

Background brief*Brussels, 8 May 2026*

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

12 May 2026, Brussels

PRESS
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EN**Chair:** Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**Starting time:** 11:00**Media opportunities:**

- Doorstep of the High Representative: +/- 8:45
- Press conference on FAC: +/- 17:00

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Main agenda topics:

The Foreign Affairs Council with EU defence ministers will start with a presentation on the updated comprehensive threat analysis mandated by the European Council.

Over a working lunch, EU defence ministers will discuss **EU support to Ukraine**, after an exchange of views with the Minister of Defence of Ukraine, Mykhailo **Fedorov**, via VTC, and the NATO Deputy Secretary General, Radmila **Shekerinska**, who will be present in person.

The Council will then discuss the situation in the **Middle East** and its implications on European defence and security.

Finally, the Council will take stock of progress made in implementation of the **defence readiness agenda**.

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Related events:

Prior to the Council meeting, defence ministers will meet in the framework of the **EDA Steering Board**.

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[Foreign Affairs Council \(Defence\), 12 May 2026 – meeting page](#)[Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming](#)[High quality photo and video material of the event](#)

Updated threat analysis

At the beginning of the meeting, EU defence ministers will receive a presentation on the updated comprehensive **threat analysis**.

In March, the European Council invited the Council to update the common understanding of the threats and challenges that the EU is facing, agreed in the Strategic Compass in 2022, on the basis of a comprehensive 360° threat analysis at EU level to be prepared by the High Representative in close cooperation with and building on input from Member States.

EU support to Ukraine

Over a working lunch, the Council will discuss **EU support for Ukraine** against the background of the latest developments on the ground and ongoing diplomatic efforts to reach a just and lasting peace backed by robust security guarantees.

The Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Mykhailo **Fedorov** is invited to address the Council via VTC at the beginning of the agenda item and is expected to focus on issues such as Ukraine's urgent battlefield needs and perspectives on advancing cooperation, in particular on supporting investment in technological sovereignty, resilience, and integrating Ukrainian companies into the European defence technological and industrial base. The NATO Deputy Secretary General, Radmila **Shekerinska**, will also participate in the discussion and be present in person.

The ministerial discussion will likely focus on the latest developments on the EU's defence support to Ukraine and **EU-Ukraine defence-industrial cooperation**, including a state of play on the implementation of the defence component of the Ukraine Support Loan, European Peace Facility, and other EU instruments.

In addition, the High Representative will provide an update on work to define the EU's contribution to **security guarantees**, including the through **EUMAM Ukraine**, as well as the proposed "**fourth pillar**" of action on resilience and stability.

[Council finalises €90 billion support loan to Ukraine \(press release, 23 April 2026\)](#)

[European Council, 19 March 2026, Ukraine](#)

[Russia's war against Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[Russia's war against Ukraine: EU sanctions \(background information\)](#)

[EU military support for Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

[EU solidarity with Ukraine \(background information\)](#)

Situation in the Middle East

The Council will discuss the situation in the Middle East and its **implications for European defence and security**.

In this context, the Council is expected to discuss cooperation with the Gulf countries, further to the discussion among foreign ministers the previous day.

The High Representative will also provide information on Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES' operational results

The Council will take stock of **diplomatic and operational initiatives** to ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

[European Council conclusions, 19 March 2026](#)

[Timeline - Iran and the Middle East \(background information\)](#)

[EU position on the situation in the Middle East \(background information\)](#)

Defence readiness

The Council will conclude with a working session on **EU's defence readiness** with a focus on implementation, in line with the European Council conclusions of March 2026. This concerns notably ongoing work on the “priority capability areas”.

The exchange of views is also expected to touch upon the ongoing work towards an EU-wide market for defence equipment.

The discussion among Ministers will be preceded by a short presentation by the President of the Aerospace, Security and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD).

[European Council conclusions, 19 March 2026](#)

[European defence readiness \(background information\)](#)

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Related events

European Defence Agency Steering Board

The European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board, meeting in the composition of Ministers of Defence, will notably focus on a single strategic agenda item: the strengthening of the EDA. This discussion follows the conclusions of the European Council in October 2025 and March 2026, which called for a reinforced role for the Agency in European defence capability development, collaborative research, and joint acquisition efforts. Against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving security environment, ministers will be invited to endorse the Agency's proposal structured around five refined and mutually reinforcing lines of action:

1. Scaling up research, technology and innovation
2. Establishing a dedicated collaborative defence procurement structure
3. Further developing the EDA's central role in capability development
4. Reinforcing EDA's policy support role
5. Implementing cross-cutting organisational measures

In line with the ambition set by EU Leaders, implementation is envisaged through a phased three-step approach. The first phase, expected to start in mid-2026, will focus on reinforcing the Agency's innovation and experimentation functions. Subsequent phases will further consolidate the EDA's strategic role as the cornerstone of European defence cooperation and capability development.

[European Defence Agency website](#)