

News from the Brussels' Bubble



EU agenda

Unless indicated otherwise, EU official meetings take place in Brussels

- 5-8/05/26 • [3rd Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy in the Defence and Security Sector \(CF SEDSS IV\) and 1st Energy Technology Solutions Conference and Exhibition](#), Lemesos, Cyprus
- 12/05/26 • Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), defence format
- 18-19/05/26 • [EBS-ASD European Defence and Security Summit](#)
- 03/06/26 • [European Defence Agency \(EDA\) conference](#)
- 7-8/06/26 • Informal meeting of Defence ministers, Lefkosia, Cyprus
- 15-19/06/26 • [8th Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) Olympiad](#)
- 18-19/06/26 • Summit of EU leaders
- 23-24/06/26 • [European Defence & Security Summit](#)
- 01/07/26 • Irish Presidency of the EU starts
- 29/10/26 • [6th European Defence and Security Conference](#)

ENAAT news

- **GDAMS closing event: breaking consensus on EU funding for arms (06/05, 6pm CEST)**



EU PEACE DAY WEBINAR
'A militarised garden: Breaking the consensus on EU funding for rearmament'
Marc Botenga (MEP The Left)
Moderation by Laëtitia Sédou (ENAAT)
• STOP REARM EUROPE & GDAMS REPRESENTATIVES
• REPRESENTATIVES from other european NGOs
Register by using the QR code or at:
<https://forms.konver.org/en/peace-day-webinar>

MAY 6
2026
18:00
CEST



[SIPRI released on 27 April](#) the latest military expenditure figures in 2025: global military expenditure reached \$2.9 billion, a third of it being spent by the US and 55% by all NATO members. The EU27 countries spent together \$460 billion, a 28% increase compared with 2024. Join us this Wednesday 6 of May at 6pm for the closing event of the GDAMS campaign, to discuss with MEP Marc Botenga and civil society actors about how to break the consensus on EU funding for rearmament. → [Register here](#)



- **14 June demonstration in Brussels: "Welfare not warfare!"**

Join the European demonstration against militarisation and military spending!
Organised by the Belgian platform [Stop Militarisation](#), with support from [StopReArm Europe](#)

EU support for the arms industry

- **Post-2027 funding: maximised flexibility and 'merit-based' approach**

On 28 April, the European Parliament adopted its position on the proposal for the next EU long-term budget for 2028-2034 (also called Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF). MEPs call for a 10% increase of the total budget compared to the EC initial proposal, that is a budget up to €2 trillion (in current figures, equivalent to 1.27% of EU GNI). The report set “defence and competitiveness as new priorities, but cohesion and agriculture funding must be safeguarded”, [reads the press release](#). It also supports simplification but that “must not undermine transparency, accountability or democratic oversight.” Both statements sound at best as naive wishful thinking considering what is already happening.

Member States are still discussing their own position, and the President of the EU Council Antonio Costa is now “step[ing] up pressure to break EU budget deadlock” [says Politico](#): as usual, “Wealthier governments in Northern Europe are reluctant to pay more into the budget and remain skeptical about handing the European Commission more taxing powers”, while “Less-developed countries in Southern and Eastern Europe (...) back a bigger budget and broadly oppose cuts to farm subsidies and regional funding, which together account for nearly half the total.” It is only once the Council will have reached its own position that negotiations can start between Member States, the Parliament and the Commission, with hopes expressed to have a deal reached by end 2026.

As regards the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), which will include funding for the arms industry (see [NBB2025-4](#)), the EP position calls to increase its budget to €264 billion (+€30bn compared to the EC proposal). The parliament is also currently working on a report specific to the ECF, and the [200-pages draft text](#) was published on 20 April. The two Rapporteurs, Christian Ehler (EPP, DE) and Dan Nica (S&D, RO) “propose allocating €13 billion to defence research and innovation across three new instruments covering different types of projects and funding”, and €54 billion to the defence industry and security, [reports ScienceBusiness](#).

Some critics “suggested that the ECF is designed to allow the Commission to spend the money however it sees fit (...) and lacks institutional safeguards and robust governance mechanisms” according to a report from the Centre for European Reform (CER) [quoted by Euractiv](#), with “the design principle appear[ing] to be to maximise flexibility.” The ECF governance proposed by the Commission would allow it “to finance some strategic projects without even issuing a call for proposals, [...] significantly reduce the role of independent experts and EU capitals in selecting projects, and give the Commission enormous power to determine which sectors are truly ‘innovative’ – and, thus, eligible for EU funding”, still according to that report. Another hot topic is the ‘excellence issue’, or “merit-based approach of disbursing funds”: in other words, “the best project wins, regardless of geographical location”. [According to Euractiv](#), “the issue has become one of the most contentious in negotiations over the next seven-year EU budget. (...) In a non-paper circulated earlier this year, a group of wealthier countries including Germany, France and Spain argued that ECF money should be awarded “based on criteria that ensure that only the best projects are funded in terms of their quality and impact. (...) By contrast, a rival paper from poorer countries including Bulgaria, Romania and Poland called for the fund to promote “geographical balance” and the “inclusive participation of member states in strategic industrial value chains.”

- **Deal on the deregulation of the arms sector postponed**

Contrary to the initial plan, the negotiations on the three main texts under the ‘simplification package for defence’, better called deregulation package for the arms industry, did not reach an agreement by end of April. In light of deep disagreements, the Cypriot presidency decided to suspend the trilogue meeting (high-level negotiations between EP, Commission and EU presidency representatives) planned for the 28 of April, which was meant to be the decisive encounter. restrictions.”

“At the core of the issue are disagreements about the easing of arms transfers between EU countries and the simpler procurement regulations to bypass the need for European-wide competitive calls” [reports Euractiv](#). In particular, a number of Member States are concerned that the Commission’s initial proposals, and even more so the amendments proposed by Parliament, would significantly encroach upon their national arms export control systems. Which is exactly the point that [ENAAT has been doing for months](#). This reluctance is likely due more to the Member States’ desire to preserve their national sovereignty over defence matters and to avoid anything that might resemble a transfer of powers to the EC, rather than to a genuine concern for compliance with international law and strict export policies.

The European Parliament had decided to split the package into three separate files (permit granting procedures, intra-EU arms transfers & defence procurement rules, and easing environmental and safety norms for 'defence readiness) and called the Cypriot Presidency to "move ahead" and "allow progress on individual files where possible, without blocking advancement across the board". However, the Council – that is to say, the Member States – is determined to ensure that negotiations on the various issues proceed at the same pace ([Euractiv](#)). The Presidency has now proposed 18 & 19 May for the trilogue meetings to happen on those three files, and in the meantime lower level "technical negotiations" are taking place to try to resolve the remaining sticking points. Once a deal will be struck, the Member States and the European Parliament will have to formally endorse it by a vote

- **News briefs**

€1.5 billion EDIP work programme adopted

[On 30 March the EC approved the work programme](#) for the implementation of the €1.5 billion EDIP (European Defence Industry Programme) voted in December by the EP and Council. "More than €700 million will support the production increase of key defence components and products, including counter-drones systems, missiles and ammunition [including] €260 million under the Ukraine Support Instrument (USI)." €325 million will be dedicated to launch and implement European Defence Projects of Common Interest (EDPCIs) also open to Norway and Ukraine. "EDIP will fund €240 million for the joint procurement of defence equipment, including counter-drone, air and missile defence and ground and naval combat systems, by Member States and Norway, [with] grants available for up to €20 million per project." About €135 million will go to defence start-ups and innovation through the Fund Accelerating Defence Supply Chains Transformation (FAST) and a new defence innovation programme called BraveTech EU initiative, supporting both Ukrainian and EU industries. The first round of EDIP calls for proposals was published on 31 March.

EC pushing for fast-track procedure for AGILE

EU Defence Commissioner Andrius Kubilius on Wednesday called for European institutions and companies to go much faster, warning that decision-making and weapons production remain too slow. "Speaking to the European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) [on 15 April], Kubilius urged the co-legislators to quickly strike an agreement on the €115 million Agile and Rapid Defence Innovation (AGILE) programme he proposed last month to support projects from startups." According to the Commissioner, the programme qualifies for a fast-track decision-making procedure, skipping also the eight-week period for national parliament to comment on the proposal, to "allow the instrument to be tested before the current multiannual budget runs out at the end of 2027." ([Euractiv](#))

EDF: €1.07 billion allocated to 57 defence projects

[57 projects have been selected under the 2025 calls for the European Defence Fund](#) (EDF), with a total amount of €1.07 billion" provid[ing] essential funding for the EU's four major defence flagships: the European Drone Defence Initiative, the Eastern Flank Watch, the European Air Shield and the European Space Shield". [According to DefenseNews](#), "the most striking cluster of projects marks a shift to 21st-century warfare, with at least four separate initiatives – EURODAMM, LUMINA, SKYRAPTOR, and TALON – devoted specifically to loitering munitions and affordable mass drone production.

UK turns to private finance to speed up defence investment push

On 22 April "the UK government announced that it is meeting with leaders from banks, venture capital and strategic finance to leverage private investments to accelerate defence readiness (...) as part of the Defence Investors' Advisory Group (DIAG), which advises ministers on investment priorities in the defence sector." This Advisory group is becoming permanent and expanded to include "industry professionals seconded into the MoD through a new "Defence Finance Zig-Zag" programme designed to embed private-sector expertise within government decision-making". ([Euractiv](#))

War profiteers: Airbus & SAAB

Defence revenues of Airbus's Defence and Space Division rose 7% year-on-year to €2.8 billion, "help[ing] offset headwinds for the rest of the company", and order intake nearly doubled to €5.0 billion compared to €2.6 billion a year earlier. According to the AIRBUS CEO Guillaume Faury, "in defence, the focus remains on serving global demand by ramping up production across our portfolio of products and services. (...) Last week, Saab also reported a solid three months with organic sales up 23.6% and gross income up 32%." ([Euractiv](#))

EIB's 5 billion in military & security: "not all about bullets"

The European Investment Bank is aiming at investing €5 billion in dual-use military and security projects in 2026, raising from 1 billion in 2024 and 4 billion in 2025. EIB vice-president De Groot insisted that "more than hardware" is needed to "defend Europe", as "military officials raised topics ranging from space, cybersecurity and military logistics to infrastructure" during his tour of EU capitals. Other topical issues are military mobility, energy efficiency and electrification. ([Euractiv](#))

Other aspects of European militarisation

- **What about the EU mutual defence clause?**

Last week EU leaders met for an informal European Summit in Cyprus, and discussed among others the EU mutual defence clause defined in Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). And the conclusion was... that it still "needs work": "Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU's mutual defense clause, Article 42.7, needs some gaming out if it's going to work properly in practice. "The treaty is very clear about the what," von der Leyen said, explaining member countries are obligated to come to each other's aid. "The treaty is not clear about what happens when and who does what." [reports Politico](#).

Article 42.7 states that "If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power" ([TEU](#)). "An all-for-one, one-for-all measure that, on paper, goes even further than NATO's mutual defense rules. However, in practice, it's unclear what support countries would actually offer to each other, given the vagueness of the commitment" [explains Politico](#). This question comes up regularly in discussions about 'European defence', a vague term that is never being properly defined, allowing for different assumptions, and discussions have not really made any progress. [According to Euractiv](#), "the EU's diplomatic service is drawing up a manual to help countries know when and how they can trigger the bloc's own mutual assistance clause (...) detailing what kind of resources are available from the EU (...). To inform the final document, countries could perform some simulations where they would be asked to react to several scenarios and say whether they think article 42.7 applies". Euractiv also reminds that the mechanism was triggered only once, by France after the 2015 terrorist attacks. "At that time, EU countries offered mainly logistical support, with Belgium and Germany sharing intelligence, police support and counter-terrorism experts."

- **Expected clash on EU military mobility package**

Last November the European Commission presented a [military mobility package](#), including in particular a Regulation "on establishing a framework of measures to facilitate the transport of military equipment, goods and personnel across the Union", to be negotiated and adopted by the EU co-legislators.

[The package proposes](#) spending €17.6 billion on military mobility in the next EU long-term budget (2028-2034), a tenfold increase compared to the current budget cycle but that MEPs might still consider not enough. However the difficult discussion will rather be on the pace of the reforms and in particular on the Emergency framework (EMERS) that the EU council could activate within 48 hours in case of a crisis, "allowing military convoys priority access and removing the requirement for national permissions to cross intra-EU borders. The mechanism would apply to all EU territory for up to one year" [details Euractiv](#). Those measures are largely supported by the two EP rapporteurs on the file (Robert Zile, ECR LV, & Michal Szczerba, EPP PL), who also call for the proposed "digital platform that will operate all transit permits to be ready by 2028" instead of 2030, and for "countries to appoint national coordinators within three months, instead of the six months proposed by the Commission. These coordinators would act as a single point of contact to review and submit transit requests", [explains Euractiv](#).

On the other side, "Member states want to be able to limit the emergency mechanism to specific regions, [as well as] to restrict the transit of foreign military through their borders even under the emergency mechanism" further reports Euractiv. A military Mobility Transport group should be set-up to help implement the regulation.

- **EU-Ukraine 'drone deals'**

After Orban's electoral defeat in Hungary, the path has been cleared for the €90bn EU loan to Ukraine which should receive the first disbursement in June, [reports Euractiv](#).

“Two-thirds of the total package (€60 billion) is allocated to military assistance, with the remainder earmarked for budget support”, and allows for retroactive financing from January. The loan as European preference in principle but derogations are possible, and this is already the case in the “defence product schedule outlining its needs for drones produced domestically and for which it received a derogation earlier this month as many of the components are sourced outside the EU or partner countries”, further details Euractiv.

“Ukraine also announced on [28 April] it is gearing up to start exporting arms through new “Drone Deals” aimed at scaling up defence production and deepening military-industrial ties with foreign partners” [explains Euractiv](#). This includes European countries which “are increasingly striking joint production deals with Ukraine, particularly in the drone sector, as Kyiv’s ability to rapidly produce affordable battlefield hardware improves” ([Euractiv](#))

The EC and Ukraine have signed on 21 April “a cooperation agreement to support investments in Kyiv’s emerging and disruptive technologies on the sidelines of the EU-Ukraine Business Summit. Ukraine will be able to receive €140 million in guarantees and €21 million in investment grants from the EU to finance the development of drones, electronic defence and space technologies.” ([Euractiv](#))

- **News Briefs**

Commission unveils EU-Med ‘Security Facility’

On 17 April “The Commission unveiled an “EU-Med security facility” as part of its first Action Plan for the Mediterranean. The initiative aims for EU countries to provide expertise and assistance to the security institutions of interested countries in the region. (...) The Commission is also looking at possible assistance measures via the European Peace Facility, or Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) missions when necessary, (...) tailored to the individual needs of each participating country in order to build trust between local populations and their state institutions. (...) The action plan comes after the EU signed the Pact for the Mediterranean last year to bolster cooperation with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.” ([Euractiv](#))

Updated EU arms exports database

The [official EU database on arms exports](#) has been recently updated with the figures for the year 2024. It provides data about the arms exports from EU countries to non-EU destinations, broken down by number of licences issued, value of licences, and value of actual exports, as well as by country or region of destination. However, there is no uniform standard and data is compiled differently by each country. Moreover, not all countries provide information about the actual exports. A more user-friendly [arms export browser is proposed by ENAAT & CAAT-UK](#), based on those figures and to be updated soon.

EU arms sales to Israel continue

“France, Germany, and Greece led EU arms sales to Israel in 2024, even as pressure now builds for new sanctions due to ongoing Israeli war crimes. Hungary (€6m), Latvia (€4m), and Croatia (€2m) granted minor amounts of permits, while Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Poland each also issued €1m or fewer. The EU figures do not detail actual arms deliveries or new orders, but still give their own snapshot of what is usually a secretive sector.” ([EUobserver](#))

- **Interesting links**

[‘From “sustainable” arms to self-sustained militarisation: the role of the EIB in the EU arms race’](#), Counter Balance blog, 31/03/26

[‘Darwinian’ battle looms for the West’s arms industry, top NATO commander warns – POLITICO](#), 06/04/26

[‘It’s not just spyware scandals: EU is funding the industry that spies on Europeans’](#), EUobserver, OpEd by EDRi & Counter Balance, 04/06/26

[‘Germany unveils strategy for becoming Europe’s strongest military by 2039’](#), DefenseNews, 22/04/26

[‘Inside Ukraine’s robot war revolution’ – POLITICO](#), 22/04/26

[‘Capitals fear EU mutual assistance talks could trigger Trump’](#), [Euractiv](#), 30/04/26

[‘FCAS collapse could derail Franco-German tank project and future cooperation’](#), [Euractiv](#), 02/05/26