



GOVSATCOM

The importance of networks in today's globalised world cannot be overestimated. In fact, satellite communications (SATCOM) have become critical elements for the EU and its Member States in support of defence, security, humanitarian and emergency response or diplomatic missions and are proving more and more valuable in the broader telecommunications landscape. Satellite communications today are a key enabler for civil and military operations/missions, not only in remote and austere environments with little or no infrastructure but in general satellite connectivity is one of the best and most reliable ways to establish communication links with a complete set of new and evolving IT services, no matter where they may be required. With increasing dependence on highly sensitive or classified information for decision-making and, as an illustration, secured satellite links for remote operation of unmanned systems, secure and highly available connectivity in a resilient network has become both strategic and crucial. The EDA GOVSATCOM Pooling and Sharing Demonstration project (GSC Demo) project has been established as answer to this development.

Despite the increasing security features implemented by commercial SatCom services, defence users depend on robust, highly protected, and guaranteed governmentally provided and controlled SatCom services derived from enhanced security requirements in response to increased multidimension security risks and cyber threats to be able to fully support the commander intent in support of national or EU CSDP missions and operations.

Hence, EDA's satellite communications priorities, supported by the EDA Member States already since a decade, address the possibility to either purchase commercial SatCom services, through its EU SATCOM Market project or to utilise GOVSATCOM services through the establishment of a government-to-government relationship within the EDA GSC project framework.

EU Political context

The development of the space sector and its relevance for the EU and its citizens has been addressed in several EU high level documents which recognise and bolster the role of space, and specifically satellite communications, in EU's security, prosperity and competitiveness. As SATCOM capabilities are scarce and represent significant public investments by Member States, their development requires exploring affordable opportunities for innovative governance, R&D and procurement schemes and programming and planning to ensure synergies.

Thus, the EU Global Strategy, adopted by the European Council in June 2016, the European Commission (EC) Space Strategy for Europe, launched in October 2016, and the European Defence Action Plan which followed the subsequent month all stress the importance of having enough access to European GOVSATCOM capabilities. Furthermore, in March 2017, the Council's Political and Security Committee has endorsed the document of High Level Civil-Military User Needs for EU GOVSATCOM, thus further consolidating civil-military synergies in the field. After finalising

an Impact Assessment in September 2017, the regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Union Space Program from April 2021, defines EU GOVSATCOM as one of the 4 components of the future space programme. This initiative having strong links with the defence field, a mandate has been approved by the EDA Steering Board in February 2018 providing for the EDA to act as facilitator in support of the Ministries of Defence within the EU GOVSATCOM Programme governance. In addition, based on the 2020 CARD Report, EDA is developing a European approach to Defence in Space in order to improve access to space services and the protection of space-based assets, decrease the high level of fragmentation in space and increase coherence. This holistic approach notably encompasses SatCom capabilities.

State of play and EDA achievements

The EDA, in a cooperative effort with the EC, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the EEAS is deeply involved in EU GOVSATCOM. In this regard, a Memorandum of Intent between the European Defence Agency and the European Space Agency on next generation secure satellite communications to pursue cooperation among various lines of cooperation, was signed in January 2021.

In this context, EDA gathered operational defence needs. This satellite communication demand for European actors involved in the conduct of national or CSDP operations/missions is described both in a Common Staff Target document and a GOVSATCOM Common Staff Requirements document and an associated Business Case detailing potential solutions to address GOVSATCOM capability development. Those documents were approved at the EDA Steering Board in 2014 and 2017. From June 2017 onwards, the EDA together with contributing Member States developed the EDA GSC Demo project. This collaborative project, which is fully coherent with the revised 2018 Capability Development Plan and the therein defined EU Capability Development Priorities, entered its execution phase in January 2019. The EDA GSC Demo project is currently composed of 17 Members including the European Peace Facility (EPF).

The GSC Demo provides access to reliable, secure and cost-effective GOVSATCOM capabilities based on existing, pooled, governmental SATCOM resources provided by Member States. GOVSATCOM capacity and service delivery is ongoing, and the project meets the GOVSATCOM requirements of the contributing Member States and in support of EU CSDP Operations and Missions (through the EPF Mechanism).

In light of this unique GOVSATCOM experience and knowledge in EDA, the Agency takes part in initiatives such as the ENTRUSTED research project funded under Horizon 2020 where a consortium of EU Member States and EU Agencies is aiming at establishing a network of governmental users and agreeing

upon common user needs and requirements for secure SatCom systems and services.

EDA's work on GOVSATCOM is thus aligned with and evolves alongside relevant stakeholders' projects, especially the EC and ESA, by engaging in dialogues and coordinating with their initiatives such as the EU GOVSATCOM project, the secure space connectivity Initiative, and ESA's new ARTES Strategic Programme Line dedicated to "Space Systems for Safety and Security (4S)", which focuses on a next generation secure SATCOM infrastructure for institutional and public regulated needs.

Way ahead

The EDA GSC Demo project, recently extended until end of November 2025, will continue to support its Members by providing quick and easy access to GOVSATCOM capacities and services through available pooled resources. EDA, together with Member States, will continue to remain active and engaged in the GOVSATCOM/Secure SATCOM related work within the EU and ESA and in particular closely follow the further development and implementation of the EU GOVSATCOM component to enhance civil/ military cooperation and the development of enhanced defence capabilities.

For more information on the EDA GOVSATCOM project, please [watch our video](#).