

European Parliament votes the 7.9 billion European Defence Fund [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#)

The European Parliament approved the European Defence Fund, the last step for its adoption.

The European Defence Fund is provided with 7.9 billion euros for the period 2021-2027, with:

- 5.3 billion euros for development actions
- 2.6 billion euros for research programmes
- 4% of the Fund is dedicated to disruptive technologies, 8% to innovative equipment

The Commission came with this initiative on the ground of how much the lack of cooperation in the European Union costs. Compared to the United States, 178 different weapon systems are currently employed in the EU versus 30 across the Atlantic Ocean. It is estimated to cost 25 to 100 billion euros per year to Member States. This Fund is a second step, after PADR (Preparatory Action on Defence Research) and EDIDP (European Defence and Industrial Development Programme), respectively worth €90 million and €500 million. Voted in plenary session on April 29th, it will enter in force retroactively on January 1st.

This fund will finance research programmes through grants, and complement the Member States' investment by co-financing up to 20% of the costs for prototype development and up to 80% of ensuing certification or testing activities. Only collaborative projects will be eligible with at least 3 Member States.

The Executive Vice-President "for a Europe fit for the Digital Age" stressed the role the Fund will help the SMEs play in defence supply chains. Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market, saluted that "the idea of working together for promoting our Defence Union is now a tangible reality".

Industries: EU Space programme, MGCS [EN](#) [EN](#) [DE](#) [FR](#)

The EU Parliament has adopted on April 28th a new European Space Programme for 2021-2027

The €14.8 billion Space programme, first presented in June 2018, aims to reorganise and give a new impulse to the space sector inside the EU.

First, it gets rid of redundancies between the ESA (European Space Agency) and the European Commission: the EU Commission ensures the programme management, i.e. priorities and operational decisions, while the ESA remains the main partner in the programme implementation. As ESA is not a EU agency, a new space agency is also created, the EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), to ensure the provision and the market uptake specifically for the two main programmes, Galileo and Copernicus.

Second, it secures a new funding, allocated as follows:

- €9.1 billion for Galileo, the satellite navigation system, a European GPS
- €5.4 billion for Copernicus, the earth observation system, for climate and nature monitoring
- €442 million for monitoring space debris hazard (SSA) and secured governmental communications (GOVSATCOM)

This new space programme intends also to invest in the "new space", i.e. the contribution of the private sector to space, to create high-value jobs and enforce the strategic autonomy of the EU.

As space becomes more and more a conflict zone, and as satellites are widely integrated into defence capacities, defence was also on the menu, with two paradoxical attitudes: defending those capacities is felt important but some fear that the EU is taken into a space militarisation race alongside the US.

Germany and the United-Kingdom discussed about the ongoing MGCS programme

The German Secretary of State Benedikt Zimmer and his British counterpart Jeremy Quin met last April 22nd to discuss cooperation on defence and weapon matters. According to the press release, the MGCS (Main Ground Combat System), of which the UK is not a part, has been part of the discussion. A project between France and Germany for a future battle tank, the MGCS workshare has been quite difficult to establish between the two countries before the launch in May 2020. The arrival of London could disturb the balance, given that the German Rheinmetall owns parts of RBSL, the British armoured vehicles specialist.

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Meeting of Defence Ministers in Lisbon on the Strategic Compass ^{PT}

Ministers of Defence meet in Lisbon to discuss Strategic Compass

On the initiative of the Lisbon presidency of the EU, a gathering of 14 Ministers of Defence, the Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton and the EDA (European Defence Agency) Chief Executive Jiri Šedivý, has occurred on April 23rd to discuss the Strategic Compass. This “European White Book” has been launched under the German presidency late 2020 and is to be adopted during the French presidency in early 2022. It focuses on 4 domains: crisis management, resilience, capacities and partnerships. The ongoing phase of “strategic dialogue” was the purpose of this meeting, with concrete propositions from the participants and the first face-to-face discussion at political level.

European Union military cooperation and external operations ^{SE DE DE}

TF Takuba – Swedish soldiers hurt

Three Swedish soldiers have been hurt in the recent explosion of a roadside Improvised Explosive Device (IED), have the Swedish Armed Forces announced on April 22nd. Their injuries were light and they all returned to service after medical observation. This appears as a sign that the 150 soldiers deployed by Stockholm are strongly engaged in operations in the Sahel region.

Bundeswehr plans to reintegrate joint logistic and medical services

The online information website Business Insider has recently unveiled a project to reorganise the logistics and the medical services of the Bundeswehr, causing some troubles and reactions of senior officers that were not aware of the project. It follows the publication of a Position Paper in February 2021 identifying the need of better operation ability for the German Army. Therefore, the objective would be to bring those services closer to the armies, instead of independent branches as it is now.

Their dissolution would impact 60.000 personnel. Moreover, it would come back as it was before those services became independent a few decades ago. The medical service General Inspector has written an open letter to express his worries for a loss of efficiency in soldiers’ medical care.

As a matter of comparison, the French Armed Forces also have separate services for logistics and medical staff, but are not considering reintegrating them in the traditional armies.

International relations : troops withdrawal from Afghanistan & Russian sanctions ^{EN DE EN EN}

NATO nations engaged in Afghanistan are to withdraw their troops, following US decision

Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11th 2021. All NATO countries engaged alongside them followed for an “orderly withdrawal”, as described by the German Defence Minister. 21 out of 27 EU countries currently deployed troops, 19 of them being NATO countries. France and Croatia are the only 2 NATO-EU that already withdrew their troops in 2014.

Analysts fear that the withdrawal will increase instability in the country and reinforce the Taliban, preventing them from seeking an agreement with the Afghan government. This could also force many Afghans to leave, as they already are one of the largest immigration groups in Europe.

Russia takes sanctions and forbids 8 EU officials to enter its territory

Russia banned on April 30th 8 senior officials from entering the country, including the EU Parliament President David Sassoli and the EU Commission VP Věra Jourová. This follows the progressive recent degradation of bilateral relations between the two regional powers, and Alexandre Navalny’s incarceration. In a joint statement, David Sassoli, Ursula Von der Leyen and Charles Michel described the sanctions as “groundless” and “targeting the European Union directly.”