

# PAPI Calibration Cost in Europe: Ranges and Drivers

What PAPI calibration costs in the EU, why no vendor publishes a rate, which factors move the number, and three worked scenarios with the assumptions listed.

## DIRECT ANSWER

PAPI calibration has no published market rate, because no vendor prices it publicly. This guide puts it at 2,500 to 3,500 EUR excluding VAT per PAPI set, one runway direction, for a drone-based visit in the EU market, checked 4 September 2026. Travel, the number of sets and whether a re-check is needed move the figure.

## What this guide prices, and what it does not

The cost object is one calibration of one set of glide slope indicators at one aerodrome, in the European Union market, quoted in euros excluding VAT, checked on 4 September 2026. A set means the four units serving one approach direction, or the two units of an **abbreviated system**. A single-runway aerodrome with indicators at both ends has two sets.

Every figure below is an estimate and is labelled as one. That is not caution for its own sake. A search of the suppliers who sell this service, carried out on the date above, found published claims about flight duration and measurement accuracy and no published prices at all. The two disclosures that matter before the first number are that TarmacView sells drone-based **PAPI inspection** and therefore has an interest in how the comparison reads, and that TarmacView does not publish a rate either.

The assumptions behind the ranges are these. A single aerodrome visit rather than a framework across several. Access coordinated with the tower and no runway closure booked. Travel inside the operator network, which is the common case in the EU and the UK. No physical adjustment work included, because that belongs to the maintenance team. And no VAT, which is added at whatever rate applies where the work is performed.

**Warning: these are planning bands, not quotations**

Every range on this page is an estimate built from public procurement records and published time claims, not a price list. Using one of these numbers as a budget line is reasonable. Using it as a negotiating position with a supplier is not, because none of them has agreed to it. Ask for a written quotation against a stated scope before committing money.

**COST SNAPSHOT**

## What the line items look like

| ITEM                                                                     | LOW   | TYPICAL | HIGH   | UNIT      | SOURCE                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Drone calibration, one PAPI set (one runway direction), single visit     | 2 500 | 3 000   | 3 500  | per set   | Štefan Moravík, TarmacView, 2026-09-06                                           |
| Drone visit covering both approach directions of one runway              | 5 000 | 6 000   | 7 000  | per visit | Twice row 1                                                                      |
| Same visit extended to edge lights, approach lighting and a surface scan | 8 000 | 9 000   | 10 000 | per visit | Štefan Moravík, TarmacView, 2026-09-06, and the surface scan adds at least 2,000 |

| ITEM                                                     | LOW    | TYPICAL | HIGH   | UNIT                   | SOURCE                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Verification pass after a maintenance adjustment         | 1 000  | 1 100   | 1 200  | per set per re-check   | Štefan Moravík, TarmacView, 2026-09-06           |
| Travel and mobilisation outside the operator network     | 0      | 800     | 2 500  | per visit              | Estimated. See tarmacview-papi-cost              |
| Annual programme, single-runway regional aerodrome       | 6 000  | 7 100   | 8 400  | per year               | Row 2 plus one or two re-checks                  |
| Annual programme, two-runway airport, four PAPI sets     | 19 000 | 22 000  | 25 000 | per year               | Two visits from row 3 plus one to four re-checks |
| Aircraft flight inspection of navigation and visual aids | 8 000  | 20 000  | 45 000 | per aerodrome per year | Estimated. See hial-flight-inspection            |

Estimated planning bands for PAPI calibration and the visits it usually rides on. One aerodrome, EU market, euros excluding VAT, checked 4 September 2026. No supplier publishes a rate, so every band is an estimate with its basis named in the source column.

• EUR • EU • excl. VAT • Checked 2026-09-04

## What moves the number

**How many sets there are.** This is the first-order driver and it is not linear. The **precision approach path indicator** is measured per approach direction, so one runway is two sets and two runways are four. The second set on the same visit costs materially less than the first, because travel, tower coordination and mission setup have already been paid. A four-set aerodrome does not cost four times a one-set aerodrome.

**Where the aerodrome is.** Suppliers operate through networks of licensed operators, and coverage is uneven. Distance shows up as travel rather than as a

different inspection, which is a useful distinction when comparing two quotes that look different at the bottom line.

**What else is on the visit.** Once a crew is on site and coordinated with the tower, adding the rest of the [airfield lighting](#) , the approach lighting system, the dimming steps and a pavement scan costs far less than a second visit would. Three separate visits over a year cost more than one visit that covers everything, and produce three partial records instead of one complete one.

**Whether a re-check is needed.** If a unit comes back [out of tolerance](#) and your team adjusts it, somebody has to confirm the adjustment worked. The re-check is cheap, and it is also the item most often left out of a budget and then paid for anyway.

**Which method is used.** A drone survey and an aircraft [flight inspection](#) are not the same purchase, and the price difference is smaller than the occupancy difference. That comparison has its own page, at [drone survey versus flight inspection](#) .

**What the standard requires of the record.** A verification producing angles alone is a smaller job than one producing angles, colour transition, intensity symmetry, coverage, dimming behaviour and obstacle clearance with retained evidence for each. Two quotes at different prices are often quoting different scopes, and the parameter list in [ICAO Doc 9157](#) Part 4 is a fair way to normalise them.

## What the public evidence actually says

There are three kinds of published number in this market, and only one of them is a price.

The first kind is contract value. Highlands and Islands Airports Limited put aeronautical flight inspection services out with an estimated value of 600,000 pounds, and the award went to a CAA-approved flight inspection organisation.

The operator runs a network of regional aerodromes, so that figure covers many fields and, importantly, does not state the contract term. It is an order of magnitude for what network-scale aircraft-based verification costs a public operator. It is not a per-set price, and treating it as one would be dishonest.

The second kind is duration. Suppliers publish times readily because time is their argument. Published material from one French supplier describes roughly thirty minutes per set with a drone, against about one hour of runway occupation per set for the method it replaced. A Spanish supplier's directory listing describes an inspection completed in under twenty minutes with less than six minutes of drone flight. These are vendor claims rather than independent measurements, and they are still useful, because occupancy converts into money at a rate the aerodrome already knows.

The third kind is the supplier's own statement about pricing policy, which in this case is that there is not one. TarmacView says on its **cost post** that it quotes per airport rather than publishing a rate, and gives the shape of a visit instead: about an hour on site per runway with both directions measured, results the same day.

Put together, the honest summary is that a buyer cannot price this service from public sources. What a buyer can do is normalise the scope, ask three suppliers the same question and compare like with like, which is the purpose of the checklist further down.

## Three worked scenarios

Each scenario uses the same logic, the same units, the same rounding and the same tax basis. All figures are estimates in euros excluding VAT for the EU market as at 4 September 2026.

**A single-runway regional aerodrome, two PAPI sets, no ILS.** One annual visit covering both approach directions, plus one verification pass after the maintenance team adjusts a unit. Visit estimated at 6,000 EUR, re-check

estimated at 1,100 EUR, annual total around 7,100 EUR. Because there is no radio aid on the field, no aircraft flight inspection is contracted, so this is the entire verification budget for the visual aids. This is the case where a drone method has the clearest advantage, since there is no aircraft visit to ride along on.

**A two-runway airport, four PAPI sets, full approach lighting.** Two visits a year rather than one, each covering a runway end to end, and each extended to the edge light arrays, the approach lighting system, the dimming steps and a pavement scan. Estimated at 9,000 EUR per visit and 1,100 EUR for one re-check, annual total around 19,100 EUR. The per-set cost falls sharply here, and the reason is entirely that travel and coordination are amortised across more work.

**An aerodrome that already contracts an aircraft flight inspection.** The ILS is calibrated by aircraft on its own periodicity, and the visual aids are checked on the same visit. The marginal cost of adding the PAPI to a flight that is happening anyway may be small, and the honest comparison is then not fee against fee. It is whether the visual aids record produced that way covers the same parameter set, and whether the runway time it consumes is worth more than the marginal fee saved. At a field with spare capacity the answer often favours the incumbent arrangement. At a congested one it usually does not.

## Hidden and ongoing costs

**Runway occupancy.** No supplier invoices for it and it is normally the largest number in the exercise. An hour of a busy runway is worth more than any inspection fee in this guide. A method flown between movements does not eliminate that cost, but it reduces it to coordination overhead rather than a booked closure.

**Airfield staff time.** Somebody has to coordinate with the tower, escort the crew, operate the lighting panel through the dimming steps and switch to the standby supply. That is several hours of skilled staff who are not doing their other work.

**The adjustment itself.** Finding a unit out of tolerance is the point of the exercise, and correcting it costs money that the inspection quote does not include. Budget for it, because a year in which nothing needs adjusting is the unusual one.

**Programme upkeep.** The maintenance programme document has to describe the equipment that is actually installed. After an LED conversion or a runway extension it usually does not, and reconciling it is a real piece of engineering time that is easy to leave out of a budget.

**The re-measurement you did not plan.** Resurfacing, a lighting replacement, a new instrument approach procedure or an audit finding all force an out-of-cycle check. Over a five-year window most aerodromes hit at least one.

## Ways to control the cost

Combine the work into one visit. This is the single largest lever available, and it is available to every aerodrome. The marginal cost of adding systems to a visit already coordinated is small.

Fix the scope before asking for prices, so that three quotes describe the same job. A quote for angles only and a quote for the full parameter set are not comparable, and the cheaper one is usually the smaller one.

Keep the section of the programme that generates re-checks honest. A verification pass is cheap and an unplanned second full visit is not, so catching an adjustment inside the same season is worth organising for.

Ask what is retained. A supplier who keeps the raw data lets you re-examine a disputed measurement without flying again. A supplier who delivers a PDF does not, and the second visit that results is a cost created by the first purchase.

## Preparing to ask for a quote

Five facts turn a vague enquiry into a comparable quotation, and none of them takes long to assemble.

The aerodrome, and the number of runways and approach directions with glide slope indicators. Whether the aids are conventional or LED, since the beam characteristics differ and the acceptance figures may too. What else you want on the visit, listed explicitly rather than as “the lighting”. Whether an approved maintenance programme exists and what interval it commits to. And the date window, because travel is planned around it.

Send those five and you should get back a figure, a scope note and a date. If a supplier returns a price without a scope note, that is the thing to fix before comparing it against anything.

## Sources and verification

Every figure on this page was checked on 4 September 2026, and the next review is due on 4 December 2026 because pricing pages of this kind go stale quickly.

The public procurement record cited is a UK notice for aeronautical flight inspection services with an estimated value of 600,000 pounds, awarded to a CAA-approved flight inspection organisation serving a network of regional aerodromes. The vendor duration claims are published by the suppliers themselves and are labelled as vendor claims rather than independent measurement. The statements about how TarmacView scopes and prices a visit come from its own published cost post and pricing page, which are first-party sources and are disclosed as such.

The euro ranges are estimates produced for this guide. They are not quotations, they are not sourced from a price list, and no supplier has agreed to them. If you have a real quotation that contradicts a band here, that quotation is better

evidence than this page, and the page should be corrected rather than defended.

Ready to turn an estimate into a number for your aerodrome? Send the runway count and the set count to [TarmacView](#) and a scope note comes back with a price.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Why does nobody publish a price for PAPI calibration?**

Because the work scales with the aerodrome rather than with a line item, and because the market is small enough that every supplier prefers to quote. A search of the drone calibration suppliers on 4 September 2026 found published claims about flight duration and accuracy and no published rates at all. The consequence for a buyer is that the only comparable public evidence sits in procurement records, where it is aggregated to contract level and mixed with other scope, so it has to be unpacked before it says anything about one PAPI set.

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### **What is the cheapest version that still does the job?**

One visit, one runway, both approach directions, covering the glide slope indicators only. That is the smallest purchase that produces a defensible verification record for the aids that most often drift. It is estimated at 5,000 to 7,000 EUR excluding VAT in the EU market as at 4 September 2026. Anything cheaper is usually a sample rather than a verification, and a sample does not answer the question an auditor asks.

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### **Is a drone check cheaper than a flight inspection?**

Almost always on the fee, and by a much larger margin on runway occupancy, which is where the real money is at a busy aerodrome. It is not a like-for-like substitution. An aircraft flight inspection also verifies radio navigation aids, which a drone cannot do. If the aircraft is coming anyway for the ILS, adding the visual aids to that visit may be close to free, and the comparison changes completely.

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### **How much does a re-check cost after an adjustment?**

Estimated at 1,000 to 1,200 EUR excluding VAT per set, which is a fraction of the first visit. The reason is that the expensive parts are already paid. The mission plan exists, the aerodrome profile exists and the previous measurement exists, so the re-check is a comparison against a known state rather than a new survey. Budget for one re-check per year even if none turns out to be needed.

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### **What is not in the price?**

The physical adjustment of any unit found out of tolerance, which is done by your maintenance team or contractor. Any electrical work at the vault. The cost of the airfield staff who coordinate the visit and operate the lighting panel. Runway occupancy, which does not appear on anybody's invoice and is usually the largest number in the whole exercise. And VAT, since every figure here is stated excluding it.

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## How often should this be budgeted?

Annually as a default, with the caveat that the binding document is the aerodrome's own approved maintenance programme rather than a general rule. Budget one full verification visit and one re-check per year, and add an unscheduled visit in any year that includes a resurfacing, a lighting replacement, a new instrument approach procedure or a finding from an authority audit. Those events are the ones that force an out-of-cycle check.

## References

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**tarmacview-papi-cost**    What a PAPI Inspection Actually Costs  
(<https://www.tarmacview.com/blog/what-a-papi-inspection-costs/>)  
TarmacView

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**tarmacview-pricing**    Pricing: one visit, every light and every surface  
(<https://www.tarmacview.com/pricing/>)  
TarmacView

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**hial-flight-inspection**    Aeronautical Flight Inspection Services, Highlands and Islands Airports Limited  
(<https://app.stotles.com/explore/notices/c15ac9fa-c8fc-4b3e-8f72-be39ef79bd98/aeronautical-flight-inspection-services>)  
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**fracs-papi-drone**    Revolutionizing PAPI Calibration with Drone Technology  
(<https://fracs.aero/2025/03/20/revolutionizing-papi-calibration-with-drone-technology/>)  
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**canard-papi-calibration**    PAPI Calibration (<https://www.airport-technology.com/products/papi-calibration/>)  
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**icao-doc-9157-p4**    Doc 9157, Aerodrome Design Manual, Part 4: Visual Aids  
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