- *Annex II (Part-ARGH)*, which contains the authority requirements. The content of this Annex has been aligned, wherever feasible, with the other existing EU aviation regulations.
- *Annex III (Part-ORGH)*, which contains the organisational requirements for GH organisations. Also, some parts of this Annex have been aligned with the other existing EU regulations, to ensure a smooth integration of the new GH elements into the already existing management systems of other organisations, such as aircraft operators or aerodrome operators. This Annex includes the management system requirements as an overarching pillar, to cover multiple subsystems:
 - Safety management, safety culture, and safety reporting,
 - Documentation,
 - Declaration and management of changes,
 - Training of GH personnel, and
 - Ground Support Equipment (GSE) and the GSE maintenance programme.
- *Annex IV (Part GH.OPS)*, which contains the operational requirements for the GH activities at very high level, to allow GH organisations to develop their own standard operational procedures for the GH services that they provide.

EASA is proposing several solutions to achieve the objectives indicated in Section 2.4 and address the main issues highlighted in phases 1 and 2 of the GH Roadmap, which were confirmed through the comments on the first draft published in 2022. Alignment with the existing EU regulation has been sought as much as possible and wherever feasible. ICAO Doc 10121 Ground Handling Manual and the industry standards and good practices have also been used for the draft regulatory material:

1. The **regulation scope** is clarified in Article 1, which identifies the organisations to which the GH Regulation will apply and the range of GH activities within the scope. The list of GH activities included in the scope is aligned with the list of GH activities included in the Annex to the GH Directive 96/67/EC, except for the operations that are already covered by other current regulations.
2. Besides the typical **definitions of terms**, concepts, operations, and processes specific to GH operations, **new concepts** are introduced in the GH Regulation, the Air Ops and the ADR Regulations, with the purpose to: (1) enable organisations that hold more than one certificate or declarations under the Basic Regulation scope to have an integrated management system, thus avoiding duplications and rendering the management of the organisations more efficient; (2) extend the scope of self-handling from one aircraft operator to the entire group of aircraft

operators that belong to the same business group; (3) give a name, for easier reference and clarity ('pan-European GH organisations') to those GH organisations providing services in more than one Member States or which is subject to oversight by more than one competent authority when it provides services in a Member State that appoints more than one competent authority.

3. The terms used throughout the draft GH regulation keep consistency with the following regulations and standards, in this order: (1) other EU aviation regulations, including the Basic Regulation; (2) other EU regulations covering a different scope (e.g., Regulation (EU) No 1107/2006 on the rights of disabled passengers and persons with reduced mobility); (3) ICAO; (4) Industry standards.
4. Some **exemptions** are proposed to **keep the rules proportional**. While the Basic Regulation definition establishes the scope of the GH Regulation, it has been considered that non-commercial operators (performing operations in accordance with Part-NCC and Part-NCO of Regulation (EU) 965/2012) and specialised operators (performing operations in accordance with Part-SPO or Part-NCO), when performing self-handling, should be exempted from the scope of the GH Regulation. The same exemption is proposed also for commercial air transport (CAT) operators with other-than-complex motor-powered aircraft when performing self-handling. ORO.GEN.110(e) and (f) require operators to have instructions and procedures for ground operations and to ensure personnel involved in ground operations are properly trained. Furthermore, ground handling training for pilots is covered in AMC1 ORO.FC.120, AMC3 ORO.FC.120(a)(2) for SPO and NCC, and recurrent training is in AMC1 ORO.FC.130, AMC1 ORO.FC.220(a)(1)(i) for CAT operations. For non-commercial and SPO operations, as well as for CAT operations with other-than-complex motor-powered aircraft, the existing requirements of Reg. (EU) 965/2012 are deemed sufficient for compliance with the GH regulation. EASA has discussed this proposal with the expert group and also internally with the Air Ops experts, and it has been considered that the safety of the GH activities is sufficiently covered when those operators apply the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 concerning the training of their personnel and the development and application of operational procedures for ground handling. The proposed exemptions are detailed in Article 3 of the draft GH Regulation.

Another series of exemptions covers a range of activities and organisations that perform those activities, which are already regulated by other regulations. For example, oil maintenance, which is covered by Regulation (EU) 1321/2014; flight dispatcher tasks, which are covered by the Air Ops Regulation; or aircraft marshalling, which is covered by the ADR Regulation. It is proposed that organisations performing these activities are exempted from compliance with the GH Regulation. For organisations that provide both aircraft marshalling and ground handling services, the GH regulation and the proposed amendment to Regulation (EU) 139/2014 enable them to fill in only one declaration instead of two: they should duly specify the provision of apron management services on the GH declaration. All the other requirements for the provision of AMS remain applicable. EASA has performed a cross-analysis between the AMS requirements and the GH proposed rules to ensure they are compatible and do not overlap to create unnecessary duplications.

5. Ensure a **minimum level of safety** to be achieved by all GH organisations. This is reflected in a proposed set of rules that are scalable to the size and complexity of an organisation and allow an organic growth from simple to complex. This approach considers the lessons learned from other

aviation domains, which have proven that it is more complicated to adjust a more complex regulatory system to simpler, smaller, less complex organisations than the other way around. Moreover, the safety risk is not the same for any type of GH activity and for any type of GH organisation. These differences should be easily captured and reflected in a scalable SMS. Therefore, the purpose of this approach is to enable organisations providing only one type of GH service or GH services that do not have a high safety risk to implement an SMS that addresses the risk of their activities in a manageable, reasonable way. The main elements of a GH organisation's management system (i.e., the mandatory minimum elements) are included in implementing rules, and additional the details that allow wider and more complex organisation are proposed at AMC level.

There is no proposal to define what a complex or a non-complex organisation is. Defining this concept has proven, more than once, to be a conundrum in other aviation domains in the past years, both for organisations and for competent authorities. It is impossible to define this within clear boundaries and establish a single template to measure all the possible variants. This is a good lesson learned and a mistake not to be repeated. It should be the task of an organisation, under its declaration system, to prove to its competent authority why it regards itself as a non-complex organisation. The different approach in the rules between a complex and a non-complex organisation is found mainly in the less demanding requirements on the allocation of more than one function to the same person in smaller, non-complex organisations. The scalability of the management system and SMS, the number of airport covered and types of GH services provided, the contracts with third-party service providers – these are criteria for an organisation to clearly indicate whether it is complex or not.

Perhaps an even more important aspect that had to be addressed was the safety culture. The low number of reports received on GH occurrences from GH organisations might indicate a low level of safety culture. This is now included in the requirements, with its important just culture component, as part of the mandatory SMS. More details about how an organisation can implement and grow the safety culture within its organisation will be added at GM level. EASA is aware that safety culture cannot be mandated through the rules. That is why the requirement is kept to a minimum, as a necessary legal hook, but the effective implementation of the safety culture will be done at practical level.

On the safety culture topic, EASA is currently working on a **general method to assess the safety culture of an organisation**. Although initiated as a project in another domain, its outcome can be used in any other aviation organisation and will certainly be transposed in the GH domain.

6. Provide a legal ground for **exchanging relevant safety information** and communication to help **build interfaces** in operation between the main stakeholders involved: GH organisations, aircraft operators, and aerodrome operators. The purpose of sharing safety relevant information is to ensure a common approach when addressing the safety risks of the interfaces in GH operations, beyond the occurrence reporting obligations. This important aspect is also meant to ensure that sharing of relevant safety information is done not only in one direction – from GH organisations to aircraft operators and aerodromes, but also in both directions, as GH organisations can also benefit from safety information coming from the other two organisations to improve safety in its own activities. This aspect is proposed to be covered by several rules: the management system

requirement for GH organisations, the management of changes, the corrective actions to findings, safety reporting.

Equivalent amendments to the Air Ops Regulation and the ADR Regulation are also proposed to mirror the GH provision.

7. **Reduce the number and scope of audits** to GH organisations to the minimum necessary.

A complex and multi-sided approach is proposed to achieve this objective:

- a. Firstly, the competent authority takes over the responsibility for, and performs the oversight of GH organisations in a coordinated and systematic way. The oversight activities will ensure that the minimum level of safety of the GH organisations, as required by the GH regulation, is achieved, so that aircraft operators would no longer have to duplicate the same audits to those GH organisations.
- b. Secondly, the Air Ops rules on contracted activities are proposed to be clarified: the rule with its AMC and GM should cater for a proportionate auditing by air operators of their third-party service providers: the number of audits to GH organisations that declare their responsibility for the provision of GH services in compliance with the new GH regulation should be reduced; air operators should also consider the results of the oversight done by the competent authority over those GH organisations and rather adopt a risk-based approach towards those organisations. They should give more credit to the management system and capacity of the declared GH organisations to manage their own safety risks and reduce wither the scope or the frequency of their audits.
- c. Thirdly, it is proposed that if GH organisations apply recognised industry standards and best practices to demonstrate compliance with the regulation, the scope of oversight and the frequency of their audits can be adjusted in a risk-based approach.

The proposed approach will, most likely, not produce the expected results in the first years after the GH regulation becomes applicable. It is, however, estimated that it will reduce the number of audits to GH organisations in the long run, once the system is established, it has been subject to a certain routine, and has managed to instil trust in the stakeholders benefitting from its results. This approach also aims at creating the ground for competent authorities to build sufficient data for a future risk-based oversight.

8. EASA proposes a **new approach towards the use of industry standards** to comply with the GH regulation, mostly addressing the operational procedures. A new implementing rule in the authority requirements (Annex II to the draft GH Regulation) is proposed to establish the legal ground for EASA and the competent authorities to work together in a process to validate (i.e., accept) the use of those industry standards that ensure compliance with the GH Regulation and meet certain quality criteria. Through this process, EASA ensures that the content of those industry standards is being evaluated on a regular basis in a common process involving the Member States, and the result of this assessment is valid for all the 31 EASA States. This way, competent authorities no longer need to focus on assessing the content of those industry standards every time an organisation uses them, but rather focus on how they are being implemented. New quality criteria for a 'good' industry standards are detailed in the rules as well. This new approach towards the acceptance of the use of many industry standards applied today in the GH industry and covering most GH activities considers in fact an element of the preamble

to the Basic Regulation: '[...] Use should be made of recognised industry standards and practices, where it has been found that they ensure compliance with the essential requirements set out in this Regulation'.

Certain industry standards are already recognised by an official standardisation body, such as the EN standards for the design and operation of ground support equipment, and they are published in the Official Journal. For such recognised industry standards, the process of evaluation should be minimum and only check that those standards address the scope of the implementing rules.

GH is not a new aviation sector; it is as old (or as young) as the entire aviation domain and it has grown together with the rest of aviation sectors. But because it was never regulated in a consistent manner before, it had to self-regulate somehow. And it did: the absence of regulations led to the development of industry standards and good practices. A tremendous body of knowledge and good experience has been accumulated on ground handling in the past 100 years. That is why the GH regulation cannot come up with something completely new, and it does not propose to reinvent the wheel. All existing body of knowledge must be acknowledged, put to good use, and this is the intent with the new approach towards industry standards and good practices in the GH domain, which practically cover almost every aspect of the GH activities.

The industry standards will not become mandatory to implement by the entire industry. The process of recognising the added value of adopting and applying industry standards, when this simplifies and harmonises the way in which 'things are being done safely', is expected to come from Industry itself. Adopting industry standards remains a voluntary decision for each organisation. GH organisations and aircraft operators that apply industry standards today may continue to do so in the future. Likewise, aircraft operators and GH organisations that use their own operational procedures may continue to apply them with the future GH regulation. This approach enables the necessary flexibility in compliance with the implementing rules.

EASA does not intend to refer to certain industry standards in the implementing rules because those standards and good practices are being updated on a frequent basis, taking stock of daily experience, lessons learned, safety occurrences. The Industry should always apply the latest update of those standards and the rules should enable that rather than including a static reference that needs to be updated every year or every 2 years. EASA cannot keep pace with making such frequent changes to its AMCs and also does not have access to the whole amount of expertise that the Industry possesses for the development and maintenance of those industry standards and good practices. At the same time, new industry standards and good practices may be developed in the future as well, and the rules should be drafted so as to accept their use rather fast.

- 9. The most important achievement of this approach is the harmonisation (standardisation) of operational procedures for GH activities across the EASA Member States.** Of course, this will not remove the responsibility of competent authorities to perform the oversight, but it might help them to decide on the amount of scrutiny they wish to put during their oversight and possibly reduce the frequency of their audits or the scope.

ARGH.OVS.305(c) - Competent authorities have full freedom to decide whether they wish to take into account, for oversight scope or frequency, the fact that an organisation uses industry standards and good practices to comply with the implementing rules. The relevant point in this

approach is that the authority first *assesses* whether the use of industry standards by the organisation subject to oversight is relevant for the scope of its oversight, and *then decides* what to do with that information and whether to adapt the scope or frequency of its oversight based on this information or not. That is why the wording ‘shall *take into account*’ has been chosen instead of a stronger requirement such as ‘the competent authority shall *adapt* the scope or frequency of its oversight’: the second wording would not offer any option to choose (‘shall *adapt*’); the first one does (‘shall *take into account*’).

A mirroring requirement has been proposed for organisations (ORGH.GEN.125) to specify that the use of industry standards to ensure compliance with the GH Regulation is not mandatory for all organisations, but voluntary. When an organisation decides to use industry standards, it has to ensure that those standards comply with the quality criteria described in ARGH.OVS.310.

10. **Identification of interfaces** (i.e., the common elements where the activities and/or responsibilities of the three stakeholders above overlap or complement each other) between the main stakeholders involved in GH activities: the GH organisation, the aircraft operator, and the aerodrome operator. This part relies on the material provided by ICAO Doc 10121 Ground Handling Manual and on the input from the GH experts who provided support to EASA during the entire GH Roadmap. The implementing rule addressing the interfaces is included in Annex IV, as the interfaces occur at the level of operations. The majority of the material to support its implementation is captured at AMC and GM level. Several other implementing rules also refer to the development of interfaces, such as the management system general requirement of ORGH.GEN.200 or the safety reporting system, to enable sharing of safety relevant information.

This requirement is also mirrored in the proposed amendments to the other two regulations – Air Ops and Aerodromes.

11. EASA proposes, under the **personnel requirements**, a minimum number of nominated persons for the key safety functions in a GH organisation: safety management, training of GH personnel, and operations. Several other relevant functions are identified, which are kept flexible for organisations to fill in, depending on their complexity: compliance monitoring, safety performance at each aerodrome, ground support equipment (GSE) management and maintenance, supervisory functions.
12. The **declaration** requirements establish a start-and-sign process that does not require any prior approval to start operation. Several elements that the GH organisation should consider prior to starting operation are also provided. The declaration requirement is aligned with the rule detailing the management of changes within the GH organisation.

For GH organisations that are already operating at the time when the GH Regulation becomes applicable, the conditions to comply with the declaration requirement will be established differently, in an Article of the GH Regulation.

The declaration form contains 2 parts: the introductory part, which contains general information about the GH organisation as a whole, and an annex that should be filled in separately for each aerodrome where the GH organisation provides services; the purpose of the second part is to inform the competent authority briefly of the GH services provided at each airport, the GSE used, and the contact details of the responsible person. All structured in an easy-to-fill, easy-to-read format.

Details about to whom a GH organisation should declare are included in the implementing rule on competent authority (**ORGH.GEN.105**). **It should be highlighted that the proposal does not ensure the same facilities for pan-European GH organisations whose principal place of business is not registered in an EASA Member State as for pan-European GH organisations whose principal place of business is registered in an EASA Member State. Please see also point 17 on cooperative oversight.**

13. The essential requirement related to the **ground handling services manual (or ground operations manual (GOM))**, as is the consecrated term used by Industry) is further developed in the proposed new rules. The GOM, as part of the organisation's documentation system, can be one manual or a set of manuals and procedures that relate to each other. Aircraft operators and aerodrome operators have the flexibility to include the GH new elements in their manuals or keep the GOM as a separate document. The proper name to be used in the GH Regulation to identify the manual of a GH organisation has also been discussed: on the one hand, the term 'ground operations' in 'ground operations manual' might be confused with the 'ground operations training' of flight crew. On the other hand, 'ground operations manual' and its acronym (GOM) are broadly used by industry.
14. The proposed **training requirements** are based on the principle of developing people's competencies, adjusted to specific GH roles, and are expected to improve the regularity and compliance with the established training programme within the GH industry. The main types and general structure of the training programme and are included at implementing rule level, and the content at AMC level; several GMs are proposed to support organisations to develop and assess people's competencies using a competency framework. The proposal does not include a full competency-based training and assessment (CBTA) programme for each of the main safety GH roles. This complex project requires dedicated time and expertise, and will be developed by EASA together with the GH experts from Industry and competent authorities as further AMC and GM or possibly even as a manual, outside the regulatory framework, and gradually implemented, much considering the model of the dangerous goods CBTA programme developed and implemented in the past years. Any project in this sense developed in the future by Industry or ICAO will be considered for this task.

A new requirement is proposed to support mobility of personnel across organisations or countries, training recognition across organisations, and reduce the training costs upon re-training of a new employee that proves to already have the necessary competencies from the previous employment. This requirement states that the GH organisation must provide the employee with a copy of their training records, upon request. The person is then free to convey this information to their new employer.

Additional elements at AMC level, to address the specific knowledge components for the main safety-relevant GH roles, aligned with the industry standards, are expected to further harmonise the training in GH and facilitate the mobility of persons and harmonisation of training.

15. The new requirement for **language proficiency** has been moved to the training requirements and much reduced compared to the first proposal, following the numerous comments on this topic; it has been adjusted following a more performance-based approach. The proposed rule requires English knowledge for the key GH roles that have regular interaction with the flight crew and whose lack of proficiency can be detrimental to safety: push-back/towing personnel, turnaround

coordinator, de-icing/anti-icing personnel. The GH organisation will be the one to determine the required level of proficiency in the other languages used within its organisation, as this may differ significantly even within one organisation, depending on the number of countries and languages spoken in those countries where it operates.

16. The proposed requirements on the **ground support equipment (GSE)** aim at establishing minimum safety rules regarding the operation and maintenance of GSE. New implementing rules propose a list of GSE included in the scope of the GH Regulation and the possibility for several GH organisations to ‘pool’ the GSE at an aerodrome. The proposed rules are technology agnostic, meaning that they allow innovations and a smooth adoption of new technologies, while they also promote an environmentally friendly approach towards the choice of GSE.
17. The proposed **operational requirements** in Annex IV are kept at a general level. This is intentional, so that GH organisations and aircraft operators can develop and implement their own standard operational procedures to cover their safety risks, capacity, services, fleet, variations, and operational context appropriately and efficiently. EASA does not intend to create a parallel set of operational procedures to the existing industry standards, which were developed and are yearly updated with the expertise of hundreds of worldwide experts. Moreover, the EASA material could never keep up with the frequency with which Industry is updating its operational procedures taking into account the good industry practices, lessons learned from daily operations and new technologies.

The proposed rules in Annex IV related to the operational requirements clarify the responsibilities of the GH organisation for all the GH activities, to support a better development of interfaces for the operations where other stakeholders (aircraft operators and/or aerodrome operators) are involved. However, it needs to be clarified that not all situations can be covered by the regulation. It is the responsibility of the stakeholders involved to identify those interfaces and sometimes even decide who is responsible for what, taking into account the applicable requirements and the operation under analysis. For example, as a general rule, the draft regulation states that the GH organisation is responsible for the maintenance of the GSE it uses. However, if the aerodrome operator applies a ‘pooled equipment’ system, then the responsibility for the maintenance can be with another organisation. The proposed rule is sufficiently flexible to allow this, but in such a case, the organisations involved in the pooling need to establish which one of them is responsible for the equipment maintenance.

The requirement also aims to enable harmonisation of various operational procedures that a GH organisation must observe to provide services to multiple aircraft operators. Harmonisation of operational procedures was identified as one of the most difficult tasks to achieve through the GH Regulation because every aircraft operator must have GH procedures for its aircraft and passengers, which the GH organisation must follow, and this is an essential requirement of the Basic Regulation. Although most aircraft operators and GH organisations apply industry standards and good practices including standard operational procedures (SOP), many individual aircraft operators use them as a basis for a safe operation and add more to those SOPs (often addressing the same aircraft type), creating thus many deviations from those standards. To note that those industry standards and good practices are developed based on industry input, by many experts who represent all affected stakeholders, so implicitly aircraft operators and GH organisations.

Example: This means that a GH organisation (which follows the SOP developed as industry good practice) must apply (correctly!) 20 different procedures for placing chocks and cones to an Airbus 320, provided by 20 different clients (aircraft operators), all based on the same industry SOP. This is a potential safety hazard⁷. The probability of a human error in applying the right SOP to the right aircraft operator is high. However, the necessary level of safety should be achieved by simply applying the industry standards, and the need to deviate from those SOPs is not always justified by an additional safety risk assessment by the aircraft operator.

To solve this conundrum, EASA proposes rules in the GH Regulation and Air Ops Regulation to enable a GH organisation to apply its own SOPs if this is agreed by the aircraft operator. Secondly, the GH Regulation provides a legal tool for GH organisations to develop their own SMS, it makes them legally accountable for the safety of their own services. Moreover, the GH Regulation confers a new status on GH organisations, by formally recognising them to be a safety-critical aviation stakeholder, not 'just' a service provider. This different status, backed by the obligation to prove that they apply an effective SMS and comply with the GH Regulation (also proven and confirmed through the oversight of a competent authority), should also help GH organisations in developing, assessing, discussing and agreeing on common SOPs with the aircraft operators. All these elements, placed in several implementing rules, are expected to improve the existing level of trust between the aircraft operator and its GH service provider, and lead towards a harmonisation of operational procedures in the future.

The approach taken with the development of Annex IV is fully performance-based and relies on the voluntary application of industry standards and good practices, as well as operational procedures well established by aircraft operators and GH organisations and continually improved through years of practice and safety lessons learned from daily operations.

18. Provide an efficient regulatory framework for competent authorities to conduct **oversight and especially cooperative oversight** of pan-European GH organisations performing GH activities in more than one Member State or subject to oversight by more than one competent authority.
19. The oversight programme is described in ARGH.OVS.305.

The oversight cycle is proposed to be 48 months, with the possibility to extend it or reduce it depending on the GH organisation's safety performance. A maximum extension period of 72 months is proposed. However, considering the intention to build a future risk-based oversight, it has been considered that visiting an organisation only once in 72 months might be insufficient to build a reliable safety profile of that organisation to apply a risk-based oversight. Sufficient safety information would accumulate too slowly for this purpose. The competent authority should receive information about an organisation's safety performance more frequently in the absence of an oversight, and this is not covering just the occurrence reporting. Therefore, EASA proposes a requirement similar to the one applicable to declared training organisations under the Aircrew Regulation, namely that GH organisations submit a yearly report to their competent authority, with safety and compliance information relevant to build the basis for a future risk-based oversight.

⁷ A safety hazard exists also in the case when a GH organisation uses 5, 6 or more IT programmes for the departure control system (as per the software required by the client aircraft operator), each of which with its own training, procedures, rules and limitations. However, this is not an SOP as it refers to the IT tool.

At the same time, it has been considered that it would be too onerous to require that all stations of a GH organisation must be covered in a full-scope oversight cycle. The number of stations to be overseen within a cycle should be relevant to complete the full oversight scope, and this number should be decided by each competent authority and shared with the other competent authorities in the case of cooperative oversight of an organisation with a pan-European coverage.

20. To maintain clarity of responsibilities of each competent authority when conducting oversight without a cooperative oversight dimension, a new implementing rule has been created, ARGH.OVS.315, Oversight tasks. The more complex configuration involved in cooperative oversight, to keep the level of responsibility unaffected but also avoid duplications of the same work, is described in ARGH.OVS.330.
21. Creating a good framework for cooperative oversight has been another most challenging tasks of RMT.0728, due to the business model applied in the GH industry. A few background explanations are necessary to ease the understanding of this statement:
 - A GH organisation is different from an aircraft operator, as it does not move around; it needs to be related to a certain space where it can be performed. This is the aerodrome, which is also fixed in space. Indeed, with the concept of ‘group operations’ in the air operations domain, the operational, management, and oversight systems have started to be put more under scrutiny and regulatory adaptations are required in this sense. The group operations concept is in many ways similar to the normal way of doing business in GH.
 - A GH organisation is also different from an aerodrome operator, as it can operate in many more locations; hypothetically, it can operate at any aerodrome in the EASA Member States. GH organisations providing services at aerodromes in more than one Member State are a usual way of doing business. This is the case of a pan-European GH organisation such as Swissport, Menzies Aviation, Worldwide Flight Services (WFS), Aviapartner, dnata, Goldair, Acciona, Celebi, SAS Ground Handling, Aviator, Groundforce, BGS (just a few examples, but the list may continue). Of course, aerodrome operators may have a similar situation, however, this is most typical for GH organisations.
 - To comply with the provisions of the Basic Regulation, these pan-European GH organisations will be subject to oversight by more competent authorities: as many (or even more) as the number of EASA States in which they operate. This would be an inefficient and burdensome process, both for GH organisations and competent authorities.

To address these difficulties about the **oversight of pan-European GH organisations**, EASA proposes a cooperative oversight process based on the hub-and-spoke concept, which will be reflected in the requirements in a way that the oversight and enforcement responsibilities of each individual Member States are not hindered. The proposed approach on cooperative oversight uses several concepts that are introduced in the GH regulation:

- a. Firstly, the concept of **principal place of business** is introduced in the GH Regulation. This makes it easier for pan-European GH organisations to identify to which competent authority they must declare their activity. A declaration submitted one time to only one competent authority will be valid and recognised by all the other competent authorities without further requirements or evaluation, as per article 67(1) of the Basic Regulation. The format of the declaration proposed here includes information about all the aerodromes where a GH

organisation provides services, so all competent authorities responsible for the oversight of that pan-European GH organisation will receive the necessary information in the same document.

- b. Secondly, the concept of the principal place of business will be used to ensure the **minimum resource and maximum efficiency of cooperative oversight** in the proposed **hub-and-spoke model of oversight**. This is similar to the SAFA/SACA ramp inspections in the air operations domain: like aircraft operators, a pan-European GH organisation has a principal place of business (a 'hub') and a competent authority responsible for the oversight of that organisation at its principal place of business (for easier identification, the 'hub competent authority'). Also, like aircraft operators operating at many aerodromes, a pan-European GH organisation provides services at multiple aerodromes in many Member States (its 'spokes'). Like the SAFA/SACA ramp inspections, each competent authority is responsible for the oversight and enforcement of the GH regulation at the aerodromes in their State. They will oversee the safe provision of GH services of that pan-European GH organisation at the aerodromes in their State (the 'spoke competent authorities').
- c. The cooperative oversight rule further details the responsibilities of the 'hub competent authority' and the 'spoke competent authorities' as follows:

By identifying an organisation's principal place of business (PPoB) it is easier to determine which is the competent authority responsible for the oversight of an organisation's management system. Given that GH pan-European organisations apply the same management system to all their stations (airports where it provides services), for an efficient oversight, the management system of such an organisation will be overseen only once instead of many times. This will be done by the competent authority of the State where the GH organisation has its PPoB – the 'hub competent authority'. Hub is where the majority of an organisation's functions take place. The management system documentation, policies and programmes – all the documentation that gives unity to a pan-European GH organisation can be verified only once, at its headquarters, by the 'hub competent authority'. The result of the audit is shared with the other competent authorities of the Member States where that organisation has stations (the 'spoke' competent authorities).

The 'spoke competent authorities' will oversee the *provision* of GH services at the aerodromes in their State; they will focus less on verifying the organisation's management system (which has already been verified by the 'hub competent authority' and the results of those audits are shared with all the 'spoke competent authorities concerned') and will focus more on the actual implementation of the management system at the station under verification. The 'spoke competent authority' will verify how the management system is applied in practice, at the aerodrome in their State; it will thus verify and confirm the 'output' of the organisation's management system, the 'product', which is the actual provision of services at the aerodrome. The 'spoke competent authority' will consider, for example, how the training programme is applied at a particular station, whether the personnel training records correspond to the situation in the field (sample checking of individual training records rather than the whole training programme), if the SMS is customised per the operational context of that particular aerodrome and properly documented at that station. They will verify whether the operational procedures are applied during turnaround GH

activities as indicated in the ground operations manual, or whether the maintenance programme for the ground support equipment (GSE) is implemented as per the documentation, the out-of-order GSE are properly marked, etc.

The 'spoke competent authority' will enforce the application of the GH regulation at that aerodrome and oversee the provision of GH services at a station just like they would perform any usual oversight. The responsibility is fully theirs for raising findings, agreeing on the corrective action plans, monitoring the application of corrective actions, closing the finding or requesting further action.

The additional tasks coming with the cooperative oversight system are the following:

- to inform the other competent authorities concerned about the finding and the associated corrective action raised at the station or at the headquarters' on the organisation's management system;
 - assess whether the finding raised at one station is specific to the operational context of that particular station or if it could be linked to the organisation's management system and therefore has been/could have been identified also at other stations, in other Member States. The 'spoke' competent authority would then have to consult with colleagues from other 'spoke competent authorities' and ask them if they have raised the same finding at the station in their country. They can also use the information from the audit report of the 'hub competent authority' to see whether that finding was already raised on the management system. If other 'spoke competent authorities' confirm that the same finding is repeating at the stations in their Member State too, this should trigger an action by the 'hub competent authority' to raise the finding on the organisation's management system directly at its headquarters, only once instead of many different times by each individual 'spoke competent authority'. The 'spoke competent authorities' will nevertheless verify that the corrective action is reflected in the operation at the station where the initial finding was raised, in order to close the finding at that station.
 - If – the other way around – the 'hub competent authority' raises a finding on the GH organisation's management system that consequently affects all the stations where the GH organisation operates, this should trigger an action of all individual 'spoke competent authorities', which will have to take a local decision whether to stop the provision of services at the stations in their State.
- d. Thirdly, the concept of 'single GH organisation business grouping' has also been introduced for the same purpose: to make the oversight of such organisations more efficient.

The concept is similar to the one from Part-CAMO (single air carrier business grouping). This concept is useful for cooperative oversight purposes, and applies to 2 or more (GH) organisations that are part of the same parent-company but may each be registered in a different MS – e.g., if Swissport has registered companies in all the EASA Member States besides its headquarter which is registered in Switzerland (e.g. Swissport Belgium, Swissport Netherlands, Swissport Italy, Swissport Germany), those sister-companies are still part of the large Swissport parent-company. They all apply the same management system, training

programme, SMS, etc. So, it makes no sense to perform 20 individual audits to the same management system, verified in each Member State.

- e. Fourthly, the rule on cooperative oversight will also enable cases when any of the ‘spoke competent authorities’ wishes to provide support to the ‘hub competent authority’ and participate in the oversight of a pan-European GH organisation’s management system at its principal place of business.
- f. Fifthly, cooperative oversight, in order to be effective, cannot be confined to the written text of a regulation, but must also grow based on **mutual trust and a lot of communication** which occurs outside the law book, EASA and the competent authorities have already set up a Network of Inspectors, a group in which Member States’ appointed GH inspectors or focal points meet and discuss. The **GH Network of Competent Authority Inspectors** has a multiple purpose, eventually leading to an efficient cooperative oversight process in the future: to create an atmosphere of trust, of common goal, to work together on attaining the same level of knowledge and the same interpretation of the GH Regulation, to work together on a common toolbox to be used for oversight and achieve agreement over the raised findings and corrective actions.

The GH Network of Competent Authority Inspectors also aims at helping one another with the training of inspectors, exchanging experience between different practices used in different countries, thus achieving part of the recurrent training.

- g. Last but not least, the EASA **repository of declarations** should be an **IT tool** where the declarations and the reports of oversight can be accessed by all competent authorities concerned.

h. With all these proposed solutions for an efficient cooperative oversight, one important aspect must be clarified already at this stage:

Pan-European GH organisations whose principal place of business (PPoB) is located outside the EASA Member States cannot benefit from the ‘hub-and-spoke’ cooperative oversight model because their PPoB is not in an EASA MS. This is because the hub-and-spoke concept of cooperative oversight (explained below) is based on the concept of PPoB. The PPoB of an organisation must be in an EASA MS for this to work.

It is also not possible for EASA to take over the oversight and enforcement responsibilities for the non-EASA GH organisations, as this is not foreseen in the Basic Regulation.

GH organisations whose principal place of business is located outside the Territories of the Treaties will be treated as any national GH organisation in each Member State and will have to submit a declaration to each competent authority in the Member States where they provide services. They will also be subject to as many oversights as there are competent authorities to which they submit a declaration. This is indeed recognised as an unnecessary administrative burden, however, the concept of PPoB cannot be applied outside the EASA Member States.

Of course, competent authorities will apply the cooperative oversight rule on these organisations. They will be able to share audit reports, corrective actions for all the ‘branch’ organisations registered in each Member State, consult or offer support to one another.

However, the full extent of applying the ‘hub-and-spoke’ model will be reduced, since the authorities will have to oversee the organisations’ management system over and over again, in each Member State. The scope of the oversight cannot be reduced only to the verification of how operations are performed at an individual station; they will have to also verify the management system in each country.

Two possible future solutions have been identified, each with a question mark and only possible in the future:

1. The GH organisations with a PPOB outside the EU decide to move their PPOB in Europe.
Or

2. Member States propose to amend the Basic Regulation to enable that EASA becomes the competent authority of GH organisations whose PPOB is outside the EU.

22. The oversight programme is proposed to ensure the initial collection of safety data from GH organisations, to enable competent authority first to know the organisations subject to their oversight, so that the evolution of the oversight process would be in the direction of a risk-based oversight. Although stakeholders’ comments requested a more risk-based approach in the oversight, EASA highlighted that such an approach cannot be implemented in the first years of implementation, as there is insufficient safety data on which competent authorities could build a risk-based oversight. Besides, the current safety reporting practices show an uneven level of safety culture and safety reporting. SMS is applied on a voluntary basis today by GH organisations and building a safety culture and a reliable safety database takes time. A risk-based oversight approach is desirable and implementable in the future, but a solid ground needs to be built to enable this.
23. Finally, implementing rules have been added for compliance with the information security management requirements for both competent authorities and organisations. The proposal is reflected in Article 4(8), ARGH.GEN.125(c), ARGH.GEN.136, ARGH.MGM.200(d), ARGH.MGM.205, ARGH.MGM.211 for authority requirements and in ORGH.MGM.201 for organisation requirements. The existing Regulation (EU) 2022/1645 is also proposed to be amended in the articles related to its scope, to include ground handling. This way, the GH domain can have a legal basis for the implementation of the new Part-IS requirements.

2.6.1 Targeted applicability date

The targeted applicability date of the regulatory material (GH Regulation and the amendments to Reg. (EU) 965/2012 Air OPS and 139/2014 Aerodromes) is proposed to be **3 years** after the date of entry into force. This means a transition period of 3 years, to provide the affected stakeholders sufficient time to prepare for the implementation of the new Ground Handling Regulation.

At the same time, EASA proposes a longer initial oversight cycle (of **5 years**) to enable competent authorities to oversee all declared GH organisations in their Member State at least once. This exceptional, initial longer period for the oversight cycle has been discussed with the competent authorities at length and was considered a feasible solution to accommodate a comprehensive oversight cycle for competent authorities having to oversee an estimate large number of GH organisations, and thus establish a basis for a future risk-based oversight by collecting information on the safety risk and safety performance of each GH organisation in their State. It is, however, not expected that all aerodromes where a GH organisation provides services are overseen in one cycle.

A smooth transition is proposed for organisations already providing GH services at the time when the GH Regulation becomes applicable: they would have to agree with their competent authority on a period in which they may submit their declaration, however this should not be longer than 24 months counting from the date of application of the GH Regulation. This interval would enable competent authorities to plan the oversight programme more easily. Authorities should also take into account, for oversight planning, the experience and performance of the GH organisation that have already been providing services prior to the date of application of the new GH regulation.

For the cybersecurity requirements, a 6-year transition period is proposed, to enable affected organisations to first prepare for the specific ground handling requirements and also to benefit from the lessons learned in the other aviation domains that should implement the new requirements at an earlier date (2026).

Stakeholders are invited to provide their views on the proposed transition period, as well as any other transition measure that could be useful for the smooth implementation of the new regulation.

2.7. Other relevant information

2.7.1 Elements not included in the first issue of the GH Regulation

The draft GH Regulation does not contain new requirements on **de-icing and anti-icing activities**. This area is proposed to be analysed in particular with an expert group, as it requires a longer analysis of the existing requirements in the Air Ops Regulation, applicable industry standards, and it would need a strategic decision as to the direction in which the EU GH rules should be developed.

The draft also does not include requirements for the GH of **helicopter operations**, as the group of experts did not have the right expertise at hand.

The draft regulation also does not include detailed requirements on **cargo handling**. Also this domain requires a deeper analysis to identify what the new regulation can improve in the current cargo handling operations.

New requirements will be added in the future to address the GH needs of **new aircraft types using other energy sources for propulsion than traditional fossil fuel**, as the infrastructure for aircraft based on electrical, hybrid, or hydrogen propulsion is not yet mature enough. The Aerodrome Regulation is also expected to be affected and consequently amended to fit the new needs of the Industry.

2.7.2 RMT.0705 'Addition of a new requirement for the handling of dangerous goods at aerodromes'

This RMT is included in the scope of RMT.0728 (see [EPAS 2023-2025](#)) and it has the following scope:

- To establish methods for the delivery, storage, dispensing and handling of dangerous goods at aerodromes; and
- ADR operators to train their personnel in the handling of dangerous goods when the ADR operator acts as a subcontractor (handling agent) of the air operators.

The ADR Regulation already contains a requirement addressing the first bullet point. The proposed GH Regulation covers the second bullet point. More details will be added at AMC and GM level, as the requirements of the ICAO Technical Instructions are the standard applicable to dangerous goods in any domain and to any stakeholder involved in the transportation chain of dangerous goods.

2.7.3 Connections with other rulemaking tasks

RMT.0392 ‘Regular Update of the Air Operations Rules’ ([NPA 2022-11](#)) and RMT.0591⁸ ‘Regular Update of the Aerodrome Rules’ contain a few amendments that will further align the three regulations (OPS, ADR and GH) on the following aspects:

1. safety reporting – enabling sharing of relevant safety information between GH organisations, aircraft operators and aerodrome operators;
2. integrated management system – enabling organisations holding multiple certifications, approvals, authorisations or declarations to have a single management system that integrates all common elements of the certificated, approved, authorised or declared organisations.

Those proposed amendments are not included in this NPA on RMT.0728, as they are not yet adopted as Commission amending regulations. However, it is important that stakeholders are aware of the parallel work done under those rulemaking tasks as they may wish to consult the latest published deliverables.

2.7.4 ICAO work on ground handling

ICAO established a Ground Handling Task Force (GHTF) under the Aerodrome Design and Operations Panel (ADOP), to investigate safety, efficiency and standardisation issues associated with ground handling and to determine the status and future needs of ICAO provisions in relation to ground handling at aerodromes. The GHTF comprises of experts from Member States and Industry – aircraft operators, GH organisations, aerodrome operators and associations thereof.

The ICAO GHTF drafted a manual for GH operations, which was published as Doc 10121 Ground Handling Manual in late 2019. The GH Manual contains general guidelines for interfaces between air operators, GH organisations, aerodrome operators, and oversight guidelines for competent authorities.

The topic of ground handling was also extensively discussed at the ICAO High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021). The discussion concluded that although ground handling remains a critical sector of the aviation industry, careful consideration would be needed before developing further regulation for the GH domain.

Currently, the ICAO GHTF is proposing to introduce a minimum number of standards and recommended practices (SARPs) to several Annexes, mostly Annex 14 (aerodromes) and a few in Annex 6 (air operations). Most guidelines are proposed to be added in PANS-ADR to support the implementation of the proposed SARPs of Annex 14.

Worth noticing is that there is yet no proposal to amend Annex 19 to require an SMS for GH service providers. There is also no proposal to require Member State to include GH in their oversight

⁸ Opinion on RMT.0591 is expected to be published in 2023.

programme, but only to monitor (by including GH in their State Safety Programme) the safety performance of the GH activities in their States. Oversight (i.e., surveillance) of GH organisations remains at the discretion of each individual State.

In February 2023, ICAO also sent a survey to the Member States to assess the usefulness of the GH Manual (Doc 10121) and to gather information about the current status of State's regulatory regime, oversight practices, and safety data collection. The aim is to better understand how the GH activities impact the safety of the aviation system as a whole. Based on the collected information, ICAO will then decide to what extent new SARPs in the aforementioned Annexes should be developed.



3. What are the expected benefits and drawbacks of the proposed regulatory material

Compared to the 'no change' policy (Option 0 of the impact assessment), it is expected that the new EU GH Regulation will address several of the most critical missing elements in the current situation in the GH industry:

1. Mandating an SMS for GH organisations is expected to improve the safety level of those organisations that today do not apply any SMS. It is also expected to improve the level of safety culture and safety reporting culture. It creates a regulatory background for the implementation of a just culture.
2. The oversight requirements for competent authorities across the EASA Member States are expected to improve the level-playing field and help harmonising the GH operations. The proposed rules will also provide the background for regular and consistent safety data collection and analysis, with multiple consequences: reduction of the number of occurrences, consequently reducing the damages to the aircraft and other vehicles, resulting in less financial costs for the aircraft operators and GH organisations; more and better safety data collection, to be used for the foundation of a risk-based oversight in the future.
3. Reduction in the number of audits to GH organisations in the EASA Member States by removing the obligation of aircraft operator to conduct multiple audits to their GHSP covering all aspects of their activity. The current requirements in the Air Ops Regulation are proposed to be amended in this sense. Also, competent authorities will become responsible for the oversight of GH organisations.
4. Creating a regulatory framework for the training of GH personnel is expected to improve the level of training by focusing on developing their competencies, the mobility of personnel across organisations and countries, as well as the safety culture within the organisations.
5. Proposing a new approach to the acceptance of recognised industry standards for the GH activities by establishing criteria of a 'good' industry standard used by GH organisations to demonstrate compliance with the implementing rules. This will help harmonising the operational procedures of GH organisations and aircraft operators across the EASA Member States. It will rely on industry developments and will keep the regulatory content for the operational procedures to a minimum.

The drawbacks will be felt mostly in the first years after the implementation of the GH Regulation, mainly in the following aspects:

6. Competent authorities will need additional resources to conduct oversight of GH organisations and they will have to train their inspectors.
7. Aircraft operators, GH organisations, and aerodrome operators will have to trust each other and share safety relevant information among themselves. Trust is built over years; it is not gained automatically because a regulation says so.
8. It is also likely that the number of audits to GH organisations will not decrease in the first years after the date of applicability of the GH Regulation.

9. GH organisations that do not have an SMS yet will need additional resources to develop an SMS and implement a management system, however, the costs are expected to be rather low, considering that guidance and tutoring on developing an SMS are widely available today and much guidance material developed by Industry is free of charge. Additionally, EASA and the Member States will organise workshops and webinars to support the implementation of the GH Regulation.

The impact assessment (see Appendix 1) further details the aspects pointed out above.

It is expected that the positive effects of the future EU GH Regulation will outweigh the anticipated drawbacks given the solutions explained in Section 2.6.



4. Proposed regulatory material

Please refer to the Annexes to this NPA as follows:

Annex 1: Draft GH Regulation and EASA AMC and GM

Annex 2: Proposed amendments to Reg. (EU) 965/2012

Annex 3: Proposed amendments to Reg. (EU) 139/2014

Annex 4: Proposed amendments to Reg. (EU) 2022/1645

Appendix 1: Regulatory Impact Assessment



5. Monitoring and evaluation

EASA will continually monitor the implementation of the GH Regulation through the following actions and channels:

- (a) Regular discussions with the competent authorities on the main issues identified during the oversight activities;
- (b) Analysis of safety occurrence reports, regular discussions with the competent authorities and the CAG-GH, proposed measures to mitigate the identified safety issues and dissemination of the actions taken;
- (c) Direct feedback from Industry through punctual workshops;
- (d) EASA regular standardisation activities.

Based on the results assessed at yearly intervals, EASA will consider the most appropriate measures to ease the implementation of the Regulation or improve its content (i.e., amendments to the GH Regulation, the related regulations, or their associated AMC and GM, or safety promotion activities).



6. Proposed actions to support implementation

EASA intends to support the implementation of the new GH Regulation by organising, coordinating, or contributing to the organisation of the following actions:

- Continued support for implementation through the Network of Competent Authorities GH Focal points: this group has a multiple purpose:
 - Prepare the basis for an effective cooperative oversight to reduce the number of audits to one GH organisation; reduce duplications
 - Ensure the same interpretation of the rules of all competent authorities
 - Develop a common toolbox for oversight
 - Ensure common training to all GH inspectors
 - Enable exchange of experience between inspectors
 - Common approach to non-compliances at individual airports in every MS
- Series of workshops and webinars in the EASA Member States, in cooperation with the competent authorities of the EASA Member States
- Focused communication at Advisory Body meeting(s) of the affected stakeholders (Member States and Industry)
- Thematic events organised on the regional principle (pan-European GH organisations and the competent authorities involved in their oversight)
- FAQ, guidelines/manuals for the implementation of certain elements of the GH Regulation (e.g., competency-based training and assessment programme for the main safety-relevant GH roles, scalable SMS) available on the EASA website



7. References

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- IATA Airport Handling Manual (AHM), Edition 43
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- ICAO: Doc 10121 Manual on Ground Handling, First edition, 2019
- ICAO: Doc 9859 Safety Management Manual, Fourth Edition, 2018
- ICAO: Doc 10147 Guidance on a Competency-based Approach to Dangerous Goods Training and Assessment, First Edition, 2021
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- ICAO: Safety Report, 2020 Edition
- IBAC: International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling (IS-BAH)
- Joint Inspection Group:
 - JIG 1 Standard: Aviation Fuel Quality Controls and Operating Standards for Into-Plane Fuelling Services, Issue 13
 - JIG 2 Standard: Aviation Fuel Quality Controls and Operating Standards for Airport Depots and Hydrants, Issue 13
 - JIG 4 Standard: Aviation Fuel Quality Control and Operating Standards for Smaller Airports, Issue 4
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- Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R1107>

- SAE International:
 - Aircraft Ground Deicing/Anti-Icing Processes (AS6285)
 - Training and Qualification Program for Deicing/Anti-Icing of Aircraft on the Ground (AS6286)
 - Processes including Methods (AS6286/1)
 - Equipment (AS6286/2)
 - Fluids (AS6286/3)
 - Weather (AS6286/4)
 - Health, Safety and First Aid (AS6286/5)
 - Deicing/Anti-Icing Diagrams/No Spray Zones (AS6286/6)
 - Aircraft Ground Deicing/Anti-icing Quality Management (AS6332)
 - Aircraft Ground De/Anti-Icing Communication Phraseology for Flight and Ground Crews (ARP6257)
- Safety Recommendation GEF-2018-002 (BFU)



Appendix 1 – Regulatory Impact Assessment

Please see Appendix 1 to this NPA.



Appendix 2 — Quality of the NPA

To continuously improve the quality of its documents, EASA welcomes your feedback on the quality of this document with regard to the following aspects:

Please provide your feedback on the quality of this document as part of the other comments you have on this NPA. We invite you to also provide a brief justification, especially when you disagree or strongly disagree, so that we consider this for improvement. Your comments will be considered for internal quality assurance and management purposes only and will not be published.

1. The regulatory proposal is of technically good/high quality

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

2. The text is clear, readable and understandable

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

3. The regulatory proposal is well substantiated

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

4. The regulatory proposal is fit for purpose (achieving the objectives set)

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

5. The regulatory proposal is proportionate to the size of the issue

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

6. The regulatory proposal applies the ‘better regulation’ principles^[1]

Please choose one of the options

Fully agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree

7. Any other comments on the quality of this document (please specify)

^[1] For information and guidance, see:

- https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how_en
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox_en