

THE WHITE PAPER FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND THE REARM EUROPE – READINESS 2030 RE-ARMAMENT PLAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR ROMANIA

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Abstract

The White Paper for European Defence and the “ReArm Europe – Readiness 2030” re-armament plan represent two key instruments designed to reinforce the European Union’s security and defence posture in an increasingly volatile strategic environment. While the Strategic Compass provides the overarching vision for EU security and defence, the White Paper translates this vision into capability development priorities, whereas ReArm Europe works on the operational level through industrial, financial and technological measures aimed at strengthening defence readiness by 2030.

For Romania, positioned on the EU and NATO Eastern Flank, these initiatives carry significant implications. Firstly, they offer opportunities to enhance national defence capabilities by supporting investment in critical systems and encouraging cross-border cooperation in procurement, innovation and joint development. Secondly, ReArm Europe provides a framework to stimulate the Romanian defence industry by integrating it into European supply chains and reducing dependency on external actors. Thirdly, alignment with these instruments strengthens interoperability with NATO forces, reinforces deterrence against regional threats and elevates Romania’s strategic profile within the EU.

Ultimately, an effective implementation will depend on the coherence of national planning, financial commitment and industrial modernization. For Romania, active engagement in these initiatives is not only beneficial, but necessary to consolidate its defence posture and contribute to European strategic resilience.

I. WHY IS THE WHITE DEFENCE PAPER NECESSARY?

I.1. The main security challenges mentioned by the White Paper

The White Defence Paper reveals the main security challenges that the EU states are confronting with. It was first published on 19th of March, 2025. Within the introduction of the document, it is stated that “a new international order will be created in the second half of this decade”¹. The security threats posed by the non-EU actors have strongly impacted the European political system, also having a negative approach on economic growth “as people fear the consequences of a break of the international order due to the behaviour of hostile actors.”². Hence, Europe must be prepared to face this kind of challenge and, nevertheless, to become part of this order and not just merely a witness to changes around the world.

The White Paper identifies Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China as states that threaten Europe’s security, although in the latter case the importance of commercial bonding between the People’s Republic of China and most of the European states is also emphasized. Thus, the Russian Federation will continue to scale up its war economy, being firmly supported by its close allies, such as Belarus, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Iran. Moreover, the Russian Federation has been “massively expanding its military industrial production capacity with an estimated spending in 2024 of 40% of the Russian federal budget and up to 9% of its GDP (up from 6% in 2023) on defence. In 2025, Russian Federation is expected to surpass Member States’ defence spending in purchasing power parity terms.”³. Subsequently, the Russian Federation has made it clear that, in their perception, the war with the West is present and ongoing. In the foreseeable future, the Russian Federation will continue to pose a significant threat to Europe’s security, especially in what concerns its nuclear posture and the positioning of nuclear weapons in Belarus. According to the White Paper, provided the Russian Federation is permitted to attain its objectives in Ukraine, no one should be surprised if its territorial ambition extends beyond. Why is this happening? Because it is an authoritarian regime, with historic aspirations, consistently fuelling

¹ European Commission, *JOINT WHITE PAPER for European Defence Readiness 2030*, page 1, at https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/30b50d2c-49aa-4250-9ca6-27a0347cf009_en?filename=White%20Paper.pdf, accessed on 5th of November, 2025.

² *Ibid.*, page 3.

³ *Ibid.*, page 4.

instability and tensions in its geographical proximity, which includes EU's neighbourhood (whether it is in the Western Balkans, Georgia, Moldova or Armenia).

In the meantime, the People's Republic of China is a key trading partner for the EU, hastily expanding its own capabilities, starting from the military ones, including nuclear, and going to space and cyber capabilities. In this context, it is majorly increasing its defence spending, all covered by a lack of transparency. Currently, it has "the second highest military spending in the world, surpassing all other East Asian countries combined"⁴.

In terms of EU's defence expenditure, since 2021 it has increased by appx. 31%, reaching 1.9% of the EU's combined GDP (326 billion EUR) in 2024, more precisely – 102 billion EUR. This amount is far lower than the total US defence spending or Russian Federation's or the People's Republic of China's, for that matter. Thus, the process of building a strong European defence will also require "massive and sustained investment, both public and private."⁵

The White Paper outlines various measures, which are essential for Europe's security, for addressing critical capability gaps and for building a strong defence industrial base. It proposes ways in which Member States could make substantial investments in defence, by both acquiring defence systems and enhancing the long-term readiness of the European defence industry. Therefore, Europe ought to invest on the continent's security and defence levels and continue to alleviate major threats translated in conflicts on its territory or in its proximity. In this regard, the White Paper highlights several main courses of action⁶:

- * *Addressing capability gaps, with a focus on the critical capabilities identified by Member States.*
- * *Supporting the European defence industry by aggregating demand and increasing collaborative public procurement.*
- * *Supporting Ukraine through enhanced military assistance and deeper integration between European and Ukrainian defence industries.*
- * *Deepening the EU-level defence market, including through regulatory simplification.*
- * *Accelerating defence transformation through disruptive innovation, such as AI and quantum technology.*
- * *Increasing Europe's readiness for worst-case scenarios by improving military mobility, establishing stockpiles and strengthening external borders—particularly the land border with Russian Federation and Belarus.*
- * *Strengthening partnerships with like-minded countries around the world.*

I.2. The role of EU's organisms in defence and Europe readiness

The White Paper also talks about the global technological race, which makes it even more necessary for EU's doctrine and planning process. In a world full of geopolitical interests and political turnarounds, the never-ending hybrid threats, such as cyber-attacks, electronic interference in global navigation and satellite systems, sabotage activities, manipulation and disinformation campaigns, political and industrial espionage become priorities when talking about building a safer environment. The question to be is „How will Member States be able to manage all the threats, risks and vulnerabilities and what will the measures, solutions, strategies look like?” “Cooperation, governance, resilience” are the top buzz-words all around the world, but will they suffice? These are questions that will need to be answered sooner or later by all of the EU's states and EU's officials and governing structures, as conflicts rise more frequently than not. The terms *cooperation*, *governance* and *resilience* are necessary, but not sufficient on their own. Success will depend on sustained defence investment, deeper integration in procurement and production chains, hybrid defence and cybersecurity architectures, rapid and common threat assessments, faster decision-making that is less intergovernmentally constrained and stronger EU - NATO complementarity.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ SOARE, Andreea, *White Paper on Defence: It is time for Europe to arm itself. The United States believes it is too engaged in European security and is reducing its role as Europe's security guarantor (Carta Albă a Apărării: Este momentul ca Europa să se înarmeze. SUA cred că sunt prea angajate în securitatea europeană și reduc rolul de garant al securității Europei)*, in Monitor of Defense and Security (Monitorul Apărării și Securității), 20th of March, 2025, at <https://monitorulapararii.ro/carta-alba-a-apararii-este-momentul-ca-europa-sa-se-inarmeze-sua-cred-ca-sunt-prea-angajate-in-securitatea-europeana-si-reduc-rolul-de-garant-al-1-57964>, accessed on 05.11.2025.

⁶ European Commission, Romanian Representation (Comisia Europeană, Reprezentanța în România), *Comisia prezintă Cartea albă pentru apărarea europeană și Planul de reînarmare a Europei „ReArm Europe – Readiness 2030”*, at https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/comisia-prezinta-carta-alba-pentru-apararea-europeana-si-planul-de-reinarmare-europei-rearm-europe-2025-03-19_ro, accessed on 06th of November, 2025.

The EU's four decisional institutions, as the European Parliament, the European Council, the EU's Council and the European Commission⁷ are some of the European main institutions that could manage and apply a three-pronged fork as strategic guidance, decision-making mechanisms and resource allocation. While concepts such as cooperation, governance and resilience have become recurring policy imperatives, their effectiveness will depend on the depth of implementation, the degree of Member State convergence and the readiness of political drive and resources, all of which remain rather uneven across the EU.

The European Council may very well play an important role in defining collective threat perceptions, steering agreement on investment priorities (e.g., defence capability gaps, industrial consolidation) and also strengthening alignment with NATO. The European Parliament acts through oversight, budgetary authority and political messaging. It can also push for coherent governance frameworks, demand accountability for defence expenditure, boost deeper cooperation with NATO and trusted partners / allies. The European Parliament's influence remains indirect, but growing fast, especially in budgetary matters. The Council and the European Parliament negotiators reached a provisional agreement on measures to incentivise defence-related investments in the current EU budget to implement the so-called ReArm Europe plan, an EU initiative to increase defence spending and strengthen the EU's military capabilities.⁸ The agreement includes a milestone decision in implementing the ReArm Europe plan and in the EU's progress towards increasing its defence readiness by 2030, while also associating Ukraine to the European Defence Fund, thus emphasizing the EU's enduring commitment to Ukraine's security, resilience and gradual integration into the European defence industrial base.⁹ In addition to this, the co-legislators decided to extend EU financial support within *Horizon Europe* to defence-related companies, while largely upholding the eligibility rules already present in EU instruments such as SAFE (*Security Action for Europe Instrument*) and EDIP (*European Defence Programme*).

The European Commission is also able to develop industrial consolidation instruments (ReArm Europe; EDIP), strengthen dual-use innovation ecosystems and last, but not least, enhance cybersecurity. Its biggest challenge will be transforming fragmented national markets into a genuinely integrated defence industrial base. The Council of the EU is able to spread on policy through legislative and coordination functions. Its capacity to respond will depend on integrating national defence planning processes, refining solidarity techniques in crisis management and also advancing military mobility, procurement synergies and infrastructure protection.

Other than that, the EU has established three agencies that perform technical, scientific and management tasks, with the mission of assisting the EU Member States in implementing the Common Foreign and Security Policy. These are:

- * The European Defence Agency (EDA) – involved in military cooperation among EU Member States, the development of defence capabilities and the promotion of defence-related research and technology;

- * The European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) – provides analyses on issues related to foreign, security and defence policy, contributing to debates on security strategy in Europe and globally;

- * The European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen) – supplies geospatial intelligence products through the analysis of data from Earth-observation satellites, issuing early-warning alerts to decision-makers on potential crises, to support diplomatic, economic and humanitarian action.

Conflicts are occurring more frequently and with hybrid dimensions that blur the lines between peace and war. Therefore, all the EU's organisms become of high importance when dealing with solving problematic incidents around Europe's territory, when finding mechanisms for retaliation (e.g., economic sanctions etc.) or when fighting with lack of cohesion among Member States. This requires the EU to move beyond rhetorical alignment into structural transformation. Sooner rather than later, the EU must decide whether it aims to become a strategic actor or to remain a strategic arena in which others act.

The White Paper is of so much importance due to the fact that it had identified the defence and security needs of EU Member States in order to ensure effective deterrence against a possible conflict, as follows^{10 11}:

* *air and missile defence: an integrated, multi-layered air and missile defence system that protects against the full spectrum of aerial threats (cruise missiles, ballistic and hypersonic missiles, aircraft and UAS);*

⁷ European Union, *Types of institutions and bodies*, at https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/types-institutions-and-bodies_en, accessed on 5th of November, 2025.

⁸ European Council, *EU investments in defence: Council and Parliament agree to support faster, more flexible and coordinated investments in European defence*, - updated press release on 07th of November, 2025, at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/11/05/eu-investments-in-defence-council-and-parliament-agree-to-support-faster-more-flexible-and-coordinated-investments-in-european-defence/>, accessed on 07th of November, 2025.

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ SOARE, Andreea, op. cit.

¹¹ European Commission, JOINT WHITE PAPER for European Defence Readiness 2030, pages 6-7, loc.cit.

- * *artillery systems: advanced combat systems, including modern artillery systems and long-range missiles, designed to conduct precise, long-distance strikes against land targets (precision strike);*
 - * *ammunition and missiles: building on the European External Action Service initiative “Ammunition Plan 2.0,” a strategic stockpile of ammunition, missiles and components, together with a sufficient level of industrial defence production capacity to ensure timely replenishment;*
 - * *drones and counter-drone systems: unmanned systems, including aerial, ground, surface and underwater vehicles that can be remotely controlled or operate autonomously using advanced software and sensors, enhancing the capabilities these technologies provide (e.g., situational awareness, surveillance etc.);*
 - * *military mobility: an EU-wide network of land corridors, airports, seaports and support elements and services that facilitate the rapid and seamless transport of troops and military equipment within the EU and to partner countries;*
 - * *AI, quantum, cyber & electronic warfare: defence applications using military AI and quantum computing; advanced EU-level electronic systems designed to protect and ensure unhindered use of the electromagnetic spectrum for land, air, space and naval forces and operations; suppress, disrupt and deny an adversary’s use of the electromagnetic spectrum; protect freedom of action in cyberspace and ensure unhindered access to cyber capabilities. Both defensive and offensive cyber capabilities are needed to ensure protection and freedom of manoeuvre in cyberspace;*
 - * *strategic enablers and protection of critical infrastructure: including, but not limited to, strategic airlift and air-to-air refuelling aircraft, intelligence and surveillance, maritime domain awareness, the use and protection of space and other secure communication assets and military fuel infrastructure.*
- The White Defence Paper states that by creating the required standards to frontload investment in defence sector, providing necessary predictability to industry and reducing red-tape, the EU will sustain Member States to attain full readiness by 2030.¹² By setting out a plan to rearm and build up Europe’s defence in order to tackle the imminent or medium-term threats, the White Paper highlights several strategies seen as priorities¹³:
- * *Member States are expected to demand the activation of the National Escape Clause, by the end of April.*
 - * *The Council is expected to assume the proposed draft Regulation on Security and Action for Europe (SAFE) as a matter of urgency.*
 - * *The co-legislators are expected to adopt the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) before summer, including its Ukraine Support Instrument (USI).*
 - * *The co-legislators are also invited to consider with priority the changes to the European Regional Development Fund that will be proposed by the end of March 2025. Following the midterm review of cohesion policies, national, regional and local authorities, they will be able to voluntarily allocate funds within their current programmes towards emerging priorities including strengthening defence and security capabilities.*
 - * *Member States are invited to swiftly step up collaborative defence procurement in line with the target of at least 40% proposed by the European Defence Industry Strategy (EDIS), including under the aegis of the SAFE instrument.*
 - * *Member States are expected to swiftly agree on an ambitious new military support initiative for Ukraine, including artillery ammunition, air defence and “train and equip”.*
 - * *The Commission will promote the integration of Ukrainian defence industry into the Single Market, support the extension of military mobility corridors into Ukraine and explore Ukraine’s access to EU space-based governmental services.*
 - * *The Commission calls on the Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank to urgently step up support to the European defence industry, notably by further narrowing the list of excluded activities and increasing the volume of available funding.*
 - * *The Commission will immediately launch a Strategic Dialogue with the defence industry, also calling on the expertise of the EDA or the EU Military Staff as appropriate.*
 - * *The Commission will present, by June 2025, a Defence Omnibus Simplification proposal.*
 - * *The EU will present a European Armament Technological Roadmap on investment into dual-use advanced technological capabilities in 2025.*
 - * *The Commission and the HR will adopt, by end of 2025, a Joint communication on Military Mobility, accompanied by the necessary legislative proposals.*

The White Defence Paper concludes by stating that a significant increase in defence spending would generate broad economic benefits, boosting competitiveness, employment and technological progress across multiple industries, starting from aeronautics and shipbuilding and going to steel, space, transport and artificial intelligence. If effectively leveraged, this momentum could considerably strengthen Europe’s resilience amid an increasingly threat-rich global environment.

¹² Ibid., page 5.

¹³ Ibid., page 21.

II. ROMANIA'S ROLE WITHIN EU'S AGENDA

In the field of security, the EU seeks to become a more capable and autonomous actor, particularly by strengthening the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Initiatives such as PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), BUS (Brussels-based Union Security) and the European Defence Fund are intended to boost defence cooperation among Member States and reduce fragmentation within the European defence market.¹⁴ Strategic autonomy does not imply a separation from NATO, but rather the strengthening of Europe's ability to act independently in its proximity or in support of the transatlantic Alliance.

For Romania, active participation in these structures represents both an opportunity to modernize its armed forces and national defence industry, as well as a political instrument for influencing decision-making processes concerning European security policies. As an active participant in PESCO projects, Romania takes part in initiatives aimed at military mobility, the development of cyber defence and military personnel training. At the same time, Romania benefits from financial support through the European Defence Fund for the modernization of its defence industry and the strengthening of its own capabilities.¹⁵

In terms of Romania's particular role within the White Defence Paper, everyone knows the fact that geography doesn't change. Its strategic location (on the Eastern flank), adjacent to the Black Sea, represents an essential hub for projecting defence and deterrence, through air/missile defence, mobility corridors and Black Sea security. Another important aspect regards aligning national capability planning with EU-wide priorities, which is actually an opportunity for a direct investment into modernisation of own armed forces, especially in the context of EU's capabilities' shortfalls.

Moreover, with the EU desire for a defence industrial base that is less fragmented and more scale-efficient, Romania's defence area possesses the opportunity to access EU financial instruments (e.g., SAFE, EDF) and join collaborative procurement efforts for military equipment. Thus, Romania could accelerate a multi-annual planning, increase equipment acquisition and participate in pan-European funding mechanisms.

One significant role that Romania might undertake is becoming a bridge between the Black Sea region and EU institutions. This would definitely strengthen Romania's strategic presence within the EU, enhancing its credibility on the decision-making / negotiation table. By having a dual presence, within the EU and NATO, Romania is able to synchronize its defence capabilities to both frameworks, which would well serve both national and European security objectives.

Nevertheless, Romania should also prioritise growing its resilience, for instance through logistical hubs, strategic stockpiles, dual-use infrastructure, thereby becoming a regional resilience node.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The White Defence Paper appears as a strategic response to the continuous deterioration of Europe's security and the rise of authoritarian powers seeking to reshape the global order. It emerges due to the necessity of finding pragmatic solutions to the intensification of hybrid threats and the widening of the geopolitical gap between Europe and other global actors.

The Paper identifies the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China as primary strategic challengers, perceiving Russian Federation as an aggressive actor, having a belligerent nuclear posture and using destabilizing influence in Europe's neighbourhood. In the meantime, the People's Republic of China is seen as an ambitious actor with an increased military spending, technological advances and opaque strategic interests.

The White Defence Paper outlines a multilevel plan so to strengthen European defence through the development of the Member States' military capabilities along with the consolidation of the defence industrial base, boosting the financial and logistical sustenance for Ukraine, reinforcing military mobility and bringing innovation in disruptive technologies to the table. Moreover, it highlights key priority areas (*precision strike capabilities, drone, counter-drone, cyber and electronic systems and critical infrastructure*), which are meant to be used, but also protected through prevention or rapid reactions to hostile actions.

¹⁴ European External Action Service, The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en, accessed on 30th of April, 2025.

¹⁵ European Defence Cooperation, *Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)*, at [https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/permanent-structured-cooperation-\(PESCO\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/permanent-structured-cooperation-(PESCO)), accessed on 29th of April, 2025.

Equally, the White Defence Paper underlines that governance reform is as important as capability acquisition, especially within the cooperation, governance and resilience context, which imply faster decision-making, optimal threat assessment and a healthy EU-NATO interoperability.

The role of the EU's institutional ecosystem (*European Council, European Commission, Council of the EU and European Parliament*) remains central in determining guidelines, finances, economic policy and even oversight. Complementing them are the EU's specialized agencies (EDA, EUISS, SatCen), which contribute with both technical and operational support.

For Romania, the White Defence Paper offers both responsibility and opportunity. Romania's strategic location on the Eastern flank, bordering the Black Sea, positions it both on the forehead of the risks and at the forefront of deterrence and defence. It acts not only as a bridge between the EU and the Black Sea region, enhancing its strategic relevance and influence within European institutions, but also as a key partner in developing EU capabilities in air and missile defence, mobility corridors and Black Sea situational awareness. Romania's dual membership in the EU and NATO provides a unique chance to be part of the interoperability, deterrence and also be an integrated response to crises.

Lastly, the White Defence Paper stresses that Europe stands at a decisive juncture. Attaining full readiness by 2030 requires structural conversion (*efficient strategic planning, sustainable defence investment, industrial integration and strong transatlantic bond*). Provided these efforts are pursued with determination, the EU might significantly improve its deterrence posture while protecting its neighbourhood and generate wider economic benefits.

The overarching conclusion is clear: Europe should transition from reactive adaptation to proactive strategic empowerment. The choice is binary: become a strategic actor shaping the international order or remain in the strategic arena shaped by others.

IV. REFERENCES

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