Pre-purchase inspection

What to check before buying a used aeroplane, glider or helicopter in Europe. Each point carries the rule behind it, in Part-ML (Annex Vb to Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014) unless stated otherwise.

Your aircraft

To fill in before you go

TYPE AND MODEL	REGISTRATION	SERIAL NUMBER

SELLER	PLACE OF INSPECTION	DATE

1 To ask before you travel

4 points

☐	The registration, and check it against the papers	22% of adverts show it
☐	Airframe hours, and engine hours since new and since the last overhaul	33% of adverts state them
☐	Has the aircraft been damaged? If so, the repair file	ML.A.902(b)(4), ML.A.304
☐	The ARC's expiry date	ML.A.901(a)

2 The papers

12 points

☐	Valid airworthiness certificate, aircraft on the register of an EU Member State	ML.A.902(a)
☐	Valid ARC (airworthiness review certificate), expires: ____ / ____ / _____	ML.A.901(a)
☐	Aircraft, engine and propeller logbooks; log cards for life-limited parts	ML.A.305(b)
☐	Each maintenance task closed by a certificate of release to service, with the signer's approval or licence	ML.A.305(a), ML.A.801(e)
☐	Status of every applicable airworthiness directive (AD), all carried out	ML.A.303, ML.A.305(d)(1)
☐	Modifications and repairs recorded, done with approved or declared data	ML.A.304, ML.A.903(a)(6)
☐	Life-limited components within their limits	ML.A.903(a)(7)
☐	Current mass and balance report	ML.A.305(d)(5)
☐	List of deferred maintenance	ML.A.305(d)(6)
☐	Maintenance programme (AMP): who declared or approved it, and its deviations from the manufacturer's recommendations	ML.A.302(c)(7)
☐	Flight manual at its latest revision, matching the aircraft as configured	ML.A.903(a)(2)
☐	Noise certificate, if required	ML.A.903(a)(11)

Planenest, version of 4 October 2026. The full guide, with links to the texts: planenest.com/en/blog/buying-guide-1/pre-purchase-inspection-1. Sources: EASA, Easy Access Rules for Continuing Airworthiness (September 2025 revision) and for the Basic Regulation (January 2023 revision); French arrêté of 23 September 1998 on microlights; German LuftGerPV, Austrian ZLLV, Swiss VLL. This document sums up the rules; it is not advice on a particular aircraft.

3 The engine

2 points

- [ ] Hours since new and since the last overhaul, read in the engine logbook — ML.A.305(e)
- [ ] The manufacturer's TBO. If it is exceeded: what the maintenance programme says — ML.A.302(c)(5)(d), (c)(7)

4 The aircraft itself

6 points

- [ ] Required markings and placards in place — ML.A.903(c)(1)
- [ ] Aircraft complies with its approved flight manual — ML.A.903(c)(2)
- [ ] What is fitted matches the documentation: engine, propeller, avionics, modifications — ML.A.903(c)(3)
- [ ] No evident defect left unaddressed — ML.A.903(c)(4)
- [ ] Serial numbers, equipment and hours on the meter match the papers — ML.A.903(c)(5)
- [ ] An inspector qualified on the type, who does not maintain the aircraft for the seller — advice

5 Microlights

5 points

- [ ] France: matches its identification sheet, maintained to its maintenance manual — arrêté of 23/09/1998, art. 14
- [ ] Germany: registration and airworthiness certificates, annual inspection less than 12 months old — LuftGerPV § 13(1)
- [ ] Austria: inspection certificate less than 24 months old, noise certificate — ZLLV §§ 40, 44
- [ ] Switzerland: Ecolight or UL category; two-seater of 450 kg + 25 kg at most — VLL, Annexes 1 and 2
- [ ] Elsewhere: ask the authority of the country of registration which papers apply — (EU) 2018/1139, Annex I

6 At signature

1 point

- [ ] The seller hands over the airworthiness records with the aircraft — ML.A.307(a)

Your decision

- [ ] I buy
- [ ] I negotiate
- [ ] I walk away

NOTES