Head Office
10 Rue de Commerce
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: +32 456 71 91 16
Email: yepp@epp.eu

Building a Strong European Defence Ecosystem

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Presented by: ***Kokoomuksen Nuorten Liitto*** *(KNL, Finland)*

Supported by: ***Young Fine Gael*** *(YFG, Ireland),* ***Suomen Kristillisdemokraattiset Nuoret*** *(KDN, Finland)* ***Moderata Ungdomsförbundet*** *(MUF, Sweden),* ***Kristdemokratiska Ungdomsförbundet*** *(KDU, Sweden),* ***Konservativ Ungdom*** *(KU, Denmark),* ***Junge ÖVP*** *(Austria),* ***Christen-Democratische Jongeren Appèl*** *(CDJA, Netherlands),* ***JONGCD&V*** *(Belgium)*

Recognising

- Russia's war against Ukraine marks a fundamental turning point in European security, identified by both the EU and NATO as a defining challenge requiring a rapid scaling-up of industrial capacity and sustained delivery capabilities.[1]
- Finland (4 April 2023) and Sweden (7 March 2024) joining NATO heightens the need for seamless interoperability, logistics, and integrated supply chains in Northern Europe and across the Alliance, while also reinforcing the importance of a coherent and functional European defence ecosystem across all EU Member States.
- European defence remains highly fragmented, with over 170 weapons systems in use compared to approximately 30 in the United States, limiting economies of scale, complicating joint operations and maintenance, and weakening Europe's negotiating leverage with industry.[1]
- Both the EU and NATO identify demand aggregation, long-term procurement signals, standardisation, and resilient supply chains as key responses to current bottlenecks, with NATO explicitly aiming to avoid unnecessary duplication by building on EU efforts, highlighting the need for stronger alignment between European and transatlantic defence frameworks.[2]
- Industrial capacity expansion continues to be constrained by slow and complex permitting procedures, regulatory uncertainty (including environmental, chemical, and competition frameworks), and persistent barriers to attracting private investment into defence-related value chains.[3]
- A strong and functional European defence industrial base is essential not only for supporting NATO capabilities, but also for ensuring that the European Union can safeguard its own security, resilience, and strategic interests where necessary.

Acknowledging

- The European Council has stressed that Europe must rapidly strengthen defence readiness, while ensuring that a stronger European defence dimension remains complementary to NATO, which continues to serve as a key enabler of collective defence. At the same time, EU's capacity to act where NATO as a whole is not engaged is vital.[4]
- The EU's *Readiness 2030* White Paper identifies key priority capability areas—including ammunition and missiles, air and missile defence, drones and counter-drone systems, and military mobility—while reaffirming that Member States retain primary responsibility for defence capabilities, with the EU supporting coordination through demand aggregation and joint procurement.[5]
- The Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument, in force since 29 May 2025, is now entering its implementation phase, with multiple Member States having their national defence investment plans approved in early 2026 and initial disbursements underway.[6] [7]
- The EU is already advancing regulatory simplification (including the "Defence Readiness Omnibus" and COM(2025)823), introducing measures such as 60-day fast-track permitting, greater regulatory clarity, and reduced administrative burdens—efforts that should be prioritised and swiftly implemented.[4] [8]
- A more integrated European defence ecosystem, open to all EU Member States, strengthens both the Union's strategic autonomy and its ability to contribute effectively to NATO and broader European security.

YEPP calls on

1. The European Defence Agency and Member States to urgently establish and coordinate multiannual, multinational procurement frameworks aligned with NATO's Defence Production Action Plan, particularly in priority capability areas (ammunition, missile systems, air defence, and drones), including harmonised requirements and interoperability-by-default standards to reduce fragmentation.
2. The European Commission, European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union to prioritise the rapid adoption and implementation of existing simplification measures that directly address industrial bottlenecks, including:
    a. 60-day fast-track permitting procedures supported by national contact points
    b. Clearer and more predictable application of competition and environmental rules in defence readiness projects
    c. Adjustments ensuring that reporting regulations are fit for purpose
    d. Streamlined processes to reduce transaction costs in cross-border procurement
3. National licensing and export control authorities, in coordination with the European Commission, to expand the use of general and global transfer licences, recipient certification, and exemptions for cooperative programmes in order to reduce administrative bottlenecks within EU supply chains while safeguarding essential security interests.
4. The European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Investment Fund (EIF), in cooperation with national development banks and private lenders, to fully implement expanded defence financing mandates, with a particular focus on:
    a. SMEs within defence supply chains (tier 2 and tier 3 suppliers)
    b. Dual-use infrastructure
    c. Clear investment guidance to remove barriers for legitimate defence investments
5. YEPP to actively advocate for reducing fragmentation in Europe's defence industrial base and strengthening EU–NATO complementarity, while promoting a cohesive and inclusive

European defence ecosystem that enhances Europe's ability to act, respond to crises, and protect its strategic interests.

6. CINEA, Member States, and relevant EU bodies to accelerate implementation of the Military Mobility agenda [9](including the Military Mobility Package 2025), delivering concrete results before 2030, including:
    a. Harmonised and digitalised procedures for military transit
    b. Prioritisation of key dual-use infrastructure projects
    c. Systematic removal of remaining regulatory and border-related obstacles to the rapid movement of troops and equipment across Europe

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