

# Governmental Satellite Communications

**The importance of networks in today's globalised world cannot be overestimated. In fact, satellite communications (SATCOM) have become critical elements for defence, security, humanitarian, emergency response or diplomatic communications. Satellite communications are a key enabler for civil and military missions/operations in particular in remote and austere environments with little or no infrastructure. With increasing dependence on highly sensitive information for decision-making processes and secure links for example for remote operation of unmanned systems, secure, large and highly available connectivity in a resilient network has become increasingly crucial.**

Satellite communications are generally split into three main parts. The first segment is related to the sovereign and hardened element (MILSATCOM – guarantee of access and highest security standards). The second segment is related to functions with assured access, relatively high throughput and secure but not hardened transmission (GOVSATCOM). Currently, five European Member States possess such capabilities nationally, all of whose operational life is expected to end between 2018 and 2025. The third segment refers to satellite communications procured on-demand through the commercial sector with various availability levels (CIVSATCOM).

SATCOM capabilities are scarce but essential resource from Member States. Their development should be based on early up-front programming and planning as well as requirements and assessment of the affordable solutions in a challenging financial environment.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) supports Member States in their capability development process related to GOVSATCOM and CIVSATCOM, while the MILSATCOM element is tackled at national level.

## EDA Achievements

At the Steering Board in November 2011, Defence Ministers identified satellite communication matters as two of the eleven Pooling & Sharing priorities. As a first building block, EDA addressed the CIVSATCOM segment through the establishment of the European Satellite Communication Procurement Cell (ESPC- see box) which is now fully operational.

For the second segment related to GOVSATCOM, the breadth of potential users, the diversity of missions as well as the current budgetary context imply the devel-



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### European Satellite Communication Procurement Cell (ESPC)

Member States often resort to commercial satellite communications either to complement military capabilities or as the sole means to effectively conduct military operations with appropriate connectivity. EDA launched the ESPC to offer a one-stop shop for SATCOM procurement. Its added value is to create a ready-to-use cell for countries without such capability as well as a benefit for all from pooled procurement of commercial satellite communications services. Initially five countries (France, Italy, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom) chose to participate in the project; Belgium, Finland and Luxemburg joined in mid-2013. Through Astrium Services, with which the EDA had signed a framework contract for a period of three years, the contributing Member States will benefit from easier access and reduced costs.

opment of future SATCOM capability in a more modular and scalable manner, able to match a wide range of civil and defence applications and missions. This activity requires exploring opportunities for innovative governance, R&D and procurement schemes to ensure synergies with the European Commission (EC), European Space Agency (ESA) and industrial players.

## Way Ahead: Indicative Roadmap

Based on EDA's initial findings regarding GOVSATCOM, capability development steps were identified and proposed to the 19 November 2013 Steering Board. The essence of the initiative is to be incremental, bringing firstly benefits

