



Council of the European Union

PRESS
EN

BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 14 April 2016

FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council **19 April 2016 in Luxembourg**

Tuesday 19 April – Defence Ministers

Following the meeting of Foreign Affairs ministers on Monday 18 April, the Council will continue at 10.00 the next day with a meeting of EU defence ministers, also chaired by Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It will be preceded by a **European Defence Agency steering board** meeting starting at 8:30.

The Council, joined by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, will start with a debate on **hybrid threats**.

It will then discuss **capacity building in support of security and development**.

Press conference: +/- 13:00

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

European Defence Agency Steering Board

Ministers of defence will meet in the European Defence Agency (EDA) steering board, under the chairmanship of Federica Mogherini as the head of the agency. All member states except Denmark participate.

Ministers will discuss the implementation of the policy framework for long-term and systematic cooperation, endorsed by member states in November 2014, on the basis of an interim report prepared by the EDA. A full report will be conducted by the agency and the EEAS in autumn 2017. The interim report was compiled by the EDA on the basis of questionnaires sent to and completed by member states. It highlights that they in general support the policy framework and its objective to provide a coherent basis for defence cooperation in Europe, from priority setting through to in-service support.

Ministers are also expected to discuss strategic autonomy considerations based on an EDA food for thought paper on implications of Europe's strategic autonomy on CSDP.

The agency will also update ministers on the progress achieved on a number of topics including the four key capability programmes (air-to-air refuelling, governmental satellite communications, cyber defence and remotely piloted aircraft systems RPAS), research, incentives for defence cooperation and efforts aimed at countering hybrid threats.

Finally, ministers are expected to adopt a range of recommendations for the implementation of key tasking and next steps in defence capabilities cooperation.

Capacity building in support of security and development

Defence ministers will discuss the EU's efforts to build capacities in support of security and development, in order to enable partner countries and regional organisations to prevent and manage crises by themselves.

The High Representative will inform ministers on progress in developing this policy, concrete projects and funding options. A public consultation launched on 1 April 2016 and ending on 27 May 2016 is expected to lead to a legislative proposal addressing these issues. The High Representative will also outline her plans towards a new EU-wide strategic framework for supporting security sector reform, in light of the tasking by the FAC in May 2015.

The Council discussion will focus on the security-development nexus and on the question of a sustainable solution regarding the defence sector and the financing of equipment and infrastructure in third countries. The EU has consistently underlined that security is a precondition for development and that without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace. One aspect is to formulate proposals responding to gaps in the EU's comprehensive approach; for example when training or other capacity building activities are undertaken by an EU mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy while facing a deficient training environment or lack of basic non-lethal equipment. Capacity building projects would support the overall EU objectives in a country or region, also in areas where there is no CSDP mission on ground.

An agreement was reached at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on 19 February 2016 clarifying the directives for the official development assistance (ODA), for which programmes focusing on the security sector reform are eligible.

In their joint communication of 28 April 2015, the Commission and the High Representative underlined their commitment to enhance coherence and coordination between EU security and development actions. The joint communication called for exploring the practical feasibility of a proposal to adapt the African Peace Facility (APF) to address its limitations, the establishment of a facility linking peace, security and development in the framework of one or more existing

instruments; and/or a new, dedicated financial instrument. The APF was set up under the EU-Africa partnership to support peace and security on the African continent.

The Council, in its conclusions of May 2015, and the European Council in June 2015 encouraged further work to implement the proposed measures, including through concrete projects of capacity building with flexible geographic coverage. As a result, the Commission work programme 2016 includes a package on capacity building in the security sector, which covers security sector reform and a possible new dedicated instrument for capacity building in support of security and development in third countries.

[European Council conclusions of 25-26 June 2015](#)

[Council conclusions on CSDP of 18 May 2015](#)

[Commission joint communication of 28 April 2015](#)

Hybrid threats

The Council will discuss the European response to identify and counter threats of a hybrid nature. It will adopt conclusions. Ministers will be joined by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

The Council is expected to highlight the need to foster the resilience of the EU and of its partners and to increase its capacities as a security provider in an ever-changing security environment.

On 6 April 2016, the Commission and the High Representative presented a joint communication entitled "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats - a European Union response". It contains 22 actions spread across three main axes (improving awareness, building resilience, and preventing, responding to crises and recovering from them) and multiple policy areas (ranging from external action and defence capabilities to critical infrastructure, industry, energy, transport, cyber security, space; finance and justice and home affairs), enabled by efforts to identify key vulnerabilities and indicators of hybrid threats and underpinned by increased cooperation with NATO.

In their communication, the Commission and the High Representative underlined the importance of facilitating a holistic approach that will enable the EU and its member states to counter hybrid threats by creating synergies between relevant instruments and enhancing close cooperation between member states.

It is essential to build resilience in key sectors, such as critical infrastructures (energy network, transport and space) and cyber security (energy sector, financial system), and to pursue efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism. Enhancing member states' situational awareness by monitoring and assessing risks targeting the EU, creating an EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and improving strategic communication are part of the actions proposed to implement these efforts.

[Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats \(6 April 2016\)](#)

A items

The Council is expected to take a number of decisions without discussion ("A-items"):

EUTM Central African Republic

The Council is expected to adopt a decision approving the launch of a military training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) to contribute to the country's defence sector reform.

The mission will be based in Bangui and operate for an initial period of two years. Following up an EU military advisory mission (EUMAM RCA), it will work towards a modernised, effective and democratically accountable Central African Armed Forces (FACA). It will provide strategic advice to the CAR's Ministry of Defence, military staff and armed forces, as well as education and training to the FACA.

[Council conclusions on the Central African Republic, dated 20/07/2015](#)

Operation Atalanta

The Council will adopt a decision amending a joint action establishing the EU military operation Atalanta in order to further contribute to the implementation of the new EU CRIMARIO programme, and to share with the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) and the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) relevant information other than personal data gathered on illegal or unauthorised maritime activities during the course of routine counter-piracy operations.

On November 2014, the Council had extended the mandate of Operation Atalanta until December 2016.

Other business

Afghanistan

Under "other business", the Council will be informed on preparations for a conference on Afghanistan to be held in Brussels on 4-5 October 2016.
