



European Council
The President

Brussels, 18 September 2025

Dear colleagues,

I wish to invite you to our informal meeting of Heads of State or Government on 1 October. Prime Minister Frederiksen will be hosting us in Copenhagen for this occasion. Our focus will be twofold: strengthening European common defence readiness and reinforcing our support for Ukraine.

Russia's recent airspace violations in Poland and Romania are a stark reminder that we must accelerate and deepen our efforts.

In previous meetings, we agreed that Europe must do more – and we must do more together – on defence. The direction of travel is clear: we are building a Europe capable of responding effectively, autonomously and together to today's and tomorrow's threats. The ambition we have set ourselves, to decisively ramp up Europe's common defence readiness by 2030, embodies that commitment.

In recent months, we have taken important steps to boost defence financing, support our industrial base, and commit to joint efforts on capability development, in particular on enhanced interoperability, joint procurement and aggregation of demand, to achieve scale. This work is done in full coherence with NATO and focused on the nine priority areas agreed at EU level.

As we invest more, we must also invest more efficiently and rationally including through common tools, like SAFE. Every euro should strengthen our common security and strategic autonomy. This is also about strengthening Europe's defence industry, driving innovation, boosting competitiveness and creating jobs. Likewise, we need to draw on the lessons from the war in Ukraine, including by strengthening cooperation with the Ukrainian defence industry, drawing on Ukraine's unique experience.

Now is the time to go further. In Copenhagen, I propose we focus on concrete capability steps, with the objective of building a shared understanding of what is expected from the EU and Member States to meet our 2030 defence readiness target. The ongoing work of the Commission and the High Representative on a Roadmap will help our collective efforts. We should provide guidance in view of this work.

I suggest our discussion be structured around the following topics:

- How to deliver faster: building on our previous decisions, how can we accelerate joint capability development? This includes the best possible use of the lead nation model for priority projects within a coherent overall strategy, progressing on simplification, as well as on interoperability and standardisation, and giving European industry the predictability it needs;

- Support for our Eastern flank: how can we use our instruments and programmes to support our Member States on the Eastern flank facing increased threats?
- Governance: how can we ensure efficient political oversight and coordination – in particular to track capability gaps and measure progress, including through milestones? How notably to strengthen the role of defence ministers in the Council to that end?

Our security is tied to Ukraine's security. In Copenhagen, I would also like to discuss how to further support Ukraine and reach a just and lasting peace.

The EU and its Member States have been leading the way in providing critical economic, military and political support to Ukraine. I suggest we focus on how to keep up our support to Ukraine in a reliable and predictable manner.

In recent weeks, we have seen significant progress on the security guarantees in the context of the Coalition of the Willing. In order to help Ukraine achieve a just and lasting peace, we should in particular examine how to continue to support the Ukrainian armed forces as the primary guarantee of the country's sovereignty and security, while increasing pressure on Russia, including by stepping up sanctions.

Ukraine's EU accession process must also stay on course. Despite the war, Ukraine's reform efforts have been remarkable. We must ensure this momentum is reflected in real steps towards accession.

We will return to both topics – European defence and Ukraine – at our European Council meeting in Brussels at the end of October, where we will formalise our guidance.

I look forward to seeing you in Copenhagen.



António COSTA