MILITARY MOBILITY

Military Mobility covers the movement of military personnel, goods and assets from one place to another, including border crossings, by using different modes of transport. A smooth, efficient and effective movement of military personnel and assets across and beyond the territory of the European Union (EU) will enhance its capacity to prepare for and respond to crises.

Military Mobility will also enable EU Member States to act faster, in line with their defence needs and responsibilities, both in the context of Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and in the framework of national and multinational activities. A comprehensive European approach, to be coordinated also with relevant international partners, is therefore required to remove potential obstacles and ensure a swift movement of military personnel and assets to areas where they are needed.

A comprehensive European approach

On 28 March 2018, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and the European Commission presented an ‘Action Plan on Military Mobility’ which introduced such a comprehensive European approach. Building on a roadmap previously developed by an expert group at the European Defence Agency (EDA), the Action Plan provides a coherent framework for programmes, projects, initiatives, and activities to further improve Military Mobility in the EU. It identifies tasks, responsibilities, and timelines for improving Military Mobility with regard to legal aspects, customs, military requirements and cross-border movement permissions.

In addition, the European Council invited the High Representative, the Commission and EU Member States to advance their work on Military Mobility, both under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and in the context of EU-NATO cooperation.

EDA’s role in the Action Plan implementation

EDA is committed to supporting its Member States to harmonise military aspects in regulations and reducing the administrative burden, while involving relevant stakeholders and ensuring coherence with NATO. The Agency functions as a facilitator and an interface between all stakeholders and provides a platform to exchange views.

Against this backdrop, EDA’s objectives as regards Military Mobility are to

- pursue Military Mobility activities as tasked by Member States;
- monitor progress on Military Mobility activities, projects and programmes;
- report to Member States on the progress made on an annual basis;
- ensure coherence with NATO.
Member States identified the following concrete work strands for EDA to help improve Military Mobility:

**Cross Border Movement Permission**

Cross Border Movement Permission relates to the procedures that Armed Forces need to go through before receiving permission to cross borders; thus, clearly an area where EU Member States can work together to increase the consistency and/or effectiveness of their respective procedures. EDA’s Cross Border Movement Permission programme has been signed by 25 Member States in 2019. In 2020, Norway (which is not a formal member but has signed an administrative agreement with the Agency) also joined the programme. In addition, in 2021 two Technical Arrangements (TA) have been developed. These arrangements specify the administrative procedures (per transport mode) that have to be followed for cross-border movements during crisis times, preparation for crises, training and day-to-day business. They describe a desired objective to be reached from a military perspective, while allowing participants to take the appropriate national measures to attain this goal, in line with their national position. Furthermore, both TA describe standard situations in which the impact for the receiving country (host nation) is reduced to an absolute minimum and where the required support from it is only minimal or not needed. This leads to the approval of such cross-border movements in advance, through the granting of annual permissions. Both TA also address the topic of diplomatic clearances. The TA implementation will shorten lead times for the movement permission process and thus help EU Member States to meet the agreed response time of 5 working days set to possibly provide movement permission. Furthermore, the use of those TA will reduce the overall administrative burden, allowing EU Member States to use their scarce personnel resources in the most efficient way.

**Customs - Harmonising the military requirements**

Requests for military transport in and out of the EU are submitted to customs regulations. In this domain, common standard procedures have been developed and deviating national interpretations on international legislation are being harmonised. This EDA programme has a strong link to the European Commission and has been executed in accordance with the European Union Customs Code leading to the establishment of an EU form 302. This form is to be used by all EU Member States as well as EU CSDP missions and operations to cover customs related activities. As a next step, the communication process between Armed Forces and customs authorities will be digitalised. This will lead to a further reduction of the administrative burden and relieve Member States’ military personnel.

**Legal – rules and regulations**

The legal issues that the military face range from the requirements for safe and secure transport of personnel and military equipment, including the transport of dangerous goods, to aspects of liability including environmental legislation, from the physical and legal protection of personnel to the availability and adequacy of relevant transport infrastructure. Given that the legislative frameworks vary from one Member State to the other, it is difficult for the military to comply with all of them adequately. As a result, for surface transport, EU Member States agreed on a voluntary basis to align with the existing EU legislation for the civilian transport of dangerous goods. When this is not possible, NATO regulations as laid down in the applicable NATO documents will be followed, thus also ensuring coherence with NATO.

**Coherence with ongoing projects and programmes**

After the adoption of the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility in 2018, other initiatives on Military Mobility have been established. Through its ‘Project Team Movement & Transport’, EDA provides the platform for EU Member States, including third parties, to exchange views on anticipated and ongoing activities for Military Mobility.

Two projects related to Military Mobility have been launched under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO): the German-led “Network of LogHubs in Europe and Support to Operations” (Loghub), the Dutch-led Military Mobility. EDA has provided expertise to these projects.

EDA’s Cat B Project EU Multimodal Transport Hub (M2TH) was established in 2013 and aims at setting up a geographical network to facilitate the movement of troops. The experience gained in this project was made available to the German “Loghub” PESCO project recognising the similarity of the ongoing activities.

**Planned next steps – Focus Area ENHANCED MILITARY MOBILITY**

‘Enhanced Military Mobility’, identified in the first Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) report as one of six ‘focus areas’ for future European collaborative defence capability development, puts the emphasis on the deployment of personnel, goods and asset in Europe and beyond. Therefore, a joint approach by comprehensively covering air, maritime, cyber, land and enabling aspects is required. It offers the opportunity for a more holistic approach to Military Mobility. It entails the improvement and development of related capabilities and services that could also support civilian response systems in times of crisis.
Under the banner of “Enhanced Military Mobility” collaborative options for improved resilience, air and sealift capabilities and logistics have been identified:

1. ‘Improved Resilience’ covers information management, cyber defence and transport infrastructure.

All Member States will benefit from standardised and digitalised processes and procedures related to Military Mobility. This approach should lead to the establishment of a federated network of involved national and multinational military and civilian stakeholders enabling a seamless administration and organisation of requests and approvals as well as the movement of military forces itself.

As regards to cyber defence, digitalisation has a direct impact. Cyber resilience as an overarching aspect applies also to Enhanced Military Mobility, especially on the improvement of communication and cooperation between the Member States, including processes and procedures previously mentioned.

Engineering services can strengthen resilience regarding infrastructure to improve Military Mobility on EU territory and beyond, for example by providing bridge-laying capacity, military engineering and the use of logistic vehicles including trucks and trailers. Protection of harbours, as access to them is crucial to conduct force deployment.

2. For ‘Air and Sea lift capabilities’, an augmentation of European strategic transport capacities in the critical area of outsized cargo in the short term is necessary. In the medium-term, focus could be on a pan-European mid-volume/long-range tactical/strategic crossover component, including by benefitting from the A400M. In the long term, assets with new features are required to ensure adequate response to evolving threats and full-range mission capability.

Regarding sealift capabilities, there is a need for enhancing the lift capabilities in the maritime domain.

3. Enhancing ‘Logistics’ is a European capability development priority in itself. Some key aspects are essential for Enhanced Military Mobility and associated collaborative projects. After strategic deployment, units enter a geographic area for Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM). These locations are to receive forces and provide logistic support to those units which are most likely collocated or in the vicinity of logistic hubs. Such hubs entertain logistic services like storage, supply, maintenance and repair. It is required to connect applied (national) CIS/IT for logistic and to digitalise the applied processes. The supporting CIS systems should be cyber-hardened. Tracking and Tracing (T&T) and common warehousing and management are further activities which need to be considered in this regard.

Additional activities should focus on the reduction of the logistic footprint for deployed operations by introducing Additive Manufacturing (AM).