

EUROMIL Wednesday Q&A series

3 Questions on European Defence



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Developing European defence has never been more urgent or higher on the political agenda. President von der Leyen has made the pursuit of a European Defence Union a priority for her second term. What, in your view, are the main barriers slowing down deeper defence cooperation?

Recent events, most notably the ongoing Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine, have shifted the EU's security focus dramatically. Consequentially the EU has taken collective action to become more resilient and increase its overall preparedness for an array of crisis scenarios – ranging from natural catastrophes to the worst case scenario, namely armed aggression. Despite the leaps forward, barriers to deeper defence cooperation persist. Let me shed a little more light on three of these. **First: insufficient levels of funding;** investing into defence cooperation is extremely costly. Closing capability gaps and doing the necessary innovation does not come for free and takes time. **Second: fragmentation,** Europe's defence industry is large and therefore has much to offer. However, on the flipside, this means that European armies are using various forms of equipment. Achieving true interoperability will be crucial, also vis-à-vis our partner NATO. **And third: the adequate mind-set,** crises are numerous and unfortunately increasing in number. The EU and Member States – including with partners – need to work together closely and swiftly implement the policies that are already in place. In the end EU Member States are in the driver's seat and must take decisive action. At the same time, it is crucial for the mind-set of society to change, peace cannot be taken for granted anymore and we must accept the fact that we need to spend more in order to build real deterrence.

So how to collectively tackle such challenges?

The challenges we face are too big for any one of our Member States to tackle on their own. Collective resilience and preparedness demand a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. This collective action will be guided by a number of EU policies, such as the White Paper on European Defence Readiness 2030, the REARM Europe initiative and the SAFE instrument.



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Looking at these documents and policies more closely: The past months the European Commission published two key documents for European security and defence, one was already mentioned, the White Paper on Defence Readiness 2030, the other one being the Preparedness Union Strategy. What are the main elements that will foster readiness and interoperability among the members of the Armed Forces and enhance civil-military cooperation?

Together, these documents create a comprehensive framework for advancing European defence readiness. By investing in joint capabilities and fostering civil-military cooperation, they ensure Europe is well-prepared for both current and emerging security challenges, promoting a unified and robust response framework. This strategic approach balances military readiness with leveraging civilian expertise, therefore ensuring holistic security for Europe. Firstly, the **White Paper on Defence Readiness 2030** sets a foundation for increased military integration through several core initiatives:

- 1. Investment in Critical Capabilities:** It highlights the importance of investing in essential areas like integrated air and missile defence, artillery systems, ammunition and missiles and military mobility. But the White Paper also takes into account solutions for what we currently witness in Ukraine, namely the need for drone and counter-drone systems as well as AI/cyber, and electronic warfare capabilities. By closing these gaps, member states can create a more unified and responsive military force, essential for facing modern threats.
- 2. Joint Procurement and Large-Scale Projects:** The emphasis on joint procurement allows for standardizing military equipment and operational procedures, promoting seamless cooperation among national forces. Initiating pan-European capability projects ensures that interoperability is at the forefront of future military developments.
- 3. Strategic Funding Mechanisms:** With a proposed funding of up to €800 billion, including through the new financial SAFE instrument (Security Action for Europe), EU countries can collaboratively invest in critical defence needs. This pooling of resources enhances collective strength and responsiveness.
- 4. Enhanced Partnerships:** Strengthening relationships with NATO and other global allies ensures that European defence readiness complements international security frameworks, promoting strategic coherence and adaptability.

In parallel – and complementarity – **the Preparedness Union Strategy** aims to improve coordination between civil and military sectors through:

- 1. Whole-of-Society Approach:** This strategy underscores the importance of integrating civilian and military efforts, using a comprehensive approach to prepare for crises ranging from natural disasters to armed conflicts. This integration ensures resources are effectively utilized across various scenarios.
- 2. Crisis Management Frameworks:** Establishing robust crisis management protocols allows for effective coordination between military forces and civilian agencies.



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This ensures military capabilities can be leveraged efficiently in civilian contexts, such as infrastructure management and logistics during emergencies.

3. Focus on Cybersecurity and Hybrid Threats: By emphasizing cooperation against cyber hacks and hybrid warfare, the strategy calls for shared intelligence and capabilities, enhancing resilience across both military and civilian sectors.

4. Joint Training and Exercises: Joint exercises and training initiatives are vital for improving interoperability among forces and enhancing civil-military understanding. These programs ensure preparedness and reinforce collaborative problem-solving during crises.

These initiatives lay a strategic foundation for robust European defence. By investing in joint capabilities and enhancing civil-military cooperation the EU strengthens its readiness and overall defence posture – enhancing European, transatlantic and global security.