

EASTERN FLANK SUMMIT 16.12.2025 HELSINKI

Joint Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of Eight EU Member States

- 1.** Russia is the most significant, direct and long-term threat to our security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions constitute a profound and enduring threat to European security and stability. Russia's strategic goals remain unchanged: to create a buffer zone stretching from the Arctic region through the Baltic and Black Seas to the Mediterranean. The Eastern Flank of the European Union and NATO is at the forefront of this threat, but the threat affects the entire European continent, calling for urgent and coordinated action.
- 2.** In addition to the conventional threat posed by Russia, Russia's complex hybrid operations and acts of sabotage against Europe are increasing. Russia is showing recklessness and disregard for the safety and security of others. Attempts to destabilise our societies must be viewed as part of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. The actions of Russia and Belarus, such as GNSS interference, airspace violations and drone incursions posing threats to critical infrastructure, and the challenges stemming from Russia's shadow fleet, as well as massive disinformation campaigns and attempts to disrupt the public order, underscore the need to strengthen Europe's resilience and defence.
- 3.** We stand firmly with Ukraine in its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace and we remain committed to increasing our support for Ukraine while ramping up pressure on Russia. We will also continue to work closely with our partners being targeted by Russian hybrid activities, especially the Republic of Moldova. Their security contributes to our own, and we will further support them in achieving increased resilience.
- 4.** We are actively implementing the historic decisions taken at the March, June and October European Council meetings and the NATO Summit in The Hague to reinforce Euro-Atlantic deterrence and defence, including commitments to increase defence spending to 5 per cent of GDP as well as capability development. These decisions mark a strategic turning point for European defence and must be implemented without delay.



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- 5.** We reiterate that NATO forms the foundation for the collective defence of its Allies. EU efforts to enhance security and defence are complementary and support the achievement of NATO capability targets. Close coordination between the two organisations is essential to avoid duplication and ensure that resources are used efficiently. Strengthening Europe's defence readiness and implementing the Preparedness Union Strategy in alignment with NATO plans and requirements is essential. Complementarity between NATO and the EU is not optional—it is a strategic imperative.
- 6.** A robust European defence industry is a prerequisite for responding to the drastically changed security environment. Strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) will require increased long-term investment, demand aggregation, joint or coordinated procurement and continued armament cooperation with like-minded partners to achieve economies of scale and technological sovereignty of the EDTIB. We call for urgent action to mobilise EU, public and private financing, including leveraging the European Investment Bank to adapt lending practices and expand funding for defence industry SMEs and mid-cap companies, while ensuring geographical balance.
- 7.** We welcome the European Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030 and the initiatives to strengthen European Defence Readiness, particularly through the Eastern Flank Watch. Reinforcing the Eastern Flank in a coherent manner from North to South requires strong forces and capabilities across all domains—land, air, maritime, cyber and space. These efforts should also align with the work being done in the Prioritised Capability Areas (PCA) concerning air and space defence in order to secure interoperability.
- 8.** It is imperative to ensure complementarity between the Eastern Flank Watch and the EU's Black Sea Maritime Security Hub, NATO's operations and activities and its integrated command and control structure. The Eastern Flank Watch should also be complementary with NATO's Enhanced Vigilance Activity Eastern Sentry, Baltic Sentry—including enhanced Baltic Air Policing—and NATO's Forward Land Forces (FLF).
- 9.** Lessons learned from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine highlight the necessity of enhanced civil-military cooperation. To address worst-case scenarios, it is important to integrate the military and civilian dimensions with a view to building resilience against hybrid and conventional threats. There is a clear need to strengthen the EU's defence capabilities, border security and crisis preparedness. We underscore the importance of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to preparedness.



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- 10.** We welcome the efforts of the Baltic States and Poland to strengthen the border through the Baltic Defence Line and the Eastern Shield and we stress that the Eastern Flank Watch Flagship should build upon existing initiatives and incorporate and expand relevant capabilities throughout the Eastern Flank to support our defence readiness.
- 11.** The situation calls for an immediate prioritisation of the EU's Eastern Flank through a coordinated and multi-domain operational approach. The Flagship would incorporate the relevant capabilities, such as ground combat capabilities, drone defence, air and missile defence, border and critical infrastructure protection, military mobility and counter mobility as well as strategic enablers. Defending and controlling the EU's eastern external border cannot rely solely on isolated capabilities; it requires a comprehensive framework and credible multidomain capacity. Together, these elements form the backbone of a resilient security architecture capable of addressing complex hybrid threats and high-intensity scenarios.
- 12.** The participating States further pledge to support the establishment of the European Defence Projects of Common Interest for the implementation of the Eastern Flank Watch and welcome an increased focus on security and defence in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This comprehensive and multi-domain flagship project requires broad EU support and engagement and the use of different EU instruments, such as the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP). To ensure that the various elements of the project are implemented, a long-term perspective is needed to enhance military capabilities for addressing the immediate threats on the EU's Eastern Flank and to provide concrete support to the Member States as a matter of priority.
- 13.** By uniting at the highest political level, we send a clear and unequivocal message: Europe's Eastern Flank is a common responsibility and must be defended with urgency, leadership and resolve. To achieve this, the Eastern Flank countries commit to jointly advancing, through their Ministries of Defence, the Eastern Flank Watch, including European Drone Defence under the EU Defence Readiness 2030 framework, building on previous work in coordination with and in support of NATO's deterrence and defence posture. The security environment has changed irreversibly, and we must adapt with determination and speed.

