Stakeholders and partners gather for EDA’s 15th Anniversary

Brussels - 25 June, 2019



**EDA today celebrated its 15th Anniversary with a ceremony in its premises attended by the Head of the Agency, Federica Mogherini, high representatives (Ministers, Deputy Ministers, State Secretaries, Chiefs of Defence, Ambassadors) from its 27 Member States and the four associated countries, the Chairman of the EU Military Committee, Deputy Secretary-Generals of the EEAS, the Director General of the EU Military Staff, several European Commissioners and Commission Director-Generals, Executive Directors and senior officials of all EU institutions and agencies, NATO senior representatives as well representatives from the European defence industry and the media.**  
  
In her commemoration speech, **Federica Mogherini**, the Head of the Agency, recalled the tremendous progress made in European defence cooperation over recent years - especially since the publication of the EU Global Strategy in 2016 - and stressed the role played by EDA in this endeavour. *“Five years ago, no-one imagined how far we would come. European defence cooperation has expanded like never before. We have created the instruments to make European defence cooperation become the norm. And the Agency has been at the core of all our work and of all the progress that we have achieved together”*, she stated. *“All this work wasn't just long overdue. It was urgent and necessary. All of our Member States, today, need European cooperation to guarantee the security of our citizens. European defence is first and foremost about the security of European citizens”*.

With CARD, PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF), the EU has put in place the tools it needs to enhance defence cooperation and make it work for the benefit of a stronger and more efficient, coherent and interoperable European defence. *“The European Defence Agency has made essential contributions to crafting these initiatives all along the way, and it is now central in their implementation. The Agency is the secretariat for both the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence and on PESCO, together with the European External Action Service and the EU Military Staff. And you are working with Member States so that their defence budgets incorporate our common Capability Development Plan"*, Ms Mogherini said. *"In these years, I have seen this Agency grow and adapt to new tasks and challenges – and let me thank everyone who works here for your professionalism and flexibility. Your role is now more important than ever, and it will be essential to ensure that EDA always has the means to fulfil its new tasks"*, she added.

The Head of the Agency concluded by saying: *"It was a privilege for me to be Head of the Defence Agency in this extraordinary moment for European defence. It has been an honour to lead the Agency in these five years, and up until its fifteenth birthday. And whatever will happen next, I know that there are some great professionals here, working every day to make our cooperation more effective, our industry stronger, and our continent more secure.So let me thank you for these years together, and happy birthday to everyone at EDA"*.  

“EDA is and will remain a central institution of European defence”

Previously, in his opening address as the representative of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, Romanian Defence Minister **Gabriel-Beniamin Leș** commended the Agency *“for its substantial contribution and support to European Defence efforts”* throughout the past 15 years. EDA is nowadays recognised as a *“key player”* in advancing the EU’s role in security and defence, he said. The Agency’s Long-Term Review was*“natural”*and necessary to keep it fit for purpose. The enhancement of the Agency proved relevant, especially when looking at the crucial role EDA plays nowadays as part of the CARD and PESCO secretariats and in the implementation of the EU defence initiatives in general, the Minister stated.  *“We encourage the Agency to continue to support the development of a common understanding regarding the new EU defence initiatives, including the possibilities of simplifying the processes and rules, to continue pursuing coherence of these initiatives and to further contribute to the coherence of output and timelines between relevant EU and NATO processes”*, Mr Leș stated. Member States, too, have to change and adapt the way they do defence planning, he said.*“PESCO, CARD, EDF are not just political initiative, but they need to become national defence planning instruments. We count on EDA support in this regard”*. The Minister, who thanked for the*“excellent cooperation”*during the Romanian EU Presidency, concluded by saying: *“EDA is and will remain a central institution of European defence. As an intergovernmental organisation, it will continue to be closely attached to the needs of the Member States, and this is the main feature that we need to preserve. Romania will remain a strong supporter of EDA as it has always been. You can count on us”*. 

Working for more coherent European capability landscape

In his welcome words to the 200 external guests and EDA staff, Chief Executive **Jorge Domecq** stressed that since its creation in July 2004, the Agency and the 700 colleagues who worked for it over the past 15 years were always (and still are) driven by one central commitment: to help Member States improve their defence capabilities through cooperation, by working together. *“Our mission is very clear: to support Member States in the development of their defence capabilities. All our work is geared towards making this mission a reality”*, he said. The Agency can be proud of what it has achieved so far in circumstances that were difficult at times, he said. Not only has it established itself as the *“main architect of EU defence capability priorities”* thanks to the roles it plays in steering the Capability Development Plan process, the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda and the identification of Europe’s Key Strategic Activities, but it is also recognised as Europe’s central hub for multinational capability development and manager of collaborative defence research, as Europe’s common training ground for common enhanced interoperability as well as the military’s voice and interface in other EU policies. Most importantly, EDA is increasingly seen as the guardian of coherence among the new EU defence initiatives (CARD, PESCO, EDF). *“I am proud of the impact this house makes, in the interest of a more coherent European capability landscape owned and used by our Member States”*, Mr Domecq said, calling Member States to make*“full use of EDA’s potential”*.