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EU military mobility not yet in the fast lane

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Security, defence and justice

- Moving troops and armaments across EU countries remains problematic
- Entire €1.7 billion EU budget on military mobility has already been allocated
- Auditors call for greater focus of EU action and more predictable funding



The EU member states' armed forces are not yet able to move quickly across the EU, the European Court of Auditors concludes in a new report. The EU's latest action plan on military mobility has seen

mixed progress due to design weaknesses, and obstacles to implementation remain. The goal of moving military staff, equipment, and supplies swiftly and seamlessly within and the EU – at short notice and on a large scale – has not yet been achieved.

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changer was Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which turned the bloc's strategic need for military mobility into a matter of urgency. Under time pressure, the EU published its second action plan in November 2022.

"Military mobility is crucial to making the EU's defence capability credible, and there is clearly a need for speed. But it is still not in the fast lane due to bottlenecks along the way," said Marek Opióła, the ECA Member in charge of the report.

Organising military movements may face significant delays for different reasons, such as red tape. For example, tanks from one EU country cannot move through another if they are heavier than road traffic regulations allow. Under normal circumstances, an EU country currently requires 45 days' notification of cross-border movement authorisations.

The auditors found that the European Commission had not thoroughly assessed needs in advance when preparing Action Plan 2.0, thus preventing it from making a robust estimate of the funding needed to achieve its objectives. With a total of €1.7 billion for the 2021-2027 period, the EU military mobility budget is relatively modest, but member states welcomed it as a step in the right direction. The EU made the funds available quickly, providing an important political signal. However, demand far exceeded supply, meaning that there was no money left in the pot by the end of 2023. The result is a significant gap of over four years before EU funds for military mobility can be made available again, thus hampering the stability and predictability of funding.

Although the funds need to be well targeted in order to have an impact, sufficient account was not taken of geopolitical and military factors when deciding which dual-use infrastructure projects to

Furthermore, projects were selected on a piecemeal basis, not always in the most strategic locations, and without considering the broader picture. Projects were funded mainly in the east of the

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complex and fragmented, without a single point of contact, which makes it difficult to know who does what. To help the EU make headway, the auditors suggest improving the governance and focus of EU action, while making funding more predictable. The EU could also tap the potential of current EU funds for civilian transport in order to alleviate military mobility bottlenecks.

Background information

Member states are in the driving seat when it comes to the EU's territorial defence, with NATO playing an important role. In December 2024, the European Defence Agency published a [coordinated annual review on defence](#), which shows that EU member states spent almost €280 billion on defence in 2023 (likely to rise to €326 billion in 2024), a figure that eclipses EU spending on military mobility. The scale of EU funding plays a key role in how much leverage the EU can expect to have over policy choices in the area of military mobility.

The focus of the audit was the EU's Action Plan 2.0 for the 2022-2026 period, which consists of four main pillars: multimodal corridors and logistical hubs, regulatory measures, resilience and preparedness, and partnerships. The EU funded 95 projects in 21 member states. The European Parliament has partial oversight over military mobility in the EU.

Special report 04/2025, "EU military mobility – full speed not reached due to design weaknesses and obstacles en route", is available on the ECA website. The ECA previously published an [audit report](#) on EU defence research, and provided an [opinion](#) on the European Defence Industry Programme.

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