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# Working Group 3 – Protection of Critical Energy Infrastructure

## What

As one of the four working groups of the fourth phase of the Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy in the Defence and Security Sector (CF SEDSS IV), **Working Group 3 (WG-3) will continue its work on** the protection of critical energy infrastructure (PCEI) and aims to **strengthen the research on the resilience and protection of defence-related critical energy infrastructure (CEI)**. This will be done by building on the accomplishment and results delivered in CF SEDSS III and by taking stock of the recommendations identified in the position paper on the PCEI and the document on the protection of defence-related CEI against hybrid threats.

The key objective of this WG is to explore how to better assist ministries of defence (MoDs) in increasing the protection and resilience of CEI and associated networks using different tools, guidelines, methodologies, vulnerability measurements, risk assessment or emergency plans, etc.

European CEI faces **deliberate threats**, including cyber, physical, and electronic attacks by state actors, state proxies, terrorist groups, or criminal organisations. They also face **non-deliberate threats** such as accidents, natural disasters, and the effects of **climate change**. A key challenge is how to maintain the security of supply and the resilience of CEI both for defence and civilian stakeholders. These threats may create significant risks, as increased exposure to incidents potentially jeopardises the security of supply. It also introduces the possibility of cascading disruptions across the Member States (MS) and the EU.

Likewise, critical infrastructure does not operate as an isolated system and the continuity of its services is quite dependent on the proper operations of other infrastructure and networks. If one of their inputs fails, the critical infrastructure cannot optimally provide its own service. Also, if these dependencies are bi-directional, this means that a disturbance in the normal operations of one critical infrastructure can impact other critical infrastructure due to interdependence.

In this context, WG-3 explores opportunities that derive from the implementation of the EU legislation on energy security. This currently includes the **Critical Entities Resilience (CER) Directive**, the **Regulation on the Security of Gas Supply, and the Regulation on Risk Preparedness in the Electricity Sector**. WG-3 will also assess the new tasks for the defence sector potentially stemming from strategic documents such as the **EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence** and the Competitiveness Compass for the EU, as well as general and sectoral legislation. In addition, the EU **Capability Development Priorities (CDP)** Plan, as approved by the MS MoDs in December 2023, identifies for the first time PCEI and energy security as one of the main future defence priorities. Likewise, the **EU Critical Infrastructure Blueprint** coordinates a response at the EU level to disruptions to critical infrastructure with significant cross-border relevance.

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## How

By providing a platform for discussion and sharing of expertise among MoDs, academia, industry, and research and technology organisations, WG-3 will address the following objectives:

- **Contribute** to the research and sharing of best practices on the protection of defence energy-related CEI from natural disasters, terrorist or cyber-attacks, and threats driven by the development of smart grids or the implications of climate change to infrastructures, networks, and installations.
- **Explore** how to contribute better to preventing and managing cross-border level crises regarding the security of gas supply.
- **Identify** how to contribute to enhancing risk preparedness in the electricity sector.
- **Develop** guidelines and studies for raising awareness and increasing knowledge of the significance of the PCEI in the EU defence and security sector.
- **Identify** how PCEI contributes to securing energy strategic autonomy for the European defence and security sector (energy security, network resilience, and energy diplomacy).

## Deliverables

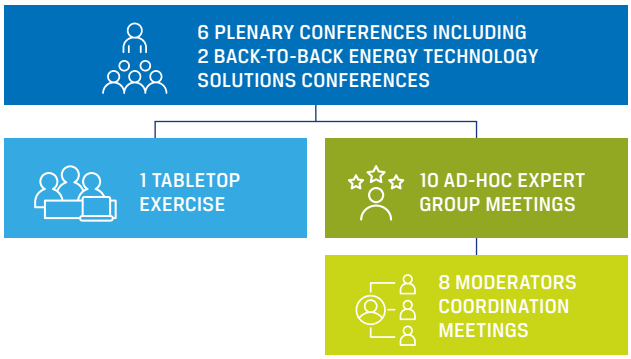
WG-3 will produce the following deliverables during Phase IV of the Forum:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8 DEFENCE ENERGY-RELATED PROJECT IDEAS | 1 DEFENCE ENERGY-RELATED RESEARCH STUDY | REVISION OF THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY IN DEFENCE |

These will contribute to supporting MoDs in their efforts to improve the resilience of the critical energy infrastructure, which is important for the functioning of the armed forces, and a key success factor in the transition towards sustainable energy models. By focusing on **the resilience of power grids, transport networks, information, and communication systems**, MoDs can contribute to the avoidance, mitigation, and recovery from damage, disruption, or even the destruction of critical energy infrastructure.

## Events

WG-3 will contribute to a number of events running **from October 2024 to September 2028**, including six plenary conferences, two energy technology solutions conference, at least two ad-hoc expert group meetings, and the table-top exercise focusing on PCEI.




## Impact

The activities of WG-3 aim at **developing dual-use research and recommendations for MoDs**, particularly looking at **synergies between the military and civilian use of functional infrastructures** that deliver critical goods and services in the energy sector. WG-3 activities will bring MoDs closer to relevant experts from industry, academia, and research and technology organisations. They will also guarantee the continuity of activities developed during the plenary conferences. Exchange of knowledge and best practices and the development of research and guidance will enhance the capacity of the EU MoDs to prevent, react to, and minimize the impact of critical energy infrastructure disruption, hampering basic social and economic functions as well as adversely impacting the defence and security sector.

## About CF SEDSS

CF SEDSS is a **European Commission initiative managed by the European Defence Agency (EDA)**, in collaboration with the European Commission Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER) and the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). The fourth phase, which has a duration of 4 years expiring on 30 September 2028, is co-funded by the European Union's **LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme** under the Grant Agreement No. 101191127 and the EDA.

For additional information visit our website:

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