



EUROPEAN UNION

~FACTSHEET~

THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

EU Member States want to get better value for their defence spending. Between them they have over 50.000 troops deployed on peace support operations beyond the Union's borders. The EU itself is conducting this kind of operations now. EU Member States struggle to maintain less than 5 % of our combined armed forces on such vital tasks. The EDA is there to assist Member States to spend their defence budgets (currently the combined defence budgets are about € 160 billion per annum) more effectively and efficiently, focussed upon urgent operational requirements and agreed longer term military capability needs.

The capabilities the EU needs for crisis management operations can be considered as conceptually different from those needed in the Cold War, e.g. the equipment and the technology which will enable peacekeeping troops to be rapidly deployed to distant trouble spots; to undertake their inevitably dangerous roles when they get there with the highest degree of protection; and to be resupplied and supported for operations that may last months rather than weeks. The EU also needs the intelligence capabilities that are key to understanding what is happening on the ground, and the communications that allow effective Command and Control. A radical shift of investment is needed from the traditional lethal military capabilities to capabilities that effective crisis management operations demand.

EU crisis management operations are multinational, with different national contingents required to work together more closely than ever before. Troops and equipment have to be interoperable. National defence industries cannot rely only on national defence orders anymore. Only by consolidating the demand across national borders, and consolidating the defence industries' supply, will European armed forces get interoperable equipment at a price they can afford, and will European defence industries be able to operate on a viable economic scale. Innovative ways must be explored to resource research and technology development, fund multinational acquisition as well as ways to maintain and sustain military equipment.

The new military transport aircraft being built by Airbus is a good example for this kind of joint endeavour. No individual nation could have done this by itself. Yet it took nearly two decades to progress this project from an idea to a contract. The EDA must catalyse many more such cooperations, and shorten their gestation period.

Examples of the Agency's focus

The below listed areas provide some examples where the Agency will seek to focus the joint efforts and resources of EU Member States.

- New technology, for instance the state of the art armoured fighting vehicles and unmanned air vehicles, are being developed by different Member States, each embarking on their own project. It is the EDA's job to bring together those efforts and ensure interoperability.

- Effective Command, Control and Communications between Brussels and national capitals and national command headquarters; between the European Headquarters commanding the operation and the deployment commander on the ground; between him and his subordinate formations; and between individual vehicles or soldiers. Jointly with the EU Military Staff, the EDA has launched a study to identify the most urgent problems and scope solutions. The same study will also look into the future and possibilities that new technologies might offer. Member States have to work together on those challenges.
- European Defence Equipment Market : the ultimate goal should be a truly continental scale of defence equipment market, where competition replaces national protectionism, with Europe's defence industrial base restructured for greater efficiency. As the defence industries are very sensitive, one has to ensure that the effects of competition, immediate and long term, are acceptable and the armed forces of one country trust the industry of another. Industrial restructuring will have to work through in a way which is acceptable to governments.

Structures and mandate of the EDA

The Agency, located in Brussels, is now operational with its senior management in place (total staff by mid 2005 will be 77), a budget of € 20 Million and a work programme for 2005 approved by defence ministers of the participating Member States.

The Agency is ascribed four functions, relating to:

- (a) defence capabilities development;
- (b) armaments co-operation;
- (c) the European defence, technological and industrial base and defence equipment market;
- (d) research and technology.

High Representative Solana is Head of the Agency and chairman of the Steering Board, its decision-making body composed of Defence Ministers of the 24 participating Member States (all EU Member States, except Denmark). The Commission and the chairman of the EUMC also participate in Steering Board meetings. It can be expected to meet at Ministerial level at least twice yearly. It is also envisaged that the Steering Board will meet regularly at the level of National Armaments Directors, national Research Directors, and national capability planners and policy directors. The Steering Board acts under the Council's Authority and within the framework of guidelines issued by the Council.

The Agency faces outwards. Its main "shareholders" are the Member States participating in the Agency; key stakeholders include the Council and the Commission. NATO and non-EU States are important interlocutors also.

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