

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND THE EUROPEAN SECURITY COUNCIL

Programme of Proposals of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe for Commissioner Kubilius

Brussels, 26 October 2026

This document compiles the concrete proposals on European defence and the European Security Council (ESC) of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. Proposals are ordered from the least to the most ambitious — from measures deployable within the current Treaty framework and existing institutions, to those requiring political breakthroughs or Treaty reform. Each proposal is accompanied by its Treaty basis and primary source.

The organising logic follows a stepwise escalation: operational upgrades → enhanced NATO–EU coordination → Treaty-based mechanisms for enhanced cooperation and common defence → institutional reform of command structures → fiscal and governance architecture → Treaty revision and the long-term goal of a European federation with a common defence.

I. Industrial and Capability Foundation

1. Joint investment, procurement and research: the 50% target

Member States should direct at least 50% of defence investments towards joint European programmes, through the existing EU instruments: SAFE, EDIP, EDF, EDA priority capabilities, also in view of the realization of a broader European defence innovation ecosystem. This requires moving beyond the current exception clause of the Stability and Growth Pact, which must be linked exclusively to joint EU projects (not national rearmament), to avoid reinforcing fragmentation. At the same time it is important to define a structured and continuous consultation process for collecting and prioritising inputs from Member States involving relevant national and subnational organisations.

Art. 173, 182-188 TFEU (industry, R&D); EDA mandate (Art. 42(3) TEU); PESCO commitments (Art. 46 TEU + Protocol 10)

2. Reduction of fragmentation and duplication

Standardisation of weapons systems and platforms, convergence on a smaller number of common models, and joint maintenance frameworks. Estimated annual loss from non-cooperation: €25 billion. This includes developing a more clear and structured process for defining and prioritizing challenges and topics, also e.g. in regard to the recently adopted AGILE. It needs pushing, notably by guidance



notes targeted at industrial actors and SMEs in particular, to foster integration partnerships between SMEs, mid-caps and large companies to facilitate the integration of innovative solutions into existing supply chains

EDA mandate (Art. 42(3) TEU); PESCO commitments

3. Strategic enablers: European autonomy

Prioritised joint development of the strategic enablers where dependence on the United States is greatest: secure satellite communications (alternative to Starlink), AWACS-equivalent airborne surveillance, air-to-air refuelling, intelligence satellites, anti-missile shield components, heavy strategic transport. EU Joint Undertakings (modelled on Galileo and high-performance computing) are the appropriate instrument for pooling public and private investment.

Art. 187 TFEU (Joint Undertakings); EDA mandate (Art. 42(3) TEU); Art. 189 TFEU (space)

Action Committee Memorandum (2025); CIDOB White Book (2026); CIDOB Notes 343 (2026)

4. Inclusion of associated partners in the defence industrial base

Ukraine and Moldova should be fully included in joint procurement and capability development programmes.

Art. 8 TEU (neighbourhood); bilateral association agreements;

II. Operational and Command Capacity

5. Strengthening CSDP missions: from expeditionary to neighbourhood security

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, which are by Treaty definition conducted outside the Union, should be extended in mandate and resources to include territorial defence and security in the EU's immediate neighbourhood (Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, Caucasus). This entails increased naval CSDP missions to protect vital shipping lanes and underwater infrastructure in the Baltic and Mediterranean.

Art. 42(1) and 43(1) TEU (Petersberg tasks and their extension); Art. 44 TEU (entrusted missions)

6. Upgrading the MPCC into a full EU Military Headquarters

The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), currently capped at commanding one executive operation the size of one Battlegroup (~2,500 troops) alongside its non-executive training missions, must be expanded in staff, infrastructure and mandate to:

- Plan and conduct executive CSDP operations of any required size (all Petersberg tasks);
- Assume strategic-level command coordination for the mutual assistance clause (Art. 42(7) TEU), if activated;
- Serve as the permanent EU military strategic headquarters, with the Eurocorps as the complementary operational-level headquarters;



- Develop a military model, threat assessments, wargaming capacity and field doctrines;
- Strengthen the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) with direct information-gathering capabilities, reducing reliance on commercial services.

Art. 42(1), 42(7), 43 TEU; EUMS Decision; Council decisions on MPCC

7. Institutionalisation of the Eurocorps as the EU's permanent operational HQ

The Eurocorps — a multinational corps-level headquarters capable of commanding forces of up to 60,000–65,000 troops, with legal personality under the Strasbourg Treaty (2004/2009) and six framework nations (Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Poland) — is already being used as the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity's Force Headquarters for consecutive six-month periods (July 2025–June 2027). The MPCC–Eurocorps–Battlegroup architecture was tested in MILEX 24, 25 and 26 exercises. Proposals:

- Institutionalise the MPCC (strategic HQ) – Eurocorps (operational HQ) – multinational forces (tactical level) command architecture;
- Incorporate all remaining EU member states as associated nations of the Eurocorps, deepening its de facto communitarisation without altering the six-nation decision-making core;
- Establish a formal operational collaboration protocol between SHAPE and the MPCC (currently absent).

Strasbourg Treaty (Eurocorps); Art. 42(1) TEU (CSDP); PESCO commitments (Art. 46 TEU)

8. Operationalising the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) towards the Helsinki Headline Goal

The RDC, declared operational in 2025 (up to 5,000 troops for crisis-management operations outside the Union), must be progressively scaled towards the Helsinki 1999 target of 50,000–60,000 troops, with strong focus on human resources management, training, retention and interoperability. Over time, the RDC should become the nucleus of a "28th European Army" — a genuinely European force permanently placed at the EU's disposal, complementary to national armies and in charge of territorial defence.

Art. 42(6) and 46 TEU (PESCO); Helsinki Headline Goal (1999); Protocol 10 TEU (PESCO commitments)

III. NATO–EU Coordination Architecture

9. Reform of the Berlin Plus arrangements

The Berlin Plus framework (2003) — which allows the EU to use NATO assets and capabilities, including SHAPE, for EU-led operations — is currently subject in practice to a veto by non-EU NATO allies, particularly Turkey (via the Cyprus–Turkey dynamic). Reform should:

- Guarantee that SHAPE can serve as EU military strategic headquarters when NATO as a whole is not engaged, with more predictable and autonomous EU access;



- Stipulate that the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) is always a national of an EU member state (not, as currently sometimes, a British national);
- Explore the progressive integration of certain NATO and EU command functions within the revised framework.

♣ Berlin Plus arrangements (2003); Art. 42(2) TEU (NATO compatibility requirement)

10. Dual-hatting the Chair of the EU Military Committee (CEUMC) as DSACEUR

The CEUMC — who chairs the EU Military Committee composed of chiefs of defence staff and provides military direction to the EUMS — could simultaneously hold the DSACEUR position through coordinated separate appointments by the EU and NATO. This would not formally merge the two mandates. A permanent Deputy Chair of the EUMC would be needed to manage the dual workload. This is the most ambitious but politically sensitive form of EU–NATO command integration short of Treaty change.

♣ Consistent with Art. 42 TEU (EUMS structure); requires political agreement within NATO

11. Formal NATO–EU coordination agreement (to replace Berlin Plus)

A comprehensive, formally binding EU–NATO agreement covering: (a) capability development and standardisation aligned with NATO standards, manuals and the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP); (b) intelligence and classified information sharing; (c) operational coordination between SHAPE and MPCC; (d) clarification of the relationship between Art. 5 Washington Treaty and Art. 42(7) TEU. The current EU–NATO cooperation is politically constrained by Turkey, which blocks an EU–NATO cooperation agreement on standards (over the Cyprus conflict).

♣ Art. 42(2) TEU (NATO compatibility); Art. 37 TEU (international agreements in CFSP)

IV. European Security Council via Enhanced Cooperation

12. European Security Council (ESC) through enhanced cooperation + CFSP passerelles

The case for a European Security Council starts with a scenario: a military threat emerges on Europe's eastern or southern flank. What needs to happen in the next 72 hours?

First, a political decision to act must be taken — not after weeks of diplomatic consultations among 27 governments, each with its own parliamentary calendar and coalition arithmetic, but within hours. Second, that decision must carry binding weight: member states must commit assets, open airspace, share intelligence and sustain operations over weeks or months. Third, someone must speak with a single authoritative voice to allies, adversaries and citizens. Fourth, military command must receive unambiguous political direction — not a lowest-common-denominator mandate negotiated until it is operationally meaningless.



None of this is currently possible. The European Council is too large, too slow and operates by consensus. The Council of the EU requires unanimity on CFSP matters. There is no standing political body empowered to take security decisions swiftly on behalf of willing member states.

The ESC fills precisely that gap. It is the executive political authority of the participating states in the enhanced cooperation framework — the body that authorises the use of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, provides strategic direction to military commanders, coordinates intelligence assessments, and sustains the political will needed to see a crisis through. Its smaller format (the participating states only), qualified majority voting, and permanent meeting structure are not institutional preferences: they are the minimum conditions under which a credible collective response becomes possible. Without them, Europe will continue to face every future crisis as it has faced past ones — divided, slow and reliant on ad hoc coalitions that exclude the common institutional resources of the Union.

Rather than creating the ESC outside the Treaty framework (-seat directorate or Lagodinsky's intergovernmental Core Union of Defence), the ESC should be established through enhanced cooperation under Art. 20 TEU, combined with the CFSP passerelle of Art. 333 TFEU. This allows a founding group of at least nine member states to:

- Activate enhanced cooperation in the CFSP field (Art. 20 + Art. 329(2) TFEU), with unanimous Council authorisation and EP notification;
- Immediately invoke the Art. 333(1) TFEU passerelle to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting (QMV) within the cooperating group for all decisions except those with military or defence implications;

This produces a founding-group ESC operating under QMV from day one — something no intergovernmental framework can deliver — while remaining within EU law and open to all member states to join. The ESC would subsume or replace existing formats (the E3, the "directoire") and operate as the EU's strategic executive on security and defence.

Art. 20 TEU (enhanced cooperation general clause); Arts. 326–334 TFEU (enhanced cooperation detailed rules); Art. 329(2) TFEU (enhanced cooperation in CFSP); Art. 333(1) and (2) TFEU (passerelle to QMV within enhanced cooperation)

The establishment of the ESC requires a dedicated legal instrument: a multilateral defence treaty concluded among the participating member states, open to signature on equal terms to all willing parties regardless of size. This treaty would serve as the constitutional document of the enhanced cooperation framework for defence — defining the commitments, the decision-making rules, and the operational obligations of its signatories — and would remain in force as a transitional instrument until the full activation of common defence under Article 42(2) TEU makes it redundant.

Participation must be voluntary but consequential: states that sign commit fully, and states that do not sign are not represented in the ESC. Member states with constitutional or traditional positions of neutrality — including Ireland, Malta and Austria — would therefore remain outside the framework for as long as those positions prevent them from accepting collective defence commitments. This is not a punitive exclusion but a structural necessity: a credible collective defence commitment cannot be diluted by opt-outs or observer status.

13. Third-country participation in the ESC (UK, Norway, Ukraine, others)

Third countries, including the United Kingdom, Norway, and Ukraine, cannot formally participate in EU enhanced cooperation. Their association with the ESC is achieved through the multilateral agreement concluded between the cooperating EU member states acting in their own names (not as



EU institutions), structurally resembling the G7. This preserves EU legal integrity while enabling genuine participation of strategically essential partners.

⚡ Outside EU Treaty law (states acting in their own capacity); compatible with Art. 20 TEU and Art. 42(2) TEU

V. More Ambitious PESCO and Common Defence

14. Institutionally ambitious PESCO as the vehicle for the European Defence System

PESCO has been used mainly for capability development projects. Its full potential under the Treaty covers the establishment of the EU Military Headquarters (EUMH) capable of conducting all types of CSDP missions plus territorial defence planning; the common command-and-control structure (C4ISTAR); and the communitarisation of the Eurocorps as permanent operational-level HQ. Within PESCO, the HR/VP would serve as mandatory of the European Council or of participating governments, representing the European Defence System externally. The European Parliament would exercise oversight through annual reports and motions of censure over the Commission/HR/VP.

⚡ Art. 42(6) TEU (PESCO establishment); Art. 46 TEU (PESCO mechanics); Protocol 10 (PESCO commitments); Art. 42(4) TEU (Council QMV within PESCO)

15. Common Defence under Art. 42(2) TEU

The ultimate Treaty objective of the CSDP is "the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy" leading to "a common defence" — i.e., the territorial defence of Europe — by a unanimous decision of the European Council, subject to adoption by member states according to their constitutional requirements, and compatible with NATO. Activating this clause is the highest-ambition step within the current Treaty. It would operationalise Art. 42(7) TEU (mutual assistance clause) by providing the institutional structure needed to respond collectively and automatically to an armed attack on a member state.

⚡ Art. 42(2) TEU (common defence objective and European Council activation); Art. 42(7) TEU (mutual assistance clause); Art. 42(1) TEU (CSDP mission scope)

16. European Defence System (EDS) as NATO's European Pillar

The EDS/common defence should be structured so as to function as NATO's European Pillar, fulfilling three levels of requirements:

- Political level: Euro-Atlantic Security Council (EASC) — see proposal 13;
- Strategic level: formal coordination protocol between NATO and the EDS/MPCC, including exchange of classified information;
- Operational level: use of NATO standards, manuals, force estimates, and alignment with the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP).



Under this design, the EDS would be mobilisable by the EU in case of NATO's non-activation (e.g., US refusal), while preserving NATO as the cornerstone of collective defence for as long as the transatlantic guarantee holds.

Art. 42(2) TEU (NATO compatibility requirement); Art. 42(7) TEU (mutual assistance)

VI. Nuclear Deterrence

17. Nuclear deterrence and European collective defence: opening the dialogue

As the only EU member state with an independent nuclear deterrent, France could offer a Europeanised framework for French nuclear capabilities: integration into the European common defence with shared financing from willing member states, political coordination and burden-sharing arrangements. British nuclear forces are a complementary element. This does not require formal Treaty change but a political agreement among participating states.

Art. 42(2) TEU (common defence); bilateral agreements between participating states; compatible with NATO Article 5 extended deterrence commitment

VII. Fiscal Architecture

18. Exemption of joint EU defence investments from the Stability and Growth Pact

Defence investments should be exempted from the SGP deficit calculation, but only when they are linked to joint EU projects, to prevent the escape clause from being used for uncoordinated national rearmament that fragments rather than builds common capacity.

Art. 126 TFEU + SGP Regulation; requires amendment to secondary law

19. EU federal bonds for defence and new own resources

Issuance of new EU federal bonds backed by new own resources to finance the European Defence System — on the model of NextGenerationEU — with the EIB mandate strengthened to include defence investment. The digital euro could be used to set up a Defence Bank. Bond issuance must be linked to the introduction of new own resources to finance repayment.

Art. 175 TFEU (cohesion, EU financial instruments); Art. 311 TFEU (own resources); requires Council Decision on own resources, or Treaty amendment for true EU debt issuance

20. Defence spending financed through the EU ordinary budget (long-term)

Once Treaty reform is achieved, the European Defence System should be financed through the ordinary EU budget, subject to co-decision by the European Parliament and the Council representing



European citizens and member states. Pending this, the HR/VP manages the EDS through PESCO financing mechanisms and intergovernmental arrangements.

Art. 314 TFEU (EU budget procedure); requires Treaty amendment to include common defence in EU budget competences

VIII. Governance and Democratic Legitimacy

21. European Parliament's role in common defence decisions

Without Treaty change, the EP can be associated with decisions on the common defence through an Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) between the Council and the EP, including: consent or notification rights on major CSDP/ESC decisions; EP approval of annual implementation reports; budgetary oversight over PESCO financing. The EP Plenary of 12 March 2025 already called on the European Council to activate the Art. 42 Lisbon Treaty provisions. In the longer term, Treaty reform should confer the EP full co-decision authority over common defence decisions of a legislative or institutional nature.

Art. 295 TFEU (IIAs); Art. 36 TEU (HR/VP consultation of EP on CFSP/CSDP); Art. 314 TFEU (budgetary co-decision)

22. Elimination of national vetoes in foreign and security policy (CFSP passerelle)

The Art. 48(7) TEU general passerelle and the Art. 31(3) TEU CFSP-specific passerelle allow the European Council to authorise the Council to act by QMV in CFSP areas where the Treaties currently require unanimity (with the exception of decisions with military or defence implications. This does not require Treaty change but a unanimous decision of the European Council. The EP resolution of November 2023 called for this change, alongside Treaty reform.

Art. 31(3) TEU (CFSP passerelle to QMV); Art. 48(7) TEU (general passerelle)

IX. Democratic and Societal Resilience

23. Protecting European democracy from hybrid threats

Military hardware and institutional decision-making are necessary but not sufficient conditions for European security. Russia and other authoritarian actors have demonstrated the strategic value of hybrid warfare: information operations, electoral interference, bot networks, and the financing of political proxies can destabilise democracies without deploying a single tank. A European defence programme that ignores this dimension is incomplete.

Participating states should therefore commit, as part of their collective defence obligations, to a coordinated framework for democratic resilience, covering: (i) shared standards for the transparency and accountability of social media platforms operating in European territory, including algorithmic auditing and political advertising disclosure requirements; (ii) joint monitoring and rapid-response mechanisms against coordinated inauthentic behaviour and foreign information manipulation; (iii)

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protection of electoral infrastructure — including voter registers, counting systems and media ecosystems — ahead of major European elections, beginning with the 2029 European Parliament elections; and (iv) adequate investment in democracy infrastructure, which NATO allies have already recognised as eligible spending within the 1.5% non-equipment component of the 2% GDP commitment.

The Union already has instruments in this space — the Digital Services Act, the Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) framework, the Code of Practice on Disinformation — but these remain fragmented and under-enforced. This proposal calls for their integration into a coherent resilience architecture with adequate funding, common enforcement, and a dedicated governance structure within the ESC.

Art. 42(7) TEU (mutual assistance, including non-military threats); DSA (Regulation 2022/2065); FIMI framework (2023); Art. 167 TFEU (culture and information); Art. 13 TEU (institutional framework)

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SUMMARY: PROPOSALS BY LEVEL OF AMBITION

#	Proposal	Treaty basis	Level
1	Joint investment / 50% target	Art. 173, 182 TFEU; EDA	Operational
2	Reduce fragmentation and duplication	EDA; PESCO	Operational
3	Strategic enablers (satcom, AWACS, ISR...)	Art. 187, 189 TFEU; EDA	Operational
4	Inclusion of associated partners in EDTIB	Association agreements; EPC	Operational
5	Strengthen CSDP missions / neighbourhood	Art. 42(1), 43(1), 44 TEU	Operational
6	Upgrade MPCC to full EU Military HQ	Art. 42(1), 42(7), 43 TEU	Operational
7	Institutionalise MPCC–Eurocorps architecture	Strasbourg Treaty; Art. 42(1) TEU	Operational
8	RDC → 60,000-strong 28th Army (Helsinki target)	Art. 42(6), 46 TEU; Protocol 10	Enhanced PESCO
9	Berlin Plus reform (DSACEUR nationality; SHAPE access)	Art. 42(2) TEU; Berlin Plus	NATO–EU
10	Dual-hat CEUMC / DSACEUR	Art. 42 TEU; NATO agreement	NATO–EU
11	Formal NATO–EU coordination agreement	Art. 42(2), 37 TEU	NATO–EU
12	ESC via enhanced cooperation + Art. 333 TFEU passerelle	Art. 20 TEU; Arts. 329(2), 333 TFEU	Enhanced coop.
13	Third-country participation in ESC (UK/NO/UA)	States acting in own name (G7 model)	Enhanced coop.
14	Ambitious PESCO: EUMH + C4ISTAR + Eurocorps	Art. 42(6), 46 TEU; Protocol 10	PESCO+
15	Common Defence (Art. 42(2) TEU activation)	Art. 42(2) TEU — unanimous Eur. Council	Common Defence
16	EDS as NATO's European Pillar	Art. 42(2) TEU; NATO standards	Common Defence
17	Nuclear deterrence and European collective defence	Art. 42(2) TEU; bilateral agreements	Nuclear
18	SGP exemption for joint EU defence projects	Art. 126 TFEU; secondary law	Fiscal
19	EU bonds + new own resources for defence	Art. 175, 311 TFEU; EIB	Fiscal
20	EDS financed through ordinary EU budget	Art. 314 TFEU — Treaty reform needed	Fiscal/Reform
21	EP role in common defence (IIA + long-term)	Art. 295, 36 TEU; Art. 314 TFEU	Governance
22	CFSP passerelle to QMV (Art. 31(3) / 48(7) TEU)	Art. 31(3), 48(7) TEU	Governance
23	Protecting European democracy from hybrid threats	Art. 42(7) TEU; DSA; FIMI framework	Resilience