EHA Position Paper – NVIS Operations Applicability under EASA and UK Regulation

European Helicopter Association – Regulatory Overview

Executive Summary

This position paper summarises the regulatory framework governing the use of Night Vision Imaging System (NVIS) operations within EASA Member States and the United Kingdom. It clarifies which operator categories—CAT, SPO, NCC, and ATO—are eligible to obtain or use NVIS approvals and identifies the relevant regulatory references under Part-SPA (Specific Approvals) and national guidance material.

1. EASA Framework

Under Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 (Air OPS), NVIS operations are covered by Part-SPA, Subpart NVIS. Only operators conducting Commercial Air Transport (Part-CAT) or Specialised Operations (Part-SPO) are eligible to hold an SPA.NVIS approval. The NVIS approval authorises the use of NVG-compatible aircraft, trained crew, and approved procedures for specific night operations. Non-commercial operators (Part-NCC and Part-NCO) cannot conduct NVIS operations, as no SPA mechanism exists under those Parts.

Approved Training Organisations (ATOs) may apply for their own SPA.NVIS approval if they intend to deliver NVIS flight training using their own NVIS-equipped aircraft. This requires compliance with the same technical and operational standards as a Part-SPO or Part-CAT operator, including approved manuals, NVIS-qualified instructors, and NVIS-compatible aircraft configurations.

2. UK CAA Framework

Following the UK's exit from the EU, the retained UK Air OPS Regulation mirrors the EASA structure. NVIS operations remain regulated under Part-SPA, Subpart NVIS, with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as the competent authority. The CAA issues NVIS approvals (SPA.NVIS) for both Part-CAT and Part-SPO operators, supported by guidance in CAP 999 and application process Form 1105. As in the EASA system, NVIS is not permitted for Part-NCC or Part-NCO operations.

3. Applicability by Operator Type

Operator Category	NVIS Permitted?	Conditions
Part-CAT	✅ Yes	Requires SPA.NVIS approval; NVIS-compatible aircraft, approved training and procedures.

Part-SPO	✅ Yes	Requires SPA.NVIS approval; typically for HEMS, SAR, Police, and firefighting operations.
Part-NCC	❌ No	No SPA mechanism under Part-NCC; private or corporate operators not eligible.
Part-NCO	❌ No	Not applicable under Air OPS; NVIS use prohibited.
ATO	⚠️ Possible	May obtain SPA.NVIS if conducting NVIS training with NVIS-approved aircraft and instructors.

4. Regulatory Logic

The regulatory restriction of NVIS operations to Part-CAT and Part-SPO operators is founded on the principle of proportional oversight and operational risk management. NVIS flight requires certified NVIS-compatible aircraft, formal crew training, and a continuous safety and maintenance framework—elements that depend on an operator's ability to maintain direct regulatory engagement through approved manuals, audits, and recurrent checking.

Part-NCC and Part-NCO operations, by contrast, operate under a declaration-based system with limited authority oversight and no mechanism for specific approvals.

Consequently, EASA and the UK CAA confine NVIS use to those operator categories that possess the organisational structure, safety management capability, and regulatory control necessary to ensure the safe and standardised employment of NVIS technology.

5. EHA Position

The EHA supports harmonised implementation of NVIS training and operational approvals across Europe, recognising NVIS as a key enabler for safe night-time HEMS, public service missions and associated training. However, EHA notes that NVIS operations must remain limited to operators with appropriate regulatory oversight and technical capability. The Association encourages competent authorities to facilitate ATO-level SPA.NVIS approvals where safety and training standards are demonstrably equivalent to those of operational operators.