

OCCAR :

## a key component of the EU strategic autonomy

**OCCAR (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement) is an international organisation whose core-business is the through-life management of cooperative defence equipment programmes. The current Member States are : Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.**



Arturo Alfonso Meiriño, director of OCCAR

In the long process towards a potential consolidation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union, recent years, especially after the European Council in December 2013, have been particularly decisive. The year 2017 confirmed that the leaders of the EU, supported by the Heads of State and Government in the meetings of the Council, have the clear objective not only to continue developing the CSDP, but also to use it as an element of cohesion at a critical moment. Many initiatives have been taken forward : the EU Global Strategy, the European Defence Action Plan with its two windows (research and capability), and only in December the Permanent Structured Cooperation.

The year 2018 will be therefore presented with an agenda full of relevant events in the process towards the consolidation of the CSDP and is also the year in which the Joint Organisation for Cooperation in Armaments (OCCAR), organisation that I am honoured to lead, will celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of its Convention.

The OCCAR Convention has a specific vision to promote armaments cooperation, improving efficiency and reducing costs, in order to become a European centre of excellence in the management of complex armaments programmes. With a clear European vocation referenced in its preamble and articles, a mission assigned by the *founding fathers* was to support the European Identity of Security and Defence, as well as to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.

### Managing European cooperative programmes

This vocation is reflected both in its current portfolio composed of 13 complex programmes with a value of more than 60 Bn€ and with the participation of 12 EU countries plus one non-EU member country. Six of these countries are Member States (MS) of the Organisation, and the remaining seven non-MS participate in various programmes under the same conditions. This is a unique feature of OCCAR : the Participating States (PS) in a programme have exactly the same rights and obligations as any OCCAR Member State with regards to a specific programme. OCCAR can also manage cooperative armaments procurement programmes with only non-MS : the *Multinational Multirole Fleet* for the acquisition of Transport and Tanker capability is a good example. It started with the participation of The Netherlands and Luxembourg that were later joined by Germany, Norway and just recently Belgium.

The OCCAR Convention pursues the promotion of cooperation in armaments among nations, the free competition, industrial consolidation and the improvement of the regulatory framework of the defence market. These objectives were also es-

established by the EU in its several initiatives : the Interpretative Communication of the current Article 346 of the Treaty, the Directive of intra-community transfers of defence goods and services, the Procurement Directive for Defence Goods and Services, the European Defence Action Plan, the European Defence Fund with the Preparatory Action for Defence Research and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP). And there is a clear intention to include defence in the future Multi-Annual Financial Framework of the EU.

OCCAR core-business is the management of cooperative programmes, and besides the reasons given above, there are other factors that I believe make of OCCAR a very well suited organisation for the management of programmes, including those derived from the EU Commission initiatives in particular those coming from EDIDP.

The current size of OCCAR-EA, with its flat hierarchy (maximum of 3 hierarchy levels), allows fast and uncomplicated management of corporate and programme aspects. This entails an administrative cost overhead of only 1.3%. The authority and responsibility to manage a Programme is entrusted to the Programme Manager by delegation from the Director. Thus, supported by a multi-disciplinary Programme Division with all functions necessary for the programme management, he/she can work autonomously and is directly accountable to the Director for the effective and efficient management of the Programme.

Besides, the Central Office supports the OCCAR Programmes by providing services (Human Resources; finance, Security, ICT, Site Management, etc.) and it is the tool of the OCCAR-EA Director for the corporate management and governance.

**The future of the EU strategic autonomy based on technologies is at stake**

The OCCAR Convention and the underlying OCCAR Management Procedures are harmonised and agreed by all OCCAR MS and are therefore the common basis for the management of cooperative armament programmes. It makes the integration of new programmes/new phases/new PS easy, as they can draw on the agreed existing rules. The defined roles of the OCCAR

Programme Boards and Programme Committees give the PS, as the customers, full transparency and control over their respective programmes as required by them. The legal framework of the OCCAR (Convention, Management Procedures, the Programme Decision and the Letter of Offer/Letter of Acceptance process for non-Member PS) has proven to be robust as it protects the joint and individual interests of OCCAR, its MS and the non-Member PS.

Ultimately, it will be up to the EU Member States, in coordination with the European Commission, to decide on the capability building programmes that will be eligible to receive funding from the EC derived from the European Defence Fund and as well as the governance of EDIDP and therefore the potential role of OCCAR in the whole process.

Creating a new organisation capable of managing complex capability acquisition programmes given the existence of OCCAR, with its more than 17 years of successful management's proven record, seems to me an unnecessary luxury. Let's not forget that the future of the EU's strategic autonomy based on technologies with a European seal is at stake. Undoubtedly 2018 will provide more clarity in the long process towards more EU strategic autonomy, in particular in the field of obtaining the required military capabilities, which will surely contribute to the consolidation of the CSDP. And I sincerely trust OCCAR will play a role in this process.

*Arturo Alfonso Meiriño  
Director of OCCAR*



The A400M programme has been integrated into OCCAR in May 2003. The delivery schedule extends to 2024.

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