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A "Military Schengen Area" in the Baltic States

On 30 January 2026, the Ministers of Defence of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia signed a Declaration of Intent on the establishment of the Baltic Military Mobility Area (BMMA). The objective is to streamline procedures and facilitate the expeditious movement of troops and equipment across the three nations, particularly in crisis situations. The initiative aims to increase the interoperability of the Baltic States' combat units and contribute to a broader discussion on the creation of a pan-European framework for military mobility.

Military Cooperation among the Baltic States. During a meeting in Tallinn on 29-30 January 2026, the Lithuanian Minister of Defence (Robertas Kaunas), the Latvian Minister of Defence (Andris Sprūds), and the Estonian Minister of Defence (Hanno Pevkur) discussed regional defence cooperation, joint procurement, and the further development of the Baltic defence line. During this period, a declaration of intent was also signed to establish a Baltic Military Mobility Area (BMMA) on the territory of the three Baltic states.¹ The BMMA is intended to be part of the military dimension of the European Union's Schengen Area, which aims to improve preparedness and enhance deterrence by harmonising procedures that currently slow down the cross-border movement of armed forces. In practice, this means that, if necessary – especially during joint exercises and crisis situations – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia can deploy their own military units and equipment using simplified procedures, thereby supporting the military potential of their neighbours. Furthermore, the BMMA will facilitate the coordination and monitoring of unit transfers, as well as the exchange of operational information not only between the Baltic States but also within the EU and NATO. Experience gained during both peacetime and crisis situations will be utilised in the event of a military threat, enabling the efficient management of the movement of allied forces on the territory of the three Baltic States. The initiative also aims to implement best practices and facilitate the organisation of joint exercises. The BMMA's remit extends to all domains: land, sea, air, and IT/cyberspace. In conjunction with the Baltic Defence Line ([IEŚ Policy Papers 2/2025](#)), the BMMA is set to become one of the component of a contemporary defence concept.

"Military Schengen Area." Initiatives jointly implemented by the Baltic States in the defence sphere could also become a key element of EU and NATO security. According to the initiators, the BMMA is intended to contribute to discussions on a pan-European framework for military mobility to strengthen NATO's eastern flank, which would result in the creation of a common European military mobility area. The BMMA is a response to earlier discussions within the EU regarding restrictions on military mobility, both in terms of infrastructure – adequate for the transport of heavy equipment, bridges, roads, and railways – and procedural – fragmented national regulations.

On 19 November 2025, the European Commission published a package on military mobility, which represents a significant step towards the establishment of a "Military Schengen Area". The objective of these initiative is to establish a framework for reducing physical, legal, and regulatory obstacles to the effective and rapid movement of troops, weapons, and equipment within the European Union.² In addition to reducing regulatory barriers, the package includes measures to adapt transport infrastructure for dual use (both civilian and military), introduce

¹ Ministry of Defence, Republic of Estonia, *Baltic defence ministers to establish joint Military Mobility Area*, 30.01.2026, https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/3b_mc_joint_communique_27jan.pdf.

² European Parliament, *Military Mobility*, December 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/779250/EPRS_ATA\(2025\)779250_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/779250/EPRS_ATA(2025)779250_EN.pdf).

common standards, add more transparent procedures for issuing border crossing permits, and develop improved coordination mechanisms.

Conclusions:

1. Close defence cooperation between Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is developing based on the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding of January 29, 2013. At the end of January this year, another regional military cooperation initiative was formalised in Tallinn. The initiative aims to remove unnecessary restrictions on border crossings, the movement of military personnel, and the transport of equipment during peacetime, as well as in crisis situations and war. Facilitating and improving military mobility has long been a key goal of cooperation between the Baltic states; therefore, this initiative is seen as another step towards improving troop deployment capabilities, thereby strengthening their security. The primary objective of this initiative is to deliver tangible operational advantages in crisis situations across the three nations, with a secondary goal of fortifying NATO's eastern flank. The BMMA is intended to ensure the mobility of allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as to deter aggressors and contribute to the security of NATO as a whole.
2. While dynamic cooperation between the three Baltic states represents an adequate response to contemporary geopolitical challenges, the financing of the Baltic Military Area (BMMA) and, in the longer term, the "Military Schengen Area" requires further clarification. On the one hand, the BMMA has the potential to contribute to a reduction in the costs of transporting military equipment and units, as well as administrative costs. On the other hand, ensuring the mutual integrity of projects and their alignment with EU mobility procedures and NATO defence plans may generate additional burdens. The Baltic states have been working closely with each other and with Poland for many years to secure EU funding for these projects, ensuring stronger capabilities in countering threats and defending their borders. Implementing the initiative will also require digital solutions to streamline the logistics system.
3. The January 30th declaration also included provisions for further strategic cooperation between the US and the Baltic states, as well as recognition of US military assistance, cooperation in the defence industry, and the US military presence in the Baltic states. For Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the US and NATO remain the foundation of their security. At the same time, they acknowledge that Europe must assume greater responsibility for maintaining stability in the region, a point that is further highlighted in the context of the US National Defense Strategy (["IEŚ Commentaries" No. 1515](#)).