

Towards a more consistent level of cyber defence capabilities across the EU



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Introduction

No single country is capable of facing the wide range of today's security challenges in a full and comprehensive manner on its own. This is especially true in the case of cyber threats. Whether as part of a hostile hybrid campaign, or as an isolated malicious attack, cyber threats have the potential to severely and negatively impact a country's security. As they operate across borders, they must be tackled in a similar manner.

Budgetary constraints may impose limitations, and therefore lead to either defence capability shortfalls or obsolete technologies. Combining efforts and resources through defence cooperation is a clear solution to this, ensuring the availability of the right capabilities for Member States. The necessity for broader defence cooperation at the EU level and the need to work collaboratively to bridge defence capability gaps were indeed among the key motivations for the establishment of the European Defence Agency.

The cyber domain, interrelated as it is with information protection, is closely associated by the Member States with national sovereignty. With this in mind, the European Union and, accordingly, the European Defence Agency, have been advocating a well-balanced strategy for an open, safe and secure cyberspace. The

Cyber Defence Policy Framework, adopted in 2014, expanded on the concept and proposed - among other things - further development of cyber defence capabilities within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) context, promoting civil-military cooperation and synergies with wider EU cyber policies, private sector and international partners, as well as encouraging cyber education.

The EDA efforts towards improving cyber defence capabilities

The European Defence Agency, the powerhouse for European defence capabilities, has a very important role to play as regards cyber defence capabilities. The EDA-led landscaping study conducted in 2011 indicated that the cyber defence capabilities of Member States were far from equal. Following the concept that "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link", the Agency has been addressing the identified shortfalls in order to leverage and further develop capabilities. Additionally, the Heads of States and Governments at the European

Council meeting in December 2013 identified cyber defence as one of four main programmes for the Agency to focus on. It should be stated, however, that the Agency's role is more that of a transmitter or facilitator of competences; it is the Member States who need to have the right arsenal and be in position to respond to emerging cyber threats.

The Agency's activities, in very broad terms, focus on the development of proactive and reactive technologies and the building of a cyber defence military workforce, as stated in the most recent EDA Capability Development Plan.

In accordance with the Cyber Defence Research Agenda, ninety-nine project proposals were put on the table for further consideration and prioritisation. The areas identified for the military to explore and improve within the Research & Technology domain contributed to the first cyber defence flagship project on Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) detection.

