

European Defence Agency (EDA) at a glance



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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 Ministers. 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 has 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. It acts as a powerful lever: the projects it launches and manages generate between 100 and 250 million euros in ad hoc budgets. EDA's flexibility is also manifested in the configuration of the projects it runs. There are two types of projects: 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 projects and studies. The Agency is a key facilitator in developing the capabilities necessary to underpin the Common Security and Defence Policy of the Union.

Developing the key capabilities

The importance of EDA's role was recognised at the European Council summit in December 2013, which focused on European defence. EDA was tasked with supporting Member States in developing four key capabilities- Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR), Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), Governmental Satellite Communications (Govsatcom), and Cyber Defence. Work is progressing in each of these areas. EDA was also given various tasks to help support and develop Europe's defence industry and technological base.

The full capability spectrum

Alongside these four areas, EDA covers the full 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 or Cyber Defence. 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 so far organised seven helicopter training exercises involving hundreds of pilots from across Europe, more than half of whom were subsequently 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. This laboratory has been deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 under French lead, and with the active involvement of a number of other Member States. After this successful deployment, where more than 6 000 IEDs were analysed, the project has now been relocated to the Netherlands where it provides a permanent training facility.

These examples fall under the Agency's Pooling & Sharing initiative which currently covers eleven priority areas, among which are also Air Transport, Unmanned Aerial

¹ Denmark does not participate

Systems, Maritime Surveillance, Satellite Communications. Recognising the importance of increased cooperation, Defence Ministers signed in November 2012 the Agency's Code of Conduct on Pooling & Sharing.

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 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

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 European Commission, it is also working with third parties. It has already signed Administrative Arrangements with Norway and OCCAR. Similar arrangements are also in place with the European Space Agency since June 2011 and with Switzerland since March 2012. The Agency has established and is developing its relationship with NATO.



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EDA's tasks

As described in the Council Decision of 12 July 2011, EDA shall:

- "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".