



REPLIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

TO THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS' SPECIAL REPORT

EU military mobility

Full speed not reached due to design weaknesses and
obstacles *en route*

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This document presents the replies of the European Commission and the European External Action Service to observations of a Special Report of the European Court of Auditors, in line with Article 265 of the [Financial Regulation](#) and to be published together with the Special Report.

I. THE COMMISSION AND EEAS REPLIES IN BRIEF

The European Commission and the EEAS welcome the extensive work of the European Court of Auditors which resulted in the audit report on military mobility. Military mobility is a relatively new policy field, and the room for manoeuvre by EU institutions is limited by the Treaty's constraints on defence policy. Competences in this policy area are not only predominantly shared with the Member States but are governed by different pillars of the Treaty. This results in different institutional stakeholders being involved on various aspects.

Whilst fully committed to ensure the coherence and avoid duplications at EU level, the Commission and EEAS also believe that the co-operation between the various stakeholders has been very good. It has resulted in a substantial progress and a number of important deliverables over the past six and a half years, following the adoption of the first Action Plan on Military Mobility in March 2018. Nevertheless, the Commission and the EEAS acknowledge that challenges relative to military mobility remain and further progress in this area is needed.

It is the first time under the current MFF, that a dedicated budget was secured for military mobility. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) contains an envelope earmarked specifically for dual-use military mobility investments. The new geopolitical context, with the Russian full scale military aggression against Ukraine, prompted the need to accelerate investments in infrastructure to improve military mobility. This resulted in the EUR 1.7 billion CEF budget spent in only three calls for proposals, to co-fund 95 dual-use projects in 21 Member States across the EU.

Whilst the dedicated CEF military mobility funding calls were met with high demand, the Commission and the EEAS acknowledged that a more strategic approach would contribute to building a better-structured and more coherent military mobility network. For this reason, the 2022 Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 tasked the Commission and the EEAS, together with the Member States and upon consultation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), to carry out a 'study to identify possibilities for short-notice, large-scale movements to improve fuel resilience, long-term infrastructure planning and optimal use of this infrastructure'.

In a first step the Commission, together with the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), acting on behalf of the EEAS, identified four military mobility corridors spanning throughout the EU. These were presented to, and subsequently endorsed by the EU Military Committee on 8 October 2024. It is envisaged to embed the new priority corridors in the Annex II of the Military Requirements, which forms a legal basis for guiding and prioritising future investments in the military mobility network. The analysis should provide guidance not only for the use of EU budget, but also for the national budgets and for the European Investment Bank, to identify dual-use projects with high added value for defence. As a second step, the Commission and EUMS are carrying out an investment needs assessment.

The Commission and the EEAS consider the recommendations and conclusions of the European Court of Auditors as an opportunity to make further progress in the area of military mobility. They will serve as guidance for the drafting of the next Action Plan on Military Mobility. The Commission and the EEAS will also take the recommendations into consideration for an even more effective implementation of the current Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0.

II. COMMISSION AND EEAS REPLIES TO MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE ECA

1. Governance of EU military mobility and reporting

The Commission and the EEAS agree that there are numerous stakeholders working in the area of military mobility¹. This applies to EU institutions as well as to Member States. To ensure coherence and avoid unnecessary duplications at EU level, the Commission and the EEAS (including EUMS) and European Defence Agency (EDA) regularly meet to co-ordinate the work strands. For instance, the Action Plan on Military Mobility and the Annual Progress Reports are Joint Communications of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; these documents require close and efficient co-ordination. To align EU activities with national ones, the EU institutions regularly participate in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) project Military Mobility meetings that take place twice per year and where 25 Member States are represented. In addition, the Commission and the EEAS organize yearly military mobility expert conferences where all stakeholders meet, including NATO.

As for the Annual Progress Report, the Commission and the EEAS would like to underline that the report shows progress achieved in all four pillars. In this context, the Commission and the EEAS focus on highlighting concrete examples to illustrate achieved progress: the acceleration of the second and third call for dual-use transport infrastructure proposals and the frontloading of the CEF budget are the result of a reactive approach to evolving needs (EUR 1.69bn were allocated to 95 projects in 21 Member States). The revised military requirements include fuel supply chain, thus lessons learned from the war in Ukraine have been taken into account.

2. Progress for the four pillars of Action Plan 2.0

Regarding the observation of the European Court of Auditors on the insufficient focus on geopolitical and military aspects² in EU funding the Commission and the EEAS would like to clarify that the selection process under the Connecting Europe Facility is a competitive one based on evaluation criteria set out in the legal act (CEF Regulation). Projects with the highest overall score are selected for funding. The outcome of the evaluation is in line with the legal framework of the CEF Regulation, work program and call documents. It may for instance be that some national projects were geopolitically relevant but perhaps not mature or lacking catalytic effect. In addition, CEF Transport can only finance infrastructure projects for dual-use (civilian-defence), not exclusively for military purposes. As explained in the introduction, the dedicated CEF calls for military mobility projects, have been highly successful in terms of the number and quality of projects submitted and selected.

With regards to the ECA conclusion on the predictability of funding available for military mobility under Connecting Europe Facility, the Commission and the EEAS agree that the budget was limited, while the factual funding gap was exceptional, the budget was significantly frontloaded in the context of Russia's full scale war against Ukraine to speed up investments in dual use transport infrastructure which was also an important political signal that the EU was taking defence as a serious and urgent matter.

¹ See ECA observation para 15-39

² See ECA recommendation 5, para 88

III. COMMISSION AND EEAS REPLIES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ECA

Recommendation 1: Improve the governance arrangements for military mobility in the EU

The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) should:

- (a) streamline coordination between the EU, member states and other stakeholders, for instance by appointing a single point of contact as appropriate;**
- (b) enhance existing synergies and interaction between the European Defence Agency, Permanent Structured Cooperation projects and the Commission and the EEAS to minimise the risk of overlaps.**

(Target implementation date: 2025)

The Commission and the EEAS accept recommendation 1a). So far, Member States have not requested the Commission and/or the EEAS to set up a single point of contact. However, to ensure the fullest possible coherence of all EU actions in the area, the Commission, the EEAS (including the EUMS) and the EDA, will explore, in consultation with Member States as appropriate further streamlining coordination and synergies at EU level for military mobility.

The Commission and the EEAS accept recommendation 1b). A network of Member States' experts is already established and works well. It is considered to allow to exchange the necessary information between the Commission services, the EEAS (including the EUMS) the EDA and Member States. This is further facilitated through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) project on Military Mobility which regularly brings together, under the lead of the Dutch project coordinator, all stakeholders including Commission services, the EEAS (including the EUMS), the EDA, as well as third country participants and provides exchanges on latest developments in all areas related with military mobility. Furthermore, the annual conference on Military Mobility (established in the Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0) brings all actors together to seek synergies. There is close interaction and co-ordination among the EU institutions as well as regular engagement with Member States.

Recommendation 2: Monitor and report on the progress of each action included in Action Plan 2.0

The Commission and the EEAS should closely monitor the implementation of Action Plan 2.0 by systematically assessing progress, delays and potential issues in relation to each key action at EU level. Without prejudice to member states' sovereignty in military mobility, the Commission and the EEAS should encourage the member states to provide the information on the progress of actions envisaged for them. The information of the fulfilment of each action should then be included in subsequent progress reports.

(Target implementation date: 2025)

The Commission and the EEAS accept this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Assess the possibility of using CEF transport calls to finance dual-use infrastructure projects under the current MFF (2021-2027)

The Commission should assess the possibility of using the remaining CEF transport calls under the current MFF to finance dual-use infrastructure projects. This assessment should take into account military requirements and the gaps identified by the EU in its military network.

(Target implementation date: 2025)

The Commission accepts this recommendation. The Commission agrees that Member States should, as per priority, use the open CEF transport calls under the current MFF to propose infrastructure projects that have a dual-use value. In line with the renewed Council Pledge on Military Mobility, the Commission therefore encourages the Member States, where possible, to bring forward projects which serve a dual-use purpose when applying to the open CEF transport calls (launched in September 2024). As set out in the respective calls for proposals, the contribution to military mobility will be taken into account for evaluating the “Priority and Urgency” criterion for applicant-projects under these calls.

Recommendation 4: Take steps to improve the predictability of possible funding for military mobility under the post-2027 MFF

When preparing the next MFF proposal, the Commission should examine how possible funding for dual-use infrastructure can be made more predictable. The proposal should include an assessment of whether relevant EU instruments can be used to finance dual-use infrastructure projects.

(Target implementation date: 2027)

The Commission partially accepts this recommendation. Building a true European Defence Union is one of the priorities of the Commission 2024-29. However, this recommendation concerns future proposals for legislation and programme design in the framework of the next MFF. The Commission cannot prejudge the design of future legislative proposals, instruments and facilities which will need to be tailored to the specific situation and as such cannot be subject to an ex-ante framing. Nevertheless, as part of the preparation of the next MFF proposal, the Commission will consider how possible funding for dual-use infrastructure projects can be supported by relevant EU instruments.

Recommendation 5: Improve the selection process for dual-use infrastructure projects under the post-2027 MFF.

Under the post-2027 MFF, the Commission and the EEAS should ensure that the most relevant dual-use infrastructure projects are selected by prioritising investments that address gaps identified by the EU in its military network, thereby promoting efficiency and effectiveness. This should include looking for synergies with NATO corridors. To this end, the Commission could consider increasing the weighting of the military assessment in the selection process to reflect the principle that dual-use projects should benefit both civilian and military users fairly.

(Target implementation date: 2027)

The Commission partially accepts this recommendation. The Commission cannot prejudge the design of future legislative proposals, instruments and facilities which will need to be tailored to the specific situation and as such cannot be subject to an ex-ante framing. The Commission and the EEAS consider that the input to the evaluation provided by the EUMS already bears a strong impact on the overall evaluation of the CEF Military Mobility projects. Nevertheless, the Commission will consider the extent to which it is possible to give additional weight to the military relevance of projects, as part of the preparation of the next proposals and calls.

Recommendation 6: Make the design of the EU's military mobility actions more focused.

When designing future military mobility action plans, the Commission and the EEAS should:

(a) systematically exploit the lessons learned from the current action plan, from national and multinational (including NATO) exercises, and from the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. These lessons learned should also be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders;

(b) focus actions on improving infrastructure as well as clear actions enabling faster cross-border movements and enhancing cyber-security and set indicators, targets and target dates, where possible, to encourage reporting on progress for all actions.

(Target implementation date: 2026)

The Commission and the EEAS accept recommendation 6a).

The Commission and the EEAS accept recommendation 6b). The Commission and the EEAS will prepare the next Action Plan on Military Mobility with a clear focus on a limited number of actions. This could be focusing on the four main military corridors for large scale movements at short notice that the Commission and the EEAS (including EUMS) and EDA together with Member States and in consultation with NATO have recently identified. In parallel focus areas could include digitalization, cyber security and countering hybrid threats.