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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Council Guidelines for EDA's Work in 2021

Delegations will find enclosed the Council Guidelines for EDA's Work in 2021, as approved by written procedure.

COUNCIL GUIDELINES FOR EDA'S WORK IN 2021

1. The Council welcomes the contribution delivered by the EDA in 2020 in view of the coherent implementation of EU defence initiatives supporting the EU Level of Ambition in the area of security and defence, thereby enhancing the EU's strategic autonomy and its capacity to act as a security provider and strengthening its ability to cooperate with partners. The Council acknowledges that the activities of the Agency are implemented in line with the agreed three-year Planning Framework, which provides a comprehensive and coherent overview of the Agency's work.
2. With a view to further reinforcing coherent capability planning and development by Member States, the Council encourages the Agency to support them in the work on a Strategic Compass.
3. The Council invites the Agency to continue providing support to participating Member States as major intergovernmental prioritisation instrument at EU level in support of capability development. It calls on the Agency to take forward the implementation of the EU Capability Development Priorities derived from the 2018 Capability Development Plan (CDP), as well as other short-, mid- and long-term activities based on the Strategic Context Cases (SCC) endorsed in 2019, which also reflect the High Impact Capability Goals. This is complemented by the work on the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda and Key Strategic Activities.
4. With a view to building a more coherent, interoperable, deployable and sustainable set of European capabilities and forces, also considering that Member States have a 'single set of forces' which they can use in different frameworks, the Council encourages the Agency to further contribute to strengthening coherent capability planning, prioritisation and defence cooperation through:
 - encouraging Member States to further develop and use the SCC as the comprehensive guidance to implement the agreed EU Capability Development Priorities in a collaborative manner;

- regularly assessing together with participating Member States the potential need for revising the CDP and initiating required work in close coordination with EUMC and EUMS, taking into account all necessary input, notably the work launched to prepare the Strategic Compass which will provide coherent political guidance for a possible update of the CDP;
- supporting participating Member States in implementing the recommendations identified in the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) report presented to the EDA Steering Board in the composition of the Ministers of Defence in November 2020, including by taking forward concrete collaborative opportunities and identified focus areas in support of capability development and the operational dimension, thereby also informing PESCO and the EDF;
- initiating the CARD cycle 2021-2022 in close cooperation with EEAS/EUMS and the EUMC along the agreed CARD methodology and lessons identified derived from the first full CARD cycle;
- contributing further to the implementation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as part of the PESCO secretariat and in line with Article 7 of the Council Decision establishing PESCO, taking due account of the outcome of the PESCO Strategic Review. This entails, upon their request, continued support to PESCO participating Member States as regards capability development as well as to achieving concrete deliverables by the end of the second phase of PESCO in 2025;
- providing its views and expertise to the Programme Committee of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) and to the Informal Expert Group, and future Programme Committee of the European Defence Fund (EDF) in line with the applicable regulations and keeping a close dialogue with the European Commission. With a view to stimulate cooperative projects in the context of the EDF and upon Member States' request, the Agency will facilitate informal exchanges among them, including in the framework of the EDIDP/EDF marketplace established in EDA.

5. The Council calls on the Agency to further support upon request participating Member States in the development and implementation of projects and activities in capability development, Research & Technology and critical enablers (e.g. defence standardisation, test & evaluation), including those generated in the context of PESCO and EDIDP/EDF. The Council thereby invites the Agency to support Member States in using the EU's capability development tools and existing incentives. The Agency is in particular encouraged to identify opportunities in the domain of emerging and disruptive technologies for defence applications. It also invites the Agency to ensure a structured dialogue and engagement with industry of Member States throughout the Union, including small and medium enterprises, middle capitalisation companies and research institutions, as appropriate.
6. The Council calls on the Agency to further contribute to the defence aspects of wider EU policies in line with EDA Steering Board taskings, and in close liaison with relevant EU institutions, bodies and agencies. This comprises the following areas: Military Mobility, cyber, hybrid, space, maritime, Single European Sky, artificial intelligence, as well as REACH¹, Energy & Environment, Circular Economy and climate change.
7. The Council encourages the Agency to continue contributing to the area of Military Mobility in line with the Action Plan on Military Mobility and the Council conclusions of 25 June 2018, including through the two EDA ad-hoc projects related to customs and cross-border movement permission procedures. It calls for the Agency to continue to support participating Member States in the PESCO project on Military Mobility.
8. The Council encourages the Agency to continue exploring and, under the guidance of the Steering Board, developing the provision of services to Member States, military and civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, as well as other EU institutions, bodies and agencies, building on ongoing activities in areas such as for example satellite communication or Air Medevac.

¹ Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals

9. The Council encourages the Agency to continue contributing to the implementation of the common set of proposals referred to under the Joint Declarations on EU-NATO cooperation of July 2016 and July 2018. The Council calls on the Agency to continue pursuing coherence of output, including with regard to the CDP and CARD, with respective NATO processes, thus further developing dialogue with NATO, in line with the agreed guiding principles, notably inclusiveness and reciprocity, and supporting participating Member States in ensuring that there is no unnecessary duplication with existing initiatives in other institutional contexts.
10. The Council calls on EDA to pursue relations with Third Parties having an Administrative Arrangement with the Agency, and encourages the Agency, under the guidance of the Steering Board, to continue exploring possible working relations with other partners based on reciprocity and mutual benefit, in full transparency with Member States, and in accordance with the EDA Council Decision and the principles applying to EDA's engagement with Third Parties endorsed by Ministers in November 2017.
11. Upon further guidance of Member States and in full coherence with related efforts taken forward by other EU institutions and bodies, the Council invites the Agency to further step up its ability of handling and exchanging EU classified information. In doing so, the Agency will take into account Member States' needs, including in the implementation of EU defence initiatives, and report back to them on progress achieved throughout 2021. Recognising the challenges posed by the current COVID-19 crisis, the Council encourages the Agency to further foster its resilience in terms of information and communication technology and infrastructure to ensure full business continuity.