



The EU's 2030 Defense Plan Promotes an Increase in Joint Internal Spending

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PARIS — The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, is urging member states to increase spending on joint defense purchases within the 27-country bloc as part of a plan to build a credible military deterrent against Russia by 2030.

Up to 150 billion euros (\$163 billion) in EU-guaranteed loans will be available for joint purchases from the European defense industry by two or more member states or one member state with partner countries including Norway, Switzerland, and Ukraine, according to a defense white paper published on March 19.

The 23-page document called for increased defense spending and identified critical investment areas including air defense, military mobility, drones, and strategic enablers.

The plan currently excludes the United Kingdom, Turkey, and the United States, although the commission stated that entities and products from other partner countries may be eligible for joint procurement, provided there is an agreement with the EU on financial conditions and

supply security.

“We have this window of opportunity to really boost the European defense industry,” said Kaja Kallas, the EU's chief official for foreign affairs and security policy, at a press conference in Brussels. “What we also see with Ukraine, if they use weapons that are not produced in Ukraine, then sometimes there are limitations on how you can use those weapons. Your military forces really need to have free hands in this regard.”

Kallas said the EU is working on a defense and security partnership with the United Kingdom, and the high representative said he “really hopes” for results in May, when the EU and the UK are scheduled to hold a bilateral summit to strengthen their ties. The white paper describes the UK as an “essential European ally” with whom security and defense cooperation should be increased.

The white paper calls for the creation of an EU market for defense equipment, simplifying and harmonizing rules for intra-EU purchases and transfers of defense-related products, as well as mutual recognition of certifications and permits.

Kallas said the international order is undergoing “changes of a magnitude not seen since 1945,” and the moment is crucial for European security. He stated that the Russian economy is “in full war mode,” with the country investing in a long-term aggression plan, and the EU needs a long-term plan to arm Ukraine to prevent future attacks.

The white paper includes three mentions of the United States, one referring to the request that Europe take more responsibility for its own defense, one on the transatlantic ally shifting its focus from Europe to other regions of the world, and one on the reduction of the country's historical role as the main security guarantor.

The priority for Europe must now be the implementation of the proposed plan, said Andrius Kubilius, the European Commissioner for Defense and Space.

Russian President Vladimir “Putin will not be deterred if we read him the white paper, he will be deterred if we turn the white paper into action, and if we use it to build very real drones, tanks, and artillery for our defense,” said Kubilius.

Europe has three areas to focus on, according to Kubilius: the massive production of what the continent already produces, such as conventional ammunition; the development of strategic enablers like air-to-air refueling capabilities and space-based intelligence; and European common interest defense products like air defense systems.

The commission will work on defining options for European common interest defense projects, aiming to present these options to the European Council, possibly in June, said Kubilius.

“Member states must decide what kind of European common interest defense projects they are ready to i

The European Commission, earlier this month, proposed a plan that reportedly could unlock about 800 billion euros in defense spending by member countries over the next four years. In addition to the plan for 150 billion euros in EU-guaranteed loans, the proposal includes easing fiscal rules that could be used by countries to increase defense spending.

The EU has gaps in air and missile defense capabilities, artillery systems, ammunition and missiles, drones and anti-drone systems, military mobility, artificial intelligence and quantum, electronic warfare, and strategic enablers, according to Kallas.

“All this costs a lot of money,” said Kallas. “The point of the white paper is that we can do it together, because it's not just about national defense, but actually regional.” He declined to say what percentage of GDP EU countries should spend on defense, only stating that “the new level of ambition is above 2%.”

The defense white paper proposes that the commission act as a central purchasing body on behalf of member states, if requested, although Kallas stated that the EU has structures like the European Defense Agency, which he said is underutilized.

The joint procurement “is one of the most important tools for us to try to decrease the systemic problems of our defense industry, which is very fragmented,” said Kubilius. “Moreover, we are spending quite a lot of money outside our defense industry.”

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