New European Maritime Mine Counter Measures project launched

Brussels, 28 October 2014. Five Member States, as well as Norway, signed a new project arrangement earlier this month to start work on future Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) capabilities. Called MMCM-NG (New Generation), the project will run until 2017 and prepare the next generation of mine countermeasures ships.

Belgium, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden as well as Norway agreed on 8 October 2014 to launch a new research project regarding future Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) capabilities. Dubbed MMCM-NG (New Generation), the project arrangement was signed at the European Defence Agency’s premises during a Steering Board of the Capabilities Directors. Germany is the project’s lead nation.

Easy to deploy and cheap to acquire, maritime mines and other underwater improvised explosive devices pose a real threat to naval forces and civilian ships by restricting freedom of movement in shallow waters, harbours and strategic choke points. Being able to detect, avoid, and defuse these weapons is therefore a key requirement for European navies.

The MMCM-NG project has a planned duration of 36 months during which contributing Member States, based on an agreed operational concept, will work on a set of common requirements to prepare the future generation of mine countermeasures ships and systems that could become operational in the 2030 timeframe. At the end of this 3-year project, Member States will have gathered enough information to decide on the potential launch of a procurement phase for these new systems.

Compared to existing solutions, future MMCM capabilities are expected to bring increased flexibility through a modular “toolbox” comprising a range of systems adaptable to different platforms, environmental, or operational conditions. The use of unmanned vehicles will also be developed and new detection techniques could be introduced. Future MMCM operations are also expected to be conducted with state-of-the-art sensors and effectors carried and deployed from dedicated or hybrid platforms as well as from stationary or mobile shore installations.

Based on the different national requirements, several technical solutions will be assessed as part of the project. Standards, protocols and interfaces will be described and agreed upon commonly in order to ensure future interoperability and to enable synergies in the fields of training, logistics, and maintenance.
Background information

The European Defence Agency conducts several activities in the maritime domain. One of the Agency’s largest programmes, called UMS (Unmanned Maritime Systems), brings together all EDA Member States under a single programme arrangement and 15 different coordinated projects that can be joined by any number of countries. EDA is also involved in the Marsur (Maritime Surveillance) project, which has been joined by 17 Member States as well as Norway to date. It has led to the development of a technical solution that connects European navies’ surveillance systems to improve global maritime awareness and enhance interoperability.

European Defence Agency

The European Defence Agency is designed to support the Council and the Member States in their effort to improve the European Union’s defence capabilities for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This means running and supporting cooperative European defence projects; supporting research and technology development; boosting the European defence technological and industrial base; and providing a forum for European Ministries of Defence.

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