

## MEMO

### Questions and answers: a background for the Strategic Compass

The European Union and its Member States face multiple threats and challenges that are rapidly evolving and increasing in magnitude and complexity. To tackle them, the EU has strengthened its work in the field of security and defence with a comprehensive set of defence initiatives implemented since 2017. As the global security environment deteriorates and new threats emerge, the EU now needs to **step up its capacity and willingness to act**.

With the Strategic Compass, Member States will set out a **common strategic vision for EU security and defence for the next 5-10 years**. Building on a common assessment of the threats and challenges we face, the Compass will provide operational guidelines to enable the EU to become a **stronger security provider** and a **more responsible and reliable partner**, namely when it comes to responding to external crises, building the capacity of partners and protecting the Union and its citizens.<sup>1</sup>

As proposed to Member States, the Strategic Compass will set policy orientations, specific goals and objectives in four work strands:

- (1) **Act:** we need an EU able to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible and alone when necessary;
- (2) **Secure:** we need to enhance our ability to anticipate threats, guarantee secure access to strategic domains and protect our citizens;
- (3) **Invest:** we need to invest more and better in capabilities and innovative technologies, fill strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies;
- (4) **Partner:** we need to strengthen our cooperation with partners to address common threats and challenges.

These four strands are interconnected. The Strategic Compass is a **guide for action**. It puts forward concrete actions with timelines to measure our progress in the implementation.

#### How is the Strategic Compass being developed?

On 15 November, the High Representative presented the first draft to Ministers. Based on their guidance, negotiations on the Compass will continue between Member States in view of adoption by the Council in March 2022.

The draft Strategic Compass is based on discussions amongst EU Member States over the past year, which were structured and facilitated by the EEAS and steered by the High Representative. The European Commission as well as European Defence Agency were closely associated throughout the process.

As a first step, in November 2020, the High Representative presented an intelligence-based “comprehensive, 360 degrees” analysis of the full range of threats and challenges the EU currently faces or might face in the near future – the first of its kind done at EU level. It provided the starting point for these discussions. For more information, about the Threat Analysis, see this [MEMO](#).

---

<sup>1</sup> EU Heads of State affirmed the EU’s commitment to developing the Strategic Compass in their Statement in February 2021.

## What does the Compass address in practice?

### **Act**

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations contribute to build peace and security in countries and regions affected by conflict and instability. They also enhance the security of the European Union and its citizens.

The Strategic Compass aims to strengthen the EU's role in **crisis management**, using both civilian experts and military forces, and making full use of the recently established [European Peace Facility](#). It will set clear goals and objectives to enhance the effectiveness and flexibility of the EU's operational engagement as well as strengthen the collective readiness to react to future crises.

To improve the **effectiveness of our operational engagement**, for example, the Compass addresses the need to provide our CSDP missions and operations with more robust and flexible mandates. We have made progress in that direction with [EUTM Mali](#) and [Operation Atalanta](#) by expanding their mandates. [Operation Iriini](#) has also been fulfilling a robust mandate, inspecting vessels suspected to be in breach of the UN arms embargo on Libya.

At the same time, the Compass should make the EU more effective and flexible in our actions, while strengthening cooperation with **European-led ad hoc coalitions**. If we want to respond swiftly to crises, the speed of our decision-making needs to be improved.

We need to prepare together for future crisis and improve the **readiness of our military**. The EU and its Member States should be ready to deploy rapidly to respond quickly to future crises, ranging from rescue and evacuation missions to stabilisation operations, as well as maritime or even an air operation. In this context, the Compass proposes to develop an **EU Rapid Deployment Capacity** that will allow the EU to rapidly deploy a modular force of up to 5,000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, based on operational scenarios. These scenarios can be used to train together and conduct live exercises within the EU framework to improve readiness and interoperability.

On the side of the **civilian CSDP**, the Compass underlines the importance of intensifying the implementation of the **Civilian CSDP Compact** adopted in 2018, for example by implementing the commitment undertaken by Member States to be able to deploy **200 personnel within 30 days**, as well as by strengthening cooperation between CSDP and Justice and Home Affairs actors.

### **Secure**

In a rapidly evolving security environment, the Compass aims to enhance our ability to **detect and anticipate** threats and challenges. The first-ever conducted Threat Analysis should be reviewed regularly to keep it up to date, at least every five years. The Compass also proposes to reinforce the role of the EU Intelligence Centre as single entry point for Member States' intelligence and security services.

The Compass addresses the need to develop an overarching policy that could help tackle the comprehensive threats against us with a clear political objective in mind. This could take the form of an **EU Hybrid Toolbox**, encompassing measures against cyberattacks, disinformation, but also other forms of interference, such as the use of migration flows as tools of hybrid attacks against the EU. This will be complementary to ongoing work strands in the context of the [EU Cybersecurity Strategy](#), including the [Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox](#). As part of this broader framework, the Compass also proposes to develop further measures to counter **foreign information manipulation and interference** more effectively, for example by deterring perpetrators and imposing costs on them.

We also need to secure European access to strategic domains (space, cyber, maritime), which are more and more contested by our strategic competitors. To respond to the increase in cyberattacks, the Compass proposes to strengthen our **Cyber Defence Policy**. We also need to invest more in the maritime domain. The EU has already naval presences in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Guinea. The Compass will further guide the implementation of the [Coordinated Maritime Presences](#) concept and look at other maritime areas of interest, including in the Indo-Pacific. Lastly, space is

becoming more and more contested. The EU should develop a **Space Strategy for security and defence**, complementing the EU space programme and other relevant initiatives developed by the European Commission.

### ***Invest***

If the EU wants to be a credible security and defence actor, it needs the necessary civilian and military capabilities to act quickly and decisively. EU Member States have a single set of forces, which they can use in different frameworks. Both civilian and military capability planning requires clear political guidance. The Strategic Compass seeks to provide more specific goals and objectives for the planning and development of the required capabilities to implement the EU Level of Ambition. It should help review the **Union's civilian and military capability needs** in light of the evolving security situation and provide a coherent vision on the future military forces and civilian capacities.

The Strategic Compass also aims at further deepening **European cooperation** in planning, developing, delivering and using these capabilities through the EU framework. This would build on all the initiatives and tools we have already put in place to increase cooperation, including [Permanent Structured Cooperation](#) and the [European Defence Fund](#).

Lastly, the Compass addresses the need for the EU to be more ambitious and coordinated in maintaining its competitive edge and promoting technological sovereignty, especially in the area of autonomous systems and digital technologies. Examples include machine learning to facilitate better image analysis for missions and operations, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-supported decision-making based on sensors or hypersonic weapons. We need to strengthen the **European Technological and Industrial Base** including in particular by developing an enhanced **common EU approach to emerging and disruptive technologies** in the security and defence domain. The EU should foster a coherent and long-term approach to these issues, for instance by scaling up investments in these technologies, ensuring synergies between civil, military and space industries, in line with the [EU Action Plan on synergies](#), as well as exploring the possibilities for cooperation with NATO.

### ***Partner***

The EU acts with partners whenever possible, to strengthen effective **multilateralism** and contribute to a global rules-based order, as well as to increase the impact and effectiveness of its own actions. The EU has an interest to work with partners sharing common values and common interests to advance its political agenda and contribute to peace and security.

While the question of the EU's partnerships runs through all the dimensions of the Compass, there is also a need to reflect on the approach to strengthen and develop them in a more strategic manner. The EU needs to be clear on its own interests and priorities and develop specific tailor-made approaches on that basis.

The Compass aims to deepen cooperation with **international and regional organisations**. With the United Nations, we have a long-standing framework for cooperation on crisis management and peace building and we can do more, for example in joint horizon scanning and conflict analysis, in line with the new UN set of priorities. Cooperation with NATO remains a key pillar of European defence. Much progress has been made in the implementation of the two **EU-NATO Joint Declarations** in the last years and more can be done, including exploring new areas of cooperation, for example in the field of resilience, emerging and disruptive technologies or climate and defence issues. The Compass also sets out the ambition to develop further its relationships with the OSCE, African Union and ASEAN.

With individual **partner countries**, the Compass proposes ways to deepen cooperation on security and defence issues, including through dedicated dialogues and consultations. In particular, it proposes to deepen security and defence cooperation with individual partners, such as the United States, Canada and Norway, as well as with other countries across various regions. Potential areas for further engagement could include CSDP missions and operations, capability development; countering hybrid

and cyber threats; maritime security; disarmament and non-proliferation; counter-terrorism; security and defence aspects of climate change; strategic communications and disinformation or emerging and disruptive technologies.

The **contribution by partners to EU CSDP missions and operations**, based on Framework Participation Agreements, will continue to be a key area of cooperation and an important indicator of the strength of the partnership in security and defence. At the same time, we will seek to identify additional areas for practical cooperation, such as exercises and training activities and cooperation in-theatre. The EU will also seek to further enhance its **support to capacity building of partners** to contribute more effectively to international peace and security.

### **What are the next steps?**

Building on first draft of the Strategic Compass put forward by the High Representative in November 2021, Member States will continue their discussions and negotiations in the coming months. The goal is for the Council to adopt the Strategic Compass and for the European Council to endorse it, by the end of March 2022.