

Military mobility

Military logistics was defined by Baron Henri de Jomini as 'the practical art of moving armies'. In the event of an unpredictable crisis at any border of the European Union (EU), military personnel and equipment must be able to move rapidly across the territory. Currently, training and the movement of military assets across the continent is severely hampered by the lack of appropriate infrastructure and cumbersome customs procedures. This strategic weakness in European defence cooperation is being addressed by means of action on military mobility: an action plan by the European Commission, a project and commitment under permanent structured cooperation, and a key action for EU-NATO cooperation. Military mobility is meant to ensure the seamless movement of military equipment across the EU by reducing physical, legal and regulatory obstacles.

Background

The debate surrounding the EU as a global player has gathered new political momentum since the release of the [EU Global Strategy](#) (EUGS) in 2016. Seeing the world as being more connected, contested and complex, the EUGS 'starts at home'. In 2016 and 2017, given the increasingly unpredictable threat environment, EU Member States took major steps to cooperate more on defence issues. Such steps include formally activating the permanent structured cooperation ([PESCO mechanism](#)) with 25 participating Member States, establishing the [European Defence Fund](#), creating a [Coordinated annual review on defence](#) and setting up an EU command for non-executive military common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions, the [Military Planning and Conduct Capability](#). EU-NATO cooperation has also been formalised in 2016 and 2018 through two [joint declarations](#). It is expected that in 2019 and the years following, various proposals put forward to strengthen and improve the integration of European security and defence will be implemented, including proposals on military mobility.

European Commission action plan

Among the first steps taken by the European Commission was the adoption in November 2017 of a [joint communication](#) on improving military mobility in the EU. It maps barriers to military mobility and outlines possible actions to expedite it across the EU by maximising civil-military (civ-mil) synergies. The conditions identified for achieving military mobility include the compliance of transport infrastructure with military requirements, coordination between national and international civilian and military authorities, civ-mil information exchanges and adaption of current formalities for customs and transport of dangerous goods. [Council](#) welcomed this communication and issued guidance for an action plan. In March 2018, the Commission followed up on the communication and guidance in its [action plan on military mobility](#). The plan restates the strategic need for better mobility of forces in order to boost European security and strengthen the CSDP, and proposes concrete operational measures regarding military requirements, transport infrastructure, and regulatory and procedural issues. The list of 'military requirements for military mobility within and beyond the EU' was approved by [Council](#) in June 2018 and provides the necessary input for dual civ-mil use of the trans-European transport network ([TEN-T](#)). In 2019 and 2020, the Commission plans to identify those parts of the TEN-T that are suitable for military transport and to upgrade existing ones in order to accommodate military vehicles, for example; to determine civ-mil synergies on transporting dangerous goods; to speed up cross-border movement permissions; and to develop overall military mobility with a view to [countering hybrid threats](#), for instance. EU Member States are invited to consider military requirements on a continual basis – e.g. the size of port terminals and how they connect to roads – when building infrastructure. Council has also called on Member States to develop national plans for military mobility, to engage in exercises practising mobility and to establish a network of points of contact by the end of 2019. The [European Council](#) called on Member States to simplify and standardise relevant rules and procedures by 2024. The action plan and the Council conclusions emphasise full respect for national sovereignty when simplifying procedures, thus addressing the misconception of a '[military Schengen](#)'.

In its communication on the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, the Commission proposed a €6.5 billion envelope for military mobility in order to enhance strategic transport infrastructure. Earmarked under the security and defence budget, military mobility is to be implemented through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which will fund projects dedicated to enabling dual civil-military use of the TEN-T.

Permanent structured cooperation

Military mobility is one of 34 [PESCO projects](#) and is under Dutch coordination. Out of the 25 PESCO members, 24 are part of [the project](#) that aims to 'guarantee the unhindered movement of military personnel and assets within the borders of the EU' by focusing on the administrative hurdles. The project aims to address legal barriers and bureaucratic requirements such as reducing the time for obtaining diplomatic clearances, for example. Military mobility is also a [binding commitment](#) for PESCO members: Commitment No 12, referring to the deployability of forces, requires the 25 Member States to simplify and standardise 'cross border military transport in Europe for enabling rapid deployment of military material and personnel'. Moreover, the [PESCO project](#) on creating a network of logistics hubs is complementary to efforts on military mobility. The action plan on military mobility sets out the aim of ensuring coordination with the PESCO project on military mobility in order to ensure complementarity of actions.

EU-NATO cooperation

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO's readiness for military mobility has been [stalling](#) as the '[peace dividend](#)' saw defence budgets decrease drastically. [After the Cold War](#), roads, bridges and rail networks in Europe were not built with military considerations in mind, and cannot sustain use by heavy military equipment. This was due to the changes in the security environment and a shift in [NATO's focus](#) from deterrence to out-of-area-operations. Geopolitical changes ongoing since 2014 have brought NATO closer to its initial mission of [territorial deterrence and defence](#), and led the EU to take more responsibility for its own security and defence. EU-NATO cooperation was formalised in the [2016 Warsaw joint declaration](#), and military mobility was endorsed as a priority area for cooperation in [2017](#). The [implementation report](#) on the declaration outlines NATO's contributions to the action plan on military mobility, involving close staff-to-staff consultations, the sharing of parameters for transport infrastructure and the transfer of its own military requirements to be incorporated into the EU's TEN-T. In their [2018 joint declaration](#), the EU and NATO called for demonstrable progress on military mobility, including in the framework of [cooperation on hybrid threats](#). In June 2018, [NATO ministers](#) agreed to enhance its command structures, including a new command in Germany responsible for rapid troop deployment across Europe. At the July [2018 Brussels Summit](#), NATO also established an 'enablement plan', which aims to adjust regulatory processes, enhance command and control, and increase transport capabilities in support of military mobility. Lastly, NATO recently put the ability to move military assets between European countries to the test in its largest military exercise since the Cold War, [Trident Juncture 2018](#).

European Parliament position

In its 2017 [resolution](#) on implementing the CSDP the European Parliament welcomed the Commission's initial communication on improving military mobility. Its May 2018 [resolution](#) on the CEF, meanwhile, calls for the Commission to develop dual use civ-mil infrastructure by using the CEF, and the June 2018 [resolution](#) on EU-NATO relations supports infrastructure upgrades in view of military mobility, and stresses that the projects should also focus on a North-South dimension. The December 2018 resolutions on implementing the [CSDP](#) and the [common foreign and security policy](#) welcome progress on military mobility 'as a central strategic tool in the current threat environment' and 'in order to advance European strategic autonomy' respectively. Most importantly, Parliament's 11 December 2018 [resolution on military mobility](#) welcomes the recent progress in this area, seeing it as a strategic and operational means to boost the EU's strategic autonomy. Noting that military mobility will benefit the connectivity of all EU countries, the resolution highlights the importance of sovereignty and Member States' involvement in adjusting national infrastructure and regulatory environments. Although it welcomes the overall action plan, Parliament regrets its limited strategic vision in terms of the EU's defence goals. While acknowledging that military mobility will strengthen the EU's CSDP, the resolution also stresses the need for a common strategic purpose among Member States.

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2019.

