Risks

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Aviation accident

Threat assessment: The occurrence of an aviation accident in Estonia is considered unlikely. Compared to the previous assessment, the risk level has not changed.

Possible causes of an aviation accident may include external environmental threats (fog, strong winds, thunderstorms, heavy rainfall), human activity (the use of an aircraft in a terrorist attack, deliberate damage to equipment, pilot error, or mistakes in air traffic control), as well as the technical condition of aircraft (equipment faults, deterioration, or shortcomings in maintenance).

Estonia is located on the main flight corridor from Asia to Europe, which has always meant a high number of overflights. The full-scale war of aggression launched by Russia against Ukraine in 2022 significantly altered this picture. Essentially, overflights towards Asia by European carriers ceased, leaving only Asia-originating aircraft en route to Europe. As of 2025, the volume of overflights remains 30% lower than before the war.

Air traffic volumes increased again last year: in 2024, Estonia handled 13% more flights than in the previous year, a notable rise. However, compared with the pre-crisis year of 2019, 25% fewer flights were handled. In total, 176,619 flights were managed in Estonian airspace, of which 129,957 were overflights. The number of passengers passing through Estonian airports also grew by about 18% compared with the previous year, exceeding 3.5 million passengers.

THREATS

- Reported incidents: In 2024, Lennuliiklusteeninduse AS (Estonian Air Navigation Services) reported 775 incidents. These mainly involved violations of airspace usage permissions, flights over neutral waters without a functioning transponder and without a flight plan, breaches of air traffic controller instructions, and the unauthorised flying of drones in the vicinity of Tallinn.

- GNSS signal disruptions: The largest number of incidents were related to interference with GNSS signals, occurring within Tallinn’s flight information region. While GNSS disruptions do not directly affect overflights, they do impact the work of air traffic controllers and systems, and they may affect the operation of regional airports. These risks can be mitigated with additional systems.

- Bird strikes: Bird collisions are on the rise, the majority of which occurred at Tallinn Airport. In 2024, a test field was established near the airport to attract birds away from the runway. The test field was mown significantly more frequently than the airport’s traffic area, successfully diverting birds away

- from the runway and reducing the risk of collisions with large birds.

ACTIONS

- Compared with 2023, the number of reported incidents increased by around 20%. This rise is due both to the recovery and growth of air traffic after COVID-19 and to an improved reporting culture.

- The sector must continue to develop and adapt to harness the potential of artificial intelligence, as well as to counter cyberattacks, in order to ensure the resilience of both ground infrastructure and the airborne fleet.

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