

Resolution on the white paper on the future of European defence

2025/2565(RSP) - 12/03/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 419 votes to 204, with 46 abstentions, a resolution on the white paper on the future of European defence.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, Renew and Greens/EFA groups.

Over the past decade, significant geopolitical changes, including hybrid threats within the EU, a large-scale war in its neighbourhood, and a global power realignment, have posed serious risks to EU security. These challenges demand urgent, ambitious, and decisive action, particularly in reforming and strengthening EU defence policy. Lessons from Ukraine's war experience and the use of new technologies highlight the need for modernisation. However, the EU's ability to respond effectively to external threats has been hindered by the requirement for unanimity, which has delayed or blocked critical military aid to Ukraine, undermining European security. In response, the European Commission President has tasked the Commissioner for Defence and Space and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs with presenting a **white paper on European defence** within the first 100 days of their term. This move aligns with longstanding calls from Parliament and experts for a comprehensive defence strategy.

Genuine security provider

Parliament emphasised the urgent need for the EU to ensure its **autonomous security**, reduce dependencies on non-EU countries, and strengthen partnerships with like-minded allies. It warned that a 'business as usual' approach risks the end of a safe and secure Europe, urging the EU to unite and act decisively against threats rather than face vulnerabilities alone. Russia, supported by allies like Belarus, China, North Korea, and Iran, was identified as the most significant threat to EU security and its partners. Parliament stressed the importance of **Europe taking greater responsibility within NATO** and integrating defence and security dimensions into broader EU policies, supported by regulatory, financial, and capability-building measures.

Parliament also called for a renewed political ambition to transform the EU into a **genuine security provider, enhance defence readiness, and build a true European Defence Union**. While acknowledging the Strategic Compass as a starting point, it demanded a 'quantum leap' in defence, including strong decisions, action plans, and short- to long-term investment strategies. It criticised the Council and Member States for lacking ambition in addressing structural challenges in the European defence industry and fostering cooperation.

The resolution urged the EU to adopt a **comprehensive framework** to strengthen security, identify future risks, and coordinate joint responses akin to wartime measures. It called for the upcoming white paper on European defence to propose concrete measures, differentiate between short- and long-term goals, address capability gaps, industrial competitiveness, and investment needs, and frame EU defence integration. Parliament also emphasised the need to strengthen the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as a key tool against hybrid warfare, ensuring it serves as Europe's security 'insurance policy' and a reliable security and power provider.

Defending Ukraine against an existential threat to Europe's security

The European Parliament urged the EU and its Member States to strongly support Ukraine by providing more arms and ammunition before any negotiations are concluded. It warned that failing to support Ukraine could lead to Russia targeting other countries, including EU members, if Ukraine were forced to surrender. The resolution emphasised the need for **urgent financial support** to ensure timely defence supplies through joint procurement, industrial coordination, stockpiling, and modernising production capacities. It called for swift adoption of the next military aid package and recommended Member States allocate **at least 0.25% of their GDP** to military aid for Ukraine. Additionally, Parliament called for stricter enforcement of existing sanctions and the adoption of new measures against entities and non-EU states aiding Russia's military by circumventing sanctions or supplying military and dual-use technologies.

Drones package

The Commission is called on to propose an **EU drones package**, focusing on drone and anti-drone systems and auxiliary capabilities, containing plans and funds to stimulate research and development, which should draw on lessons learnt from the Ukrainian experience and be open to the participation of Ukraine's highly innovative companies, as well as an industrial programme dedicated to the joint development, production and procurement of drone and anti-drone systems, and a regulation on the use of drones in civilian and military contexts.

Most extreme military contingencies

The resolution stressed that preparedness for hybrid and grey zone attacks must become part of the EU's strategic culture, with permanent exercises, joint threat assessments and preplanned, coordinated responses among Member States, particularly in regions bordering hostile powers. It called on the EU to develop a comprehensive EU risk assessment to help identify the major cross-sectoral threats and hazards, as well as the concrete risks facing the EU as a whole, building on current sector-specific risk assessment procedures.

Parliament called for **urgent adaptation of EU tools** to address new realities, including faster administrative procedures during wars or large-scale crises. It emphasised the need for regular threat analyses, recommending updates to the EU's Strategic Compass to reflect the evolving threat environment and conducting more frequent assessments to guide capability and operational planning. The Strategic Compass, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the upcoming white paper on defence, and the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) should form the foundation of a comprehensive European defence vision.

Parliament reiterated the importance of **EU-NATO cooperation**, particularly in areas like information exchange, planning, military mobility, and interoperability, while advocating for a stronger, autonomous European pillar within NATO. It highlighted the deteriorating strategic environments of many CSDP missions, stressing the need for the white paper to ensure flexibility and a 360-degree approach to European security, building credible deterrence and rapid response capabilities.

Expressing deep concern over rising hybrid threats - such as sabotage, cyberattacks, disinformation, and election interference - Parliament insisted on the swift development of **joint European cyber capabilities** to counter these challenges effectively.

Coherence and sovereignty

Parliament called for the EU to develop wartime economic cooperation plans with close partners to ensure mutual support during large-scale security crises. It emphasised deepening dialogues with European and global partners to provide early warnings of hard, hybrid, and cyber threats, while fostering collaboration on critical infrastructure protection and maritime safety. Parliament urged greater coherence between EU

instruments and encouraged Member States to aggregate defence demand through **joint procurement**, potentially granting the Commission a mandate to procure on their behalf. This would improve the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), enhance production capacities, ensure interoperability of European armed forces, and optimise taxpayer funds through economies of scale.

Parliament highlighted the need for a single European defence market, addressing fragmentation and lack of competitiveness in the industry, which currently hinders the EU's ability to act as a security provider. It also proposed **strengthening its oversight role** in defence matters, including appointing a Parliament representative to the new Defence Industrial Readiness Board under the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), as no such provision currently exists.

Finance and investments

Parliament considered that, in the EU's next multiannual financial framework (MFF), defence spending lines will have to reflect the new 'ready for the most extreme military contingencies' priority. Innovative solutions for finding additional funding must be explored without delay without waiting on the next MFF. Members strongly support the idea that EU Member States must increase their defence and security financing to new levels. Some Member States have already increased their defence spending to 5 % of GDP.

Member States are urged to support the establishment of a **defence, security and resilience bank** to serve as a multilateral lending institution designed to provide low interest, long-term loans that can support key national security priorities such as rearmament, defence modernisation, rebuilding efforts in Ukraine and the buying back of critical infrastructure currently owned by hostile non-EU countries. Parliament called for a system of **European defence bonds** to be explored for financing large-scale military investments up front.