



# Position Paper

on

## MILITARY MOBILITY

Military mobility frequently relies on civil abnormal transport for the movement of heavy and oversized equipment, such as tanks, as well as on mobile cranes for handling the equipment. Experience from recent military exercises has shown that permit requirements for abnormal transport can significantly hinder military mobility, even when requests are submitted well in advance.

As a result, abnormal transport permits generate substantial administrative costs— estimated at around €500 million annually across the EU for the sector as a whole— and frequent delays due to lengthy, unpredictable procedures and divergent national practices. These shortcomings directly affect the efficiency, cost, and reliability of logistics operations.

The European Association of Abnormal Road Transport and Mobile Cranes (ESTA) has long advocated for further harmonisation of the regulatory framework governing abnormal road transport across Europe. Transports exceeding standard weight- or dimension limits, including those involving mobile cranes, require special permits that continue to vary significantly between Member States and remain largely non-harmonised at an EU level. In addition, administrative and safety requirements differ from country to country, leading to red tape and delays in the provision of abnormal transport services.

**ESTA therefore very much welcomes the Military Mobility Package published on 19 November 2025**, comprising of a draft Regulation and Joint Communication on military mobility. These initiatives aim to facilitate the transport of troops, equipment, and military assets across the European Union, while **taking into account the essential role of civilian abnormal transport operators**.

### ESTA overall assessment of the Package

ESTA considers that the **newly published package rightly recognises the main barriers and challenges** that must be addressed in order to effectively facilitate military mobility within the EU, in particular:

- **the fragmentation of national rules for oversized and overweight transport**, which constitutes one of the core bottlenecks for military mobility by road;

- **the need for permits for abnormal loads** (such as tanks, heavy equipment, and mobile cranes), which are acknowledged as a critical constraint on rapid military movements;
- **the importance of time predictability and harmonised procedures;**
- the necessity of **high-quality dual-use infrastructure.**

Against this background, the Military Mobility Package represents an important step towards a future “Military Schengen”, with the objective of creating an EU-wide military mobility area by 2027.

ESTA particularly welcomes the Commission’s proposals to:

- **remove regulatory barriers by introducing EU-level harmonised rules on military mobility**, including clear procedures for cross-border military movements, a maximum three-day processing time for permits, and streamlined customs formalities;
- **enhance the resilience of transport infrastructure** by upgrading key EU military mobility corridors to dual-use standards and protecting strategic infrastructure;
- **pool and share capabilities in order to strengthen preparedness, solidarity, and the availability of military mobility assets**, notably through the creation of a Solidarity Pool and the possible establishment of a Military Mobility Digital Information System.

### **The role of civilian abnormal transport operators and military permission procedures**

**ESTA strongly welcomes the fact that the Military Mobility Package recognises the role of civilian operators in military transport. Any solution limited to “purely military vehicles” would fail in practice.** In this context, ESTA supports the Commission’s intention to develop a unified approach to military operations integrated into the broader EU transport acquis.

ESTA therefore supports the proposal to establish a single set of rules for cross-border military transport permission procedures, including diplomatic clearances and the transport of dangerous goods and oversized or overweight military cargo, with shortened lead times and standardised templates for requests and notifications. ESTA believes that **the standing military permission procedure outlined in Article 5 of the Regulation should be used as widely as possible and should apply to military-related goods and equipment, including mobile cranes**, as it provides predictability and guarantees the timely provision of military transport services.

When issuing standing or ad hoc military transport permissions, ESTA believes that **competent authorities in Member States should take into account not only the weight and dimensions of the cargo, but also the type of trailer used for the transport of the goods concerned.** Due to recent technological developments and modern axle and suspension systems, loads can be distributed in an optimal way, thereby limiting their impact on road infrastructure.

ESTA supports the proposal to exempt military mobility operations carried out by civilian operators from certain rules, such as holiday traffic bans or cabotage restrictions, and to include civilian operators within the scope of the EMERS system. ESTA also advocates **to exempt civilian operators from the need to comply with environmentally related traffic bans and restrictions.**

However, **ESTA questions the detailed provisions proposed in Article 27 of the Regulation with regards to driving and rest time rules, as these would be extremely difficult to follow and enforce in emergency situations within EMERS**, where timely and uninterrupted delivery of military cargo must be the priority. While supporting additional flexibility in respecting driving and resting time rules, **ESTA asks that these provisions are reconsidered in order to ensure legal and contractual clarity, enforceability, and operational feasibility in emergency situations.**

ESTA is a strong proponent of **digitalisation** in the transport sector and therefore considers the creation of a **single digital tool for handling cross-border military mobility processes** to be both a necessary and forward-looking step.

### **Dual-use transport infrastructure**

Achieving a trans-European transport network that meets both civilian and military needs requires **substantial investment**. ESTA therefore welcomes the Commission's readiness to earmark significant funding for dual-use transport infrastructure under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021–2027, as well as the possibility to reallocate Cohesion Policy funds to defence-related investments. **ESTA counts on the ambition of the European Parliament and the Council to further increase the proposed funding levels, also as part of Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034.**

In order to ensure the safety of military cargo, transport operations, and drivers, ESTA believes that **critical road infrastructure across Europe should be marked with special road signs indicating their capacity to accommodate abnormal transport**, including, for example, bridge loading capacities. Such road signs would be particularly useful in extreme crisis situations, including military conflicts, where military transports may need to move without tailor-made permits.

### **Governance**

ESTA strongly supports the creation of bodies that would facilitate effective communication and coordination between Member States, local and national authorities, competent authorities, as well as relevant stakeholders involved in military transport operations.

Therefore, ESTA believes that **National Coordinators for Cross-Border Military Transport** should include not only representatives of the relevant ministries but also from **national permitting authorities**. It is also advisable that representatives of the civilian transport sector, such as **civilian abnormal**

**road transport operators**, be given the possibility to participate in meetings and work of the **Military Mobility Transport Group** on an ad hoc basis.

The **Solidarity Pool** is another way to strengthen cooperation between Member States and encourage them to voluntarily share their transport and logistics capabilities, including dual-use mobile assets such as vehicles and vessels. **As civilian operators will have a key role to play in this solution, it is important to clarify in advance their rights, obligations, legal responsibilities, operational procedures, and employment conditions**, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and social partners.

### Military Mobility Package and the Weights and Dimensions Directive

ESTA underlines that effective military mobility also **requires further harmonisation of the rules governing abnormal road transport in general, notably through the ongoing revision of the Weights and Dimensions Directive**. Abnormal transport operators play a crucial role not only in military movements, but also in the delivery of infrastructure projects essential for dual-use road infrastructure, as well as energy and fuelling infrastructure.

The EU has a unique opportunity to strengthen its military mobility. To make this happen, **ESTA calls on EU decision-makers to urgently reach a compromise on the revision of the Weights and Dimensions Directive, which is instrumental in unlocking the potential of abnormal and military mobility in Europe**. Further harmonisation of the rules applicable to abnormal transport is crucial to delivering the EU's security, defence, and green agendas.

With regard to the ongoing trilogue negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council, ESTA calls on the co-legislators to accept the Commission's proposal to revise the Weights and Dimensions Directive and to add several missing elements, with the aim to:

- harmonise and digitalise permit application procedures;
- introduce digital permits and oblige controlling authorities to accept them;
- introduce a harmonised vehicle registration document, such as the SERT;
- develop a single national portal containing national-specific information;
- introduce a ban on language requirements for drivers;
- harmonise EU rules on permit application forms, escorting, and the marking and signalling of abnormal transport;
- link in-road weighing systems with permitting systems in order to automatically recognise abnormal transport.

ESTA is convinced that, **if all these proposals are adopted and effectively implemented at national level, they have significant potential to reduce delays and operational risks in cross-border military transport and to strengthen defence readiness** by enabling seamless cross-border movements of military personnel and equipment.

ESTA stands ready to work together with EU decision-makers and stakeholders to finalise work on the Military Mobility Package and to ensure that its provisions are made binding at EU level as soon as possible.

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ESTA , the European Association of Abnormal Road Transport and Mobile Cranes, is the leading European association for the abnormal road transport and mobile crane rental industry.

In case of any further questions or comments you are kindly invited to contact ESTA Director Ton Klijn via e-mail: [director@estaeurope.eu](mailto:director@estaeurope.eu) or call +31 6 515 02 069.