

European Defence Agency (EDA) at a glance



The European Defence Agency (EDA) supports Member States' efforts to improve European defence capabilities.

A unique structure

EDA was established in 2004. An agency of the Council, its Steering Board meets at the level of Defence Ministers¹. This puts it in a unique institutional position and gives it political impetus at the highest level.

Flexible and compact

EDA is small (fewer than 130 staff) but its expertise is widely acknowledged. Its personnel generally have a defence or military background with extensive experience. They work in an integrated manner within the Agency; and have close links to expert counterparts in Member States. The Agency has a budget of some 30 million euros. And it acts as a powerful lever: the projects it launches and manages generate anything between 100 and 250 million euros in ad hoc budgets. Its budget should not thus be seen in isolation: in military parlance, it acts as a force multiplier.

EDA's flexibility is also manifested in the configuration of the projects it runs. There are two types of project: opt-out (all Member States participate unless they choose not to); and opt-in (formed by two or more Member States). EDA thus works à la carte: depending on their strategic priorities, their operational requirements, or their interest in a specific project, Member States decide the extent to which they participate in the Agency's core work of projects and studies. In other words, it is where Member States who wish to develop capabilities in cooperation can do so. But it is also a key facilitator in developing the capabilities necessary to underpin the Common Security and Defence Policy of the Union.

The full capability spectrum

The EDA covers the full capability spectrum of capability development, from upstream Research & Technology (R&T) to Operational Deployment. In the area of R&T, for example, the Agency is working on the technologies of tomorrow that will be needed in the area of maritime countermine warfare. It also works with the European Commission on dual use (civil and military) technologies linked to the fight against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threats. EDA is also playing a role in bringing to the attention of its Member States the issue of technological non-dependence.

Turning to the operational deployment of capabilities, the Agency has trained almost 120 helicopter crews, more than half of which have deployed to Afghanistan. In another concrete example - the fight against improvised explosive devices - the Agency has developed a forensic analysis laboratory to counter these weapons that can be so devastating for our armed forces. This laboratory has been deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 under a French national lead, and with the active involvement of a number of other member states.

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Denmark does not participate

These are also examples of Pooling & Sharing. But there are others, such as Air Transport, Unmanned Aerial Systems, Maritime Surveillance, and Satellite Communications. Pooling & Sharing has top-level impetus: at the last meeting of the Agency's Steering Board, held on 30 November 2011, the Defence Ministers of the EDA's 26 Member States approved eleven operational cooperation opportunities, including maritime surveillance, naval logistics, and satellite communications, to mention but a few.

Defence and other EU policies

The strengthening of the European Defence technological and Industrial Base is a priority for the Agency. It achieves this through a close dialogue with defence ministries and industry: full transparency is the key. The Agency has thus established Codes of Conduct for industry as well as a Code of Conduct on offsets. The Agency is also playing a central role in striving to strike a balance between the single market on the one hand, and the specificities of the defence sector on the other.

EDA is active in maximising civil-military synergies. Its expertise is available to, and utilised by, Member States in their consideration of the defence implications of a range of broader EU policies and initiatives, such as Radio Spectrum, Single European Sky, Cyber Defence, UAS and Space. The Agency is where defence ministries can identify and articulate their interests vis-à-vis these policies.

EDA and partners

The Agency does not live in a bubble. Relationships with the broader defence community are vital. In the same way that EDA is developing its relationship with other EU institutions such as the Commission, it is also working with third parties. It already has an Administrative Arrangement with Norway, which facilitates close practical cooperation. A similar Arrangement has been signed with the European Space Agency on 20 June 2011 at Le Bourget. An Arrangement with Switzerland is also in preparation. The Agency has established and is developing its relationship with NATO. It also have close relationship with OCCAR.



Image credits: *Gorup/Austrian Airforce - Belgian Army/DG COM*

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EDA's tasks

As described in the Council Decision of 12 July 2011, EDA has at its task to:

- "contribute to identifying the Member States' military capability objectives and evaluating observance of the capability commitments given by the Member States";
- "promote the harmonisation of operational needs and the adoption of effective, compatible procurement methods";
- "propose multilateral projects to fulfil the objectives in terms of military capabilities, ensure coordination of the programmes implemented by the Member States and management of specific cooperation programmes";
- "support defence technology research, and coordinate and plan joint research activities and the study of technical solutions meeting future operational needs";
- "contribute to identifying and, if necessary, implementing any useful measure for strengthening the industrial and technological base of the defence sector and for improving the effectiveness of military expenditure".