

# NATO Flight Training Europe (NFTE)

Letter of Intent <sup>1</sup> signed	Memorandum of Understanding <sup>2</sup> signed	Initial Operational Capability	Full Operational Capability
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## Participants



## What is NFTE?

The NATO Flight Training Europe (NFTE) High Visibility Project<sup>3</sup> will be a network of training facilities set up for different types of pilots: fighter jet pilots, helicopter and transport pilots, as well as personnel who remotely pilot aircraft. This multinational initiative will enable adaptable pilot training across Europe, using existing training structures whenever possible. The participating nations are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Turkey.

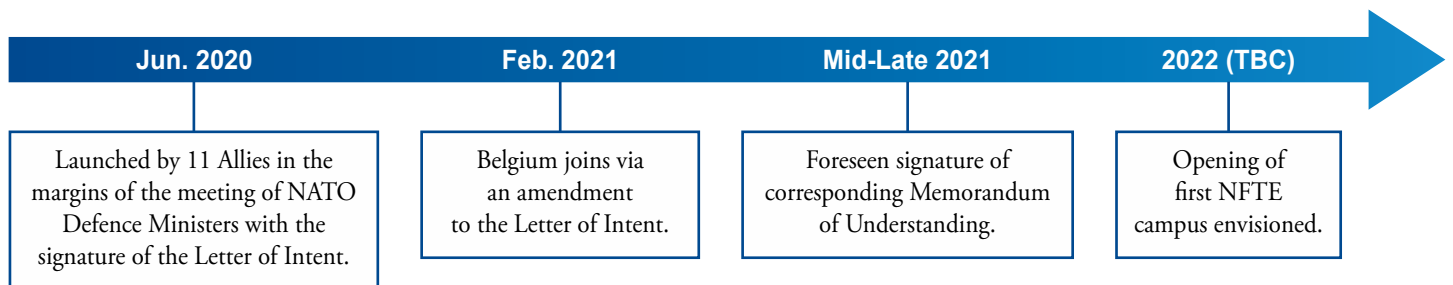


Students of the NATO Flight Training in Canada (NFTE), which inspired the creation of the NFTE

## Multinational effort

The NFTE was officially launched by 11 Allies in the margins of the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in June 2020 with the signature of the corresponding Letter of Intent. Belgium became the 12<sup>th</sup> participant, by signing an amendment to the Letter of Intent, in the margins of the February 2021 NATO Defence Ministers Meeting. It provides the framework for interested Allies to systematically explore and develop the NFTE concept further. The Letter of Intent essentially captures the necessary political buy-in to take this project forward.

Under the Letter of Intent, work focuses on the more detailed questions associated with establishing the NFTE. This includes: determining all national requirements; cataloguing existing training capacities on the territory of participating countries; outlining the governance structures for the NFTE; as well as determining the composition and features of specific campuses, standardized training syllabi and potential contractual provisions to engage with industry.



1 Initial non-binding document outlining participants' will to explore the area in question further

2 Legally binding document specifying details of cooperation

3 NATO High Visibility Projects are multinational initiatives tailored to address key capability areas, usually launched at Defence Ministers' level.

## Why is it important?

Delivering state-of-the-art pilot training is an increasingly costly and challenging endeavour. In many instances, the national pilot requirements needed each year are too small to justify the establishment or maintenance of national flight centres. Alternative sustainable solutions have therefore been sought to avoid potential future training gaps. Given the enduring need for competent flight crews that can operate at high readiness in dynamic and unpredictable environments, this challenge needs to be addressed quickly.

To fulfil their pilot training needs, many European Allies are currently sending their pilots for training to the United States, which results in additional strain on US capacities. The establishment of the NFTE will significantly decrease this reliance on existing US training facilities, by making European Allies capable of training their own flight crews. The NFTE therefore serves as an excellent example of transatlantic burden-sharing.

## How does it work?

Over time, the core ambition of the NFTE is to link an increasing number of training campuses together. In practice, this will mean leveraging existing national and multinational facilities in Europe and, where necessary, expanding or potentially creating new training capacities to fully and effectively address training requirements for all different types of pilots. The complexity and scale of ambition of this initiative will require a step-by-step approach for its implementation.

The NFTE will gradually build up its capacity to offer a wide range of training programmes that will be conducted at different levels (i.e., basic, intermediate and advanced) for the different types of piloting needs identified. The participating Allies, and by extension the entire Alliance, will benefit from cost savings, increased interoperability and operational value as a result of systematically linking and, if required, expanding multinational training capacities. Furthermore, establishing such a network of training capacities will enable the European Allies to eventually become self-sufficient in pilot training.

### Did you know?

1. The NFTE is loosely modelled after the NATO Flight Training in Canada (NFTC), which is a military flight training facility that was launched in 2000. The NFTC continues to train Canadian and Allied pilots.
2. Initially, drone pilot training was not going to be covered under the NFTE. However, given the high interest shown by a number of Allies due to the increased use of unmanned systems, drone pilot training has been included in the initiative.
3. An initial survey conducted by NATO revealed that, in 2020, European Allies operate more than 30 training facilities that are not systematically connected.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Twelve Allies and two partner nations provided responses.