Arms Export Control

Responsibility and transparency by both exporting and importing countries, as well as adherence to the highest regional and international standards.

In the EU, arms exports have to be assessed against eight far-reaching risk assessment criteria relating notably to the risk of human rights and humanitarian law violations, the risk of diversion, the risk of internal or regional instability.

The EU promotes responsibility and transparency by both exporting and importing countries, as well as adherence to the highest regional and international standards, such as:

- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)
- EU Common Position on arms export control
- Council Decision amending the Common Position

Common Position on arms export controls

The EU Common Position on arms export controls lays down a notification and consultation mechanism for export licence denials, including a transparency procedure (publication of EU annual reports on arms exports).

See: Annual Reports on Arms Exports

In September 2019, the Council adopted a Decision amending the Common Position. This Decision takes account of a number of developments at both European Union and international level that have resulted in new obligations and commitments for EU Member States since the adoption of the Common Position of 2008. These developments include for example the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2014.

In September 2019, The Council also adopted Conclusions on the review of the Common Position.

The Common Position contains 8 risk assessment criteria that all EU countries apply to their licensing decisions for exports of conventional weapons.

The EU Common Position has contributed significantly to the convergence of national arms export control policies. It extends controls to brokering, transit transactions and intangible transfers of technology. Its principles and criteria have also been officially subscribed to by a
number of countries outside the EU.

It requires EU governments to apply risk assessments and transparency measures to goods listed by the ‘EU Common Military List’.

The User’s Guide (revised in 2019) is intended to help Member States apply the EU Common Position. It does not replace the Common Position in any way, but summarises agreed guidance for the interpretation of its criteria and implementation of its articles. It is intended for use primarily by export licensing officials.

**Promoting effective arms export control outside the EU**

Since 2008, the EU has funded arms export control outreach activities towards 16 countries in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods. Activities relate to regulatory assistance, training of relevant officials, exchange of best practices and case-studies.

**Documents**


More information on EU arms export control outreach

**Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**

The EU supports the effective implementation and universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), notably through Council Decision 2017/915/CFSP.

More information on EU’s activities in support of the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

**Arms brokering**

Common Position 2003/468/CFSP requires EU Member States to regulate brokering activities on their territory or carried out by their nationals, in particular by:

- requiring arms brokers to apply for a licence
- establishing an information-sharing system on brokering activities
- laying down adequate penalties for illicit brokering.