CLECAT
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POSITION PAPER

Military Mobility and Dual-Use Transport Infrastructure

The evolving geopolitical environment, notably Russia's aggression against Ukraine, has exposed the strategic vulnerabilities of Europe's transport infrastructure in times of crisis. In this context, the European Union has committed to deepening its military mobility agenda through the development of dual-use transport infrastructure.

Europe's transport infrastructure was primarily designed for civilian use. While this has served economic growth and integration well, it falls short in terms of resilience and dual-use capabilities. The European Commission's Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 (2022-2026), the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, and recent initiatives under the TEN-T revision all underline the urgent need to remove bottlenecks and align civil and military needs.

CLECAT, representing freight forwarders and logistics service providers, supports a holistic approach to enhance Europe's preparedness and resilience. Military mobility must be built on robust infrastructure, streamlined administrative processes, and coordinated civilian-military cooperation. Logistics operators are central to this effort: they connect modes, manage complex supply chains, and ensure that essential goods and military assets move seamlessly across borders. In times of crisis, they will also be key actors in ensuring that military operations are supported by efficient and coordinated logistics services. In light of this, CLECAT advocates for sustained investment, a revised EU regulatory framework, and the meaningful involvement of the private sector to ensure that military mobility objectives are achieved without compromising the competitiveness and efficiency of the civilian economy. At the same time, military mobility must be enabled by a predictable and business-friendly regulatory framework. Logistics companies operate in a highly competitive and time-sensitive environment, where flexibility and legal clarity are essential. Rather than increasing complexity, EU policy should aim to simplify rules, provide clear exemptions under crisis conditions, and enable logistics operators to scale up operations efficiently when called upon to support defence objectives.

Role of Logistics Operators in Dual-Use Planning

Freight forwarders are system integrators who manage the coordination of multimodal transport chains, interface with Customs and border authorities, and provide real-time visibility of goods in transit. Their knowledge of the supply chain and expertise are indispensable to move goods efficiently, in both peacetime and emergency logistics operations. Freight forwarders bring essential expertise in routing strategies, multimodal transport, and last-mile logistics, which is vital for both military and humanitarian mobility. At the same time, improving military mobility requires:

- predictable, secure, and interoperable supply chain systems;
- access to strategic logistics assets, including terminals, rail yards, and inland depots;
- simplified and harmonised administrative procedures for cross-border movements;
- digital tools for tracking, communication, and coordination in complex logistics environments.

To make the EU's military mobility agenda effective, logistics service providers must be fully integrated into the planning, funding, and implementation of dual-use infrastructure and procedures. Freight forwarders, acting as system integrators, bring the operational capacity and cross-border coordination needed to ensure the resilience and readiness of European supply chains. They also play a crucial role in simulating and testing real-world readiness through scenario planning and logistics exercises that align civilian and defence priorities.

Policy Recommendations

Against this background, the following policy recommendations aim to strengthen the enabling framework for military mobility, while ensuring alignment with broader EU objectives on competitiveness, sustainability, and digitalisation:

Increase financing for dual-use projects in MFF and safeguarding it in future budgets

- Financing dual-use infrastructure projects in the context of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) have proven to be an effective policy which should be substantially strengthened in the following EU budget, allocating more resources and a possibly a higher co-funding rate from the EU. CLECAT urges the EU institutions and Member States to take decisive steps to ensure long-term, stable funding for dual-use transport infrastructure. All TEN-T infrastructure upgrades must include dual-use parameters, including road and rail loading standards, tunnel and bridge capacities, and last-mile access.

- In addition, CLECAT recommends the establishment of a dedicated EU instrument or budget line aimed at coordination and strategic direction from a European perspective. The risk of fragmented national investments is particularly high at cross-border transhipment points, where interoperability gaps and insufficient capacity for modal connection are most acute. A targeted, corridor-based EU approach would help strengthen these critical transition nodes, for example by upgrading infrastructure to support 60-tonne-ready assets (e.g. bridges and viaducts) along strategic axes. This would improve cross-border operability and help ensure coherence in military mobility planning across Member States.

- In view of the important capacities of the EU rail network, there is a need for attention to the TEN-T rail corridors, rolling stock, ERTMS implementation, maintenance facilities, and flat wagons: these should be mainstreamed into the 2028–2034 EU budget framework and future EU budgets (not just crisis-driven calls).

- Investment in ports, airports, and logistics hubs must reflect their role as strategic nodes in the military transport network. Priority should be given to projects identified through the Military Mobility corridor gap analysis and "hotspot" project mapping.

- Finally, the EU should pursue synergies between defence, sustainability, and competitiveness in all dual-use transport investments.

Strengthened public-private cooperation for better understanding of needs and efficient planning of military logistics and activities:

- To ensure effective planning and implementation of military mobility objectives, a structured and inclusive governance framework should be established at both EU and national levels. This should bring together civil and military actors, including logistics service providers, infrastructure managers, and relevant EU institutions. Joint training exercises are recommended.

- Improved coordination and information sharing between military and civilian stakeholders will accelerate operational planning and execution. This includes transparent communication on available infrastructure, asset capacity, and operational constraints in real time. Emergency planning must not introduce unnecessary complexity or uncertainty for operators. Clear rules on liability, operational responsibilities, and applicable exemptions as well as provisions for the protection of logistics assets and personnel will be essential to ensure the logistics sector can contribute effectively and without hesitation.

- Streamlined and predictable procedures for extraordinary shipments and priority movements of military convoys are essential. Member States should define contingency plans with clear responsibilities and decision-making pathways for approving cross-border transport of military assets, building on the objectives of the EU's Military Mobility Action Plan.

- While Europe is not formally at war, the current geopolitical climate represents a pre-conflict environment where legal clarity is lacking. Legislation provides for various exemptions in the event of armed conflict, but less is known about which rules or procedures might be suspended or adapted in a high-alert or pre-conflict phase. CLECAT recommends developing a harmonised framework that defines which regulatory requirements (e.g., transport permits, customs clearance, operational restrictions) could be conditionally relaxed under a crisis escalation protocol. This would provide legal certainty for logistics operators and authorities during periods of heightened tension.

- Over-reliance on a few large gateways such as Rotterdam or Antwerp creates vulnerabilities in times of crisis. In the event of escalating tensions in Eastern Europe, it is inevitable that military movements will rely on the TEN-T corridors, the main arteries of civilian freight transport in Europe. Therefore, strategic redundancy must include sufficient alternative rail terminals, inland depots, and ports that can absorb diverted civilian flows if military convoys occupy primary corridors. Buffer capacity and rerouting options should be planned and funded in advance as today, the logistics sector operates with exceptional efficiency. As a result, most capacity is already fully deployed. Any additional capacity requirements for military purposes will come at the expense of civilian supply chains. It is therefore essential to ensure that supplying the armed forces does not jeopardise deliveries to critical sectors of society.

- Logistics service providers must be formally included in the development and testing of emergency logistics protocols. Their role as integrators of multimodal transport and coordinators of customs and clearance procedures makes them essential partners in military mobility governance.

- Given that civilian transport companies are often contracted by military authorities to respond to large-scale logistical challenges, these companies should be able to react quickly, flexibly, and perform their services without operational restrictions to enable timely delivery. Transport

infrastructure should be used wherever possible, balancing the needs of society in a hybrid war situation. The organisation of such contracts should be streamlined and organised, e.g. through a dedicated procurement platform with standardised requirements.

- The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the risk of uncoordinated national responses, with many Member States prioritising domestic needs at the expense of EU-wide supply chain resilience. In the event of military mobilisation, similar disruptions could arise if drivers and assets are redirected without coordination, particularly given the existing capacity constraints in the logistics sector. Most logistics operators already operate at full deployment, meaning that additional military demands will directly impact critical civilian flows. In conclusion, to avoid widespread disruptions, the EU must ensure that solidarity, cross-border coordination, and the needs of all citizens remain central to military mobility planning.

Harmonising customs, administrative procedures and operational requirements

- Customs and administrative procedures must be harmonised and digitalised to ensure that military and civilian goods can move quickly and securely. The initiative should provide clear rules for rapid border crossing procedures and allow for secure priority access for military convoys.

- For the use of the EU rail network for military mobility, the capacity management across the EU rail network should be improved to enable the smooth and rapid movement of trains across borders, including for military convoys. This requires more flexible operational arrangements at border sections, simplified national procedures, and accelerated implementation of the future Rail Infrastructure Capacity Regulation. Better coordination and planning can unlock capacity gains enhancing the efficiency of the existing network without major new construction.

- Standardisation is required to enhance interoperability and storage ease for trailers, to define minimum capabilities (load capacity) and in terms of staff requirements including training and relevant security clearance, permit requirements and certification while reducing administrative burden for cross-border operations.

- Establish war risk insurance coverage for high-risk logistic service providers.

- As the need for enhanced military mobility grows, the effective and efficient cross-border use of heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) of all sizes and payload capacities will become increasingly important. In this context, provisions facilitating the circulation of heavy, oversized, or abnormal-load vehicles are essential. Further facilitations, streamlining and harmonisation of abnormal load (overweight/oversized) permits would support the needs for military mobility at regional, national, and intra EU levels. Additionally, facilitations linked to the cross-border use of European Modular Systems (EMS) should be expediated and supported to assist the cross-border transportation of large volumes of military goods. Principles such as the lowest common denominator principle, as outlined within the proposed revision of the Weights and Dimensions Directive, removes the need for lengthy and burdensome bilateral Member State agreements on EMS use. Finally, moderate generic weight increases, also in line with the proposed revision, are needed to support the transportation of military goods without the need to undergo procedures and permitting for overweight cargo movements.

Enhancing cyber resilience

- Ports, airports, railway infrastructure and logistics hubs are increasingly vulnerable to cyber-attacks and hybrid threats**,** especially when integrated into military supply chains. Ports and airports need robust cyber defences and flexible contingency plans alongside physical infrastructure reinforcements. Redundancy and rapid restoration capabilities should also be built into railway systems.

Enhancing energy resilience and supporting bridging technologies

- It is also essential to consider energy and fuel supply dimensions when planning for dual-use transport infrastructure. By investing in grid upgrades and innovative energy solutions, Member States can enhance energy capacity and flexibility, enabling a resilient supply system that meets both military and civilian needs. This contributes not only to national security but also to wider societal welfare.

- In parallel, bridging technologies such as range extenders, biofuels, and biogases will play a critical role in supporting the EU's climate objectives while ensuring the security, stability, and adaptability required for military logistics operations. Regulatory incentives, such as reduced tolls under the Eurovignette Directive, should be pursued to support the deployment of these transitional technologies.

Conclusion

In an increasingly volatile geopolitical landscape, Europe's ability to respond swiftly to crises depends not only on military readiness, but also on the strength, flexibility, and resilience of its transport and logistics systems. Military mobility is no longer the sole domain of defence planners; it must be embedded in broader EU transport and logistics policy. To ensure readiness without undermining commercial supply chains, Member States should adopt strategic logistics contingency plans that fully integrate private operators. Public-private cooperation frameworks must be established in all Member States to plan for emergency logistics scenarios and ensure operational alignment between civilian and military actors.

The COVID-19 crisis revealed the risks of fragmented, nationally focused responses. In a future military mobilisation scenario, a lack of coordination could again lead to disruptions in cross-border flows of essential goods. Given that most logistics operators already operate at full capacity, any diversion of resources to support military operations will directly impact the functioning of critical civilian supply chains. What the sector needs most is not only targeted investment, but a stable, business-friendly regulatory environment that enables logistics companies to respond quickly, flexibly, and effectively to evolving demands. Legal clarity, streamlined procedures, and favourable operational conditions are as vital as physical infrastructure.