



The Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference on the Future of Europe, launched in 2021, provides a platform for citizens to discuss the continent's future. The conference covers topics such as climate change, democracy, and economic policies, fostering public participation and encouraging cooperation between European institutions, governments, and citizens. This initiative ensures that European policies reflect the needs and aspirations of its people.

Follow-Up on the Conference on the Future of Europe Outcome on Migration

Migration remains a major issue for the European Union (EU) with social, economic, and political implications. The Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) emphasized the need for a coordinated and humane approach to migration and asylum policies. Here are the key takeaways from the discussions:

1. European Solidarity

The need for a fairer distribution of migration responsibilities among EU countries was a central topic. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum seeks to address this but faces delays due to national interests. Greater cooperation is required to ensure shared responsibility for reception and integration.

2. Human Rights and Protection

Refugees and asylum seekers must have access to safe, legal migration pathways. The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation aims to harmonize asylum procedures to ensure fairness and efficiency.

3. Addressing Root Causes

Migration is often driven by conflict, poverty, and climate change. The EU is investing in partnerships with third countries to promote stability and development, particularly in North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Legal Migration Channels

Expanding work visas, family reunification, student visas, and humanitarian pathways can reduce irregular migration and attract skilled workers, benefiting both migrants and host countries.

5. Integration Policies

Successful integration requires education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The EU supports integration through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

(AMIF). **Follow-Up on the Conference on the Future of Europe: Education**

Europe's diverse cultures, languages, and traditions shape its educational systems, creating both strengths and challenges. The European Union (EU) aims to ensure equal access to quality education and lifelong learning for all citizens, including those in remote areas. Key measures discussed in the conference include:

1. Standardizing Education

Efforts are being made to harmonize diplomas and qualifications across Member States, promoting equal educational opportunities.



2. Future-Proof Education

Enhancing civic education on democracy, integrating soft skills like respect and resilience, combating racism and bullying, and fostering critical thinking are priorities.

3. Environmental Education

The EU plans to introduce school subjects focused on biodiversity, climate change, and their impact on health.

4. Teacher Training

Supporting educators with innovative teaching methods is essential for adapting to evolving educational needs.

5. Digital Inclusion

Ensuring all students have access to modern digital tools, updated hardware, and reliable internet connectivity is a priority.

6. Knowledge Sharing

A Europe-wide information platform will facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among citizens.

The EU is working toward a more inclusive and standardized education system, balancing national diversity with shared goals for accessibility, sustainability, and digital readiness.

TOPIC I

How some European countries are aligning with the European Defence Policy?

ROMANIA

As geopolitical tensions rise in Eastern Europe, Romania has emerged as a critical actor in strengthening EU defense initiatives. The country plays a key role in bolstering regional security, aligning with both European Union and NATO-led defense strategies. Its growing defense capabilities, cybersecurity efforts, and commitment to crisis management reinforce its position as a cornerstone of European security.

Romania's Contribution to the Strategic Compass

The Strategic Compass is the EU's comprehensive roadmap for security and defense, designed to enhance crisis management, resilience, and partnerships. Romania actively contributes to this initiative by modernizing its military capabilities, improving rapid response mechanisms, and strengthening EU-wide defense collaboration. The country participates in joint military exercises, intelligence-sharing agreements, and rapid deployment strategies to enhance operational effectiveness within the EU defense framework.

Participation in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

Romania plays a strategic role in PESCO, an initiative aimed at deepening defense collaboration among EU nations. Through this framework, Romania has committed to multiple defense projects, including:

- European Patrol Corvette (EPC) Project: Developing advanced multi-role naval vessels to improve European maritime security and counter hybrid threats in critical sea
- Military Mobility Project: Enhancing infrastructure and logistical networks to allow for rapid deployment of troops and equipment across Europe.



- Cooperation with EU Agencies: Working with Frontex and UNHCR to provide safe transit routes and humanitarian assistance.
- Establishment of Refugee Reception Centers: Creating facilities that offer housing, healthcare, and integration services for displaced populations.
- Legal Support for Refugees: Assisting asylum seekers with legal procedures and documentation to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

Green Defence Strategy and Sustainable Military Initiatives

Romania is a key player in the EU's Green Defence Strategy, which promotes sustainability in military operations. The country is actively involved in:

- Development of Low-Emission Military Vehicles: Collaborating with European defense industries to manufacture hybrid and electric-powered armored vehicles.
- Sustainable Defense Facilities: Modernizing military bases with renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, to reduce carbon footprints.
- Eco-Friendly Training Programs: Integrating sustainability into military exercises, focusing on energy-efficient logistics and environmentally responsible operations.

Strategic NATO Partnerships and the Expansion of the Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase

In addition to its EU commitments, Romania is strengthening its role within NATO, particularly through the expansion of the Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase. This transformation includes:

- Increased NATO Troop Presence: Hosting multinational battlegroups to deter potential threats in the Black Sea region.
- Deployment of Advanced Aircraft: Accommodating F-35s, Eurofighters, and AWACS surveillance planes to reinforce air superiority in Eastern Europe.
- Integrated Missile Defense Systems: Hosting NATO's Aegis Ashore missile defense system at Deveselu, which plays a vital role in European security architecture.

The Three Seas Initiative and Regional Security

Romania is a founding member of the Three Seas Initiative, which focuses on improving economic, infrastructure, and security cooperation across Central and Eastern Europe. Security benefits include:

- Military Mobility Improvements: Enhancing road and rail networks to facilitate rapid troop deployment.
- Energy Security Strengthening: Reducing dependence on Russian energy by developing alternative energy supply routes.
- Cybersecurity Cooperation: Strengthening digital resilience among member states through collaborative cyber defense initiatives.

Participation in the EUFOR Crisis Response Core

Romania plays an active role in the EUFOR Crisis Response Core, contributing personnel and resources to European peacekeeping and rapid intervention missions. Key contributions include:

- Military Deployments in Conflict Zones: Supporting stabilization missions in the Balkans and Africa.
- Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Operations: Providing logistical support and medical aid in crisis-stricken regions.



Defense Budget and Military Expenditure

Romania continues to increase its defense spending in alignment with NATO guidelines. In 2023, Romania's military expenditure reached \$6.2 billion, marking a significant increase from previous years. The budget focuses on:

- **Modernizing Military Equipment:** Acquisition of Abrams tanks, HIMARS systems, and Bayraktar drones.
- **Enhancing Cyber Defense Capabilities:** Expanding national cybersecurity centers and AI-driven defense mechanisms.

Conclusion

By integrating EU and NATO-led defense strategies, Romania is reinforcing its role as a pillar of security in Eastern Europe and a key contributor to collective defense efforts. Its commitment to military modernization, cybersecurity, humanitarian aid, and strategic alliances positions it as a leader in European security and crisis management.

SPAIN

Spain aligns itself with European defense policy by promoting cooperation within the European Union (EU) and supporting initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defense Fund (EDF). The country actively participates in missions and operations under the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), seeking to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy without compromising its alliances with NATO. Furthermore, Spain supports greater integration and coordination among EU Member States to jointly respond to threats and enhance collective defense capabilities.

ITALY

Italy has undertaken several initiatives to align with the European Union's (EU) defence policy, actively participating in joint projects and missions. These initiatives include:

- **Investment in Defence and Aerospace:** Italy has launched a major plan to boost investments in the defence sector.
- **Participation in European Missions:** Italy takes part in key EU-led military operations, such as Operation Aspid.
- **Involvement in European Military Structures:** Italy is an active member of Eurocorps, contributing to its operations.
- **Participation in EU Battlegroups:** Italy provides troops for the

EU's rapid reaction forces, particularly through the Multinational Land Force.

- **Commitment to EUFOR Crisis Response Core:** Italy supports the development of a large-scale EU crisis response force.
- **Debate on Defence Spending:** The Italian government is advocating for increased European defence funding and policy

Investment Proposals in the Defence Sector

Recently, Italy proposed a strategic investment plan to European partners aimed at generating up to €200 billion in the defence and aerospace sectors. The Italian Minister of Economy, Giancarlo



Giorgetti, presented this initiative during a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels. The plan, named the “European Security and Industrial Innovation Initiative,” envisions €17 billion in guarantees catalyzing €200 billion in investments over five years. The initiative aims to enhance Europe’s defence capabilities and industrial innovation, ensuring strategic autonomy and reducing reliance on non-EU suppliers.

Participation in European Missions

Italy plays an active role in EU maritime security missions. A significant example is **Operation Aspides**, launched on February 19, 2024, in response to Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea. This mission aims to escort merchant vessels, enhance maritime surveillance, and protect critical trade routes. Italy contributes naval assets, personnel, and logistical support to this operation, ensuring safe passage for European commercial interests. Additionally, Italy participates in other EU-led missions such as **Operation Irini**, aimed at enforcing the UN arms embargo on Libya, and **EUTM Mali**, which supports security sector reforms in the Sahel region.

Involvement in European Military Structures

Since 2009, Italy has been a member of **Eurocorps**, a multinational army corps founded in 1992. Headquartered in Strasbourg, Eurocorps provides rapid deployment forces for EU and NATO missions. It operates under both the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO frameworks, serving as a high-readiness force capable of responding to international crises. Italy contributes personnel and resources, reinforcing its commitment to European collective defence.

Participation in EU Battlegroups

Italy contributes to the **EU Battlegroups**, which are military units of around 1,500 troops each, designed to be ready for deployment within 10 days of activation. These groups serve as the EU’s rapid reaction force, capable of responding to crises, humanitarian emergencies, and conflict stabilization efforts. One of Italy’s key contributions is through the **Multinational Land Force (MLF)**, a brigade-level unit formed in collaboration with Slovenia and Hungary. The MLF operates under a unified command structure, ensuring interoperability among the three nations’ military forces. This initiative strengthens European defence cooperation and enhances regional security.

Commitment to the EUFOR Crisis Response Core

Italy is also actively involved in the **EUFOR Crisis Response Operational Core (EUFOR CROC)**, a defence project within the **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** framework. This initiative aims to create a 60,000-strong military force composed of three divisions, capable of responding to large-scale crises. The EUFOR CROC enhances the EU’s ability to conduct autonomous military operations without relying solely on NATO. Italy collaborates with Germany, France, and Spain to develop this force, contributing expertise, personnel, and strategic planning. These forces are intended for crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions in regions where the EU has strategic interests.

Debate on Defence Spending

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has emphasized the need for increased defence spending in Europe. She supports European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s proposal to exclude defence expenditures from the EU’s budget rules, arguing that such spending is crucial for Europe’s strategic autonomy. However, Meloni has also stressed that additional measures are required to strengthen Europe’s contribution to NATO.



Currently, Italy aims to increase its defence spending to **1.61% of GDP by 2027**, still below NATO's 2% target. This gap highlights the challenges Italy faces in meeting NATO commitments while balancing national budgetary constraints. The Italian government is advocating for a more integrated European defence policy that shares financial burdens among member states and reduces dependency on U.S. military support.

Conclusion

Italy is demonstrating strong commitment aligning with the European defence policy through strategic investments, joint missions, and participation in EU military structures. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding defence spending and the balancing of national priorities with EU and NATO commitments. By continuing to advocate for increased European defence funding and policy alignment, Italy seeks to strengthen its role in shaping the future of European security.

POLAND

Along with the latest news and war activities around the European Union, Poland got a substantial growth from a country that can hardly suggest something about defense policy to the point where nobody can avoid Poland's voice in that question.

Good economic decisions

Since the fall of communism and Poland receiving its independence, Poland went through a remarkable process of switching from a centrally planned system to a market-based economy. Poland nearly tripled its gross domestic product (GDP) from 2004, when it joined the EU, to the year of COVID-19, 2020. This economic success has strengthened Poland's regional leadership in European and transatlantic security by providing more stable financing of security measures that needed to be applied. Even during the financial crisis of 2008, the country managed to avoid recession by using several cautious banking practices and diversified industrial base. Now Poland is the sixth contributor to EU's economy having an impressive GDP of 4.31 percent of the EU total GDP.

Choice of joining both the EU

This growth has been provided by liberal market reforms and EU integration combined with internal factors such as a highly skilled workforce, credible domestic consumption and an expanding industrial base, but the major factor that played a crucial role in this growth is the substantial inflow of EU structural funds. From which, by 2023, Poland had received over €250 billion, with access to an additional €137 billion as of 2024, making it the largest recipient of EU funds.

Balancing the budget

Having spent the budget that has tripled, rising from €7.7 billion to €23.4 billion over the past decade, Poland has more than doubled its armed forces from 99,000 to 216,000 in 2024 has also made substantial investments in military hardware and has solidified its role as NATO's key eastern frontline state. To date, over 150,000 tonnes of aid have been delivered for Ukraine with allocated €4.33 billion in bilateral aid, with over 90% of military supplies destined for Ukraine passing through Poland. Balancing these commitments with domestic needs, such as healthcare and public services which are additionally under strain from Ukrainian refugees, remains a challenge to Warsaw.

Probable tension

As Poland's influence grows, it is potentially creating tension with NATO and EU. It may shift the balance in the EU's decision-making system and also for countries that favour a more diplomatic approach to security challenges. But overall, Poland has eased tensions with Brussels and has



transitioned from a peripheral player to a central force in European security by actively working on EU's security questions.

TOPIC II: How the EU Guarantees Peace and Which is its Defence Policy?

The EU's Role in Promoting Peace and Stability

The European Union has historically contributed to peace by fostering economic integration, political cooperation, and promoting democratic values among its member states. This approach has reduced the likelihood of conflicts within Europe.

CSDP: A Collective Approach to Security

In terms of defense policy, the EU operates under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), enabling it to conduct civilian and military missions aimed at preserving peace, preventing conflicts, and strengthening international security. These missions are carried out by forces contributed by member states, reflecting a shared commitment to collective security. In addition, the EU has been enhancing its crisis management capabilities, deploying missions that address state-building, conflict resolution, and post-conflict stabilization.

The Strategic Compass: Strengthening EU Defense Capabilities

A significant development in EU defense strategy is the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, adopted in 2022. This document serves as a roadmap for enhancing the EU's security and defense capabilities, including the establishment of a Rapid Deployment Capacity by 2025. The Strategic Compass represents a pivotal step toward a more cohesive and proactive EU defense policy, outlining measures for quicker response to emerging threats and greater coordination among member states' armed forces. It also emphasizes the need for joint military training, investment in innovative defense technologies, and stronger partnerships with international organizations like NATO and the United Nations.

Adapting EU Defense Strategies to Emerging Global Challenges

Recent geopolitical events have prompted EU member states to reassess their defense strategies. The conflict in Ukraine and shifting international alliances have led to increased defense spending and initiatives aimed at greater military autonomy. For instance, European leaders have pledged to enhance defense capabilities and financial contributions to security in response to Russian threats. Furthermore, the EU is exploring deeper cooperation on intelligence sharing and cybersecurity to address hybrid threats and misinformation campaigns.

Promoting Peace:

Economic Integration: The EU's single market facilitates the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, enhancing economic interdependence and reducing the likelihood of conflicts among member states. Efforts to deepen financial and trade ties have also strengthened resilience against external economic pressures.

Democratic Values and Rule of Law: The EU upholds democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law, contributing to internal stability and peaceful relations.

Defense Policy:

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP): The CSDP enables the EU to undertake civilian and military missions aimed at conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and strengthening international security. These missions are conducted with contributions from member states and increasingly focus



on capacity-building in partner countries and addressing emerging security challenges like cyber warfare and terrorism.

European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS): Introduced in 2024, the EDIS aims to bolster the EU's defense capabilities by promoting a robust and competitive defense industry. It encourages joint procurement of defense equipment and investment in critical technologies to ensure the EU's strategic autonomy. The strategy also prioritizes innovation, the development of advanced defense systems, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises in the defense sector.

TOPIC III: How the EU is Responding to International Conflicts and Its Role in Them?

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is often seen as a symbol of peace, cooperation, and economic integration. Since its creation, the EU has worked tirelessly to ensure that its member states remain united and free from the devastation of war. But the EU's reach extends far beyond its borders, and over time, it has found itself involved in international conflicts, having problems bringing peace and stability around the world. The way the EU has responded to these conflicts, and the role it has played in addressing them, is a story of adaptation, collaboration, and commitment to a better global order.

From Peace in Europe to Peace in the World

The European Union was born out of the ashes of two World Wars, with the idea that economic cooperation would help prevent future conflicts between European countries. The founding nations of the EU believed that if they could make their economies interdependent, they would have no reason to go into another war. Over time, this vision expanded, and the EU's reach grew far beyond Europe's borders. While the EU initially focused on creating peace and prosperity within its borders, the end of the Cold War and the expansion of the union brought new challenges. As the world grew more interconnected, the EU began to realize that peace in Europe was only meaningful if it was extended globally. The European Union began to face a question: how could it help address conflicts in regions far beyond its own territory? The EU makes contacts and agreements with other nations and continents to maintain security, including the ONU/UN (United Nations).

The EU's Strategy for Peace: A Blend of Diplomacy, Economics, and Security

The European Union is not a traditional military power, but its approach to conflict is shaped by a specific combination of diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian tools. The EU's responses to international crises are coordinated through its High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS). While the European Council, made up of the leaders of member states, sets the overarching foreign policy direction, it is the European Parliament that often debates and helps shape the EU's policies on conflict resolution.

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism

When there is a crisis or disaster, the EU can use various crisis response mechanisms to provide assistance and try to resolve situations. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism coordinates the EU's escalation response to natural and man-made disasters. Its purpose is to: foster cooperation between national civil protection authorities;

- Raise public awareness and preparedness for
- Enable
- Effective and coordinated assistance to affected



There is an Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which is the core of the Civil Protection Mechanism (coordinating the EU's escalation response to natural and man-made disasters). It is always active and coordinates the EU's response efforts in the event of disasters. The mechanism also includes a European Civil Protection Reserve, a voluntary pool of capabilities to which Member States commit for immediate deployment within or outside the EU. Among others, the following actions include: investing in research and innovation, working on appropriate prevention and preparedness measures, developing civil protection capacities, improving citizens' preparedness through better information, and encouraging citizens and volunteers to participate in civil protection initiatives.

Crisis Coordination in the Council:

The Integrated Political Crisis Response Facility (IPCR Facility) ensures rapid and coordinated EU decision-making in the event of major and complex crises, such as health crises or acts of terrorism. Through this mechanism, the Council Presidency coordinates the political response to crises by bringing together the EU institutions, affected Member States, and other key stakeholders.

The ICCR Facility is currently active to coordinate EU measures in response to the migration crises and the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, it has preparedness and plans for specific crises such as food, health, and economic crises.

The European Union's highly effective approach was exemplified by its ability to control the COVID-19 health crisis.

United Nations: Peacekeeping Missions.

The European Union is a strategic and key partner of the United Nations. This union ensures the maintenance of peace through conflict resolution and the supporting role of peacekeeping operations in this regard.

It reaffirms the basic principles of peacekeeping, including:

- The consent of the
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- The non-use of force (except in self-defense and in defense of the mandate).

The importance of peacekeeping is one of the most effective instruments available to the United Nations to promote and maintain international peace and security. Collectively, each country reaffirms its constant and strong support for peacekeeping's fundamental role in preventing, containing, and resolving conflicts wherever peacekeeping operations are deployed and for its role in promoting compliance with international law and consolidating peace. Today, countries are involved in 14 different peacekeeping missions (out of a total of 21 promoted by the ONU), primarily in Africa but also in other parts of the world.

TOPIC IV: Missions related to CSDP (Common Security Defence Policy).

The CSPD

With the treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the Common Security and Defense Policy was born. It's about a military organ of the EU that enables it to undertake civilian and military missions all over the world. Its function is to provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets, undertake missions outside its borders in order to maintain peace and prevent conflicts, in fact it is also a key component of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which is specifically



in charge of this tasks in foreign countries. In 2003 the first mission began and since then also other 37 operations across Europe, in Africa and Asia begun. Today 21 CSDP missions are ongoing.

The civilian missions

This kind of missions aim to strengthen the rule of law, supporting security sector reforms and improving, in the partner countries, the governance structures. These missions are rooted in the EU's approach to crisis management and their main target are the root causes of conflicts and economical problems. So they promote, as a solution, the human rights and the effective governance. Two missions can be taken as an example: The EUCAP Somalia, which aims to improve the maritime security, the police sector and the rule of law, and the EUCAP Mali, which basically does the same things but it also provides Mali with material support. This mission also aims to improve the efficiency of switching tasks among the military forces. Following, the goals of the missions.

The military operations

In order to enhance international security, many military operations, designed to manage crisis and peace-keeping, under the control of the CSDP, are ongoing in many regions in order to make a better international security, fighting against piracy and making many efforts to bring stability. To combat piracy, in 2008 an anti piracy program called Naval Force Operation Atalanta (NFOA) was launched and was first sent in Somalia, ensuring the safe passage for the vessels with first aid kits and other supplies for the country. Another notable EU organization which solves governance issues, such as terrorism and organized crime, is called Training Missions in Mali (TM Mali), established in 2003. It also provides the Malian military forces with training and advice. These military operations demonstrate the EU's ability to respond in a cleaner way and effectively to emerging security threats, contributing to global peace and stability.

The recent developments

In October of 2024, the EU's member states tried to involve the United Kingdom in these kind of operations, and thanks to the efforts of David Lammy, foreign secretary of united kingdom, to join this projects, highlighting the potential of the cooperation between countries, thanks to which, they could cover more territory, this project represents a great advancement in peace-keeping missions, since the UK has a significant knowledge about military capabilities and experience in international missions. The efforts of the CSDP in its purposes, can be seen by the attempts and the will to adapt and respond to emerging challenges. The benefits that are being achieved so far are the contribution to the long term stability and the development of the involved nations. This approach ensures the sustainability and suitability of the EU's interventions.

How does the CSDP makes decisions?

A structured framework ensures that the missions of the CSDP operate coordinately and effectively to security challenges. The decisions concerning the CSDP are proposed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council, generally requiring unanimity among member states. Concerning the operational planning and conduct of missions are under the responsibility of the Military Staff (EUMS) and also the (CPCC), main parts of the (EEAS) European External Action Service. The MS provides strategic advice and early warning, while the CPCC is responsible for the operational planning and conduct of civilian missions.

The CSDP's mentor

In 2017, PESCO, the Permanent Structured Cooperation, was established. It's about a framework which allows the EU's member states to unitedly develop defense capabilities, improve the efficiency



during the operations of the armed forces and invest in other shared projects. This Year 25 / 27 of the EU member states participate in PESCO, busy in many operative projects and collaborating with each other. These projects aim to develop new military tech and establish new training programs, in order to achieve a deeper defense integration.

TOPIC V: How the EU uses Economic Resources for Defence?

In an era of shifting global power dynamics, the European Union (EU) is taking bold steps to reinforce its security and defence capabilities. Over the past decade, the EU has significantly increased its defence budget, launched new initiatives, and sought greater strategic autonomy. At the heart of this transformation is the allocation and management of economic resources, which are being channelled into cutting-edge military research, cybersecurity, and infrastructure protection. This article examines how the EU finances its defence sector, exploring key funding mechanisms such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), recent financial proposals, and the challenges associated with the fragmented European defence market.

The European Defence Fund (EDF): A Key Pillar of EU Military Strategy

Launched in 2021, the **European Defence Fund (EDF)** is one of the EU's most ambitious defence initiatives. With a budget of **€8 billion for the 2021-2027 period**, the EDF seeks to enhance cooperation among member states by funding **joint research, technological development, and procurement projects** in the defence sector. Unlike previous EU defence programs, which focused on individual national investments, the EDF is structured to foster **collaborative innovation** across multiple European industries.

How the EDF is Structured

The fund is divided into two primary components:

- **Research:** The EU provides up to **100% funding** for innovative defence projects, encouraging technological advancements in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and autonomous weaponry.
- **Development & Acquisition:** The fund offers up to **80% co-financing** for the development of new defensive capabilities, with the goal of reducing dependency on non-European suppliers.

Several major European companies, including **Leonardo S.p.A. (Italy)**, **Airbus (France/Germany)**, and **Rheinmetall (Germany)**, have played a central role in EDF-funded projects. Italy's **Leonardo S.p.A.**, one of the continent's leading aerospace and defence firms, has been instrumental in developing **cybersecurity solutions, advanced radar systems, and AI-driven military applications** under the EDF umbrella.

Expanding EU Defence Investments: The “ReArm Europe” Initiative

In March 2025, amid rising geopolitical instability, the **European Commission** unveiled a new financial strategy called **“ReArm Europe.”** This initiative aims to **mobilize up to €800 billion** to bolster the EU's defence infrastructure and technological edge. The plan includes several groundbreaking financial measures:

- **Fiscal Flexibility:** EU member states will be allowed to use **cohesion funds** to finance defence expenditures. Additionally, the **Stability and Growth Pact** will be temporarily relaxed to permit military spending beyond the **3% deficit rule**.



- **A €150 Billion Military Investment Loan Fund:** This mechanism will provide **low-interest loans** to governments for acquiring modern military equipment and **encourage joint procurement** among member states.
- **Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Protection:** Recognizing the growing threats in **cyberspace**, the EU will allocate **billions in funding** to strengthen **digital defences** against cyberattacks from state and non-state actors.
- **Support for the European Defence Industry:** A large portion of the funding will be directed toward **homegrown defence companies**, including **Italy's Leonardo S.p.A. and shipbuilder Fincantieri**, ensuring that Europe becomes less reliant on **non-EU suppliers** such as the United States.

EU Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** described the initiative as “**a historic step toward a stronger, more resilient Europe that can defend itself in an increasingly volatile world.**”

The Fragmentation of the European Defence Market: A Persistent Challenge

Despite these ambitious reforms, the EU's defence sector remains **deeply fragmented**. Member states continue to prioritize **national interests over collective security**, leading to inefficiencies and **higher production costs**.

Economic & Strategic Consequences

1. **Redundant Development Programs:** Several countries develop **similar weapon systems** independently rather than pooling resources, leading to **higher costs** and **duplication of efforts**.
2. **Limited Economies of Scale:** The lack of joint procurement **reduces production efficiency**, making European defence equipment more expensive compared to US-made alternatives.
3. **Dependence on US Technology:** Many European countries still rely heavily on **American military exports**, including **fighter jets, missile defence systems, and cybersecurity technologies**.

A study by **Bruegel**, a leading economic think tank, estimates that a **fully integrated EU defence market** could save **billions of euros annually**, improving both **cost efficiency** and **combat readiness**.

The War in Ukraine: A Turning Point for European Defence

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked a turning point for the EU's security and defense policy. Member states significantly increased their defense budgets and, for the first time in history, the EU directly funded the supply of weapons to a third country through the European Peace Facility (EPF). This mechanism allocated billions of euros to provide military support to Ukraine, demonstrating an unprecedented commitment to the continent's security. Furthermore, the war accelerated plans for greater integration of European armed forces. The Strategic Compass, adopted in 2022, outlines a series of measures to strengthen the EU's operational capacity, including the creation of a 5,000-strong rapid reaction force ready to intervene in crisis situations.

Environmental & Ethical Implications of EU Defence Investments The “Green Defence Strategy”

The EU is integrating **sustainability** into its military strategy through the **Green Defence Strategy**, which focuses on:



- **Reducing Carbon Emissions in Military Operations:** Promoting the use of **renewable energy** in European armed forces.
- **Developing Sustainable Weapons & Equipment:** Encouraging research into low-emission military vehicles, biofuels, and eco-friendly explosives.

Ethical Considerations & Arms Export Regulations

The EU faces growing scrutiny over **the ethical implications of arms exports**. The block has **tightened regulations** to prevent **European-made weapons from being used in human rights violations**. The **Common Position on Arms Exports** now enforces **stricter criteria** regarding:

- Sales to non-EU countries with questionable human rights records.
- **Weapons used in ongoing conflicts that may violate international law.**
- **AI & Autonomous Weapons:** Ethical concerns surrounding **the deployment of AI-driven military systems** remain a key policy debate.

Future Challenges & Opportunities

Looking ahead, the EU must navigate **several key challenges** to ensure its defence ambitions are realized:

1. **AI & Automation in Warfare:** The integration of **artificial intelligence in military strategy** raises questions about **autonomy, ethics, and international regulations**.
2. **Strengthening NATO-EU Collaboration:** While the EU aims for strategic autonomy, **collaboration with NATO** remains essential, especially regarding **cyber defence and intelligence sharing**.
3. **Investment in Next-Generation Technologies:** The EU must continue funding **hypersonic weapons, space defence, and quantum computing** to maintain technological superiority.

Conclusion: The Path to a Stronger European Defence

The EU is at a crossroads in its defence policy. With new funding mechanisms like the **EDF** and **ReArm Europe**, and a renewed commitment to military cooperation, **Europe is positioning itself as a global security leader**. However, achieving true **strategic autonomy** requires overcoming **market fragmentation**, investing in **cutting-edge defence technology**, and **ensuring ethical standards in military operations**. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the **urgency of a coordinated European defence strategy**, and if the EU can sustain this momentum, it may emerge as a **formidable player on the global stage**.

TOPIC VI: How the EU is managing external challenges such as Migration, Cyber-security and Terrorism?

The European Union is a very substantial part of the European continent, where countries are having different levels of economic development and, also political situation. The better political situation and perspectives are engaging people from less developed countries to migrate to the EU countries, but not always this migration is legal. The other factor that occurs with people from other countries with different cultures and kinds of thinking, is terrorism, which has become one of the ways of executing one's believing and false claims. Also, the problem with our world, that transitions more and more into digital technologies, is the fact that the cyber-security solutions for main European structures are needed. The EU institutions are constantly working on finding solutions to the above-mentioned problems.



EU managing and preventing migration issues

From the start of development of the EU, it had substantially different problems to cope with, but looking over the recent years the migration issue and solutions to the issue is one of the most important aspects that EU working on. Such solutions became the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR).

The New Pact on Migration is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level, that delivers results while remaining grounded in our European values. The system provided by this pact secures external borders by having new and more efficient procedures, robust screening and crisis protocols and pre-written actions against instrumentalization. In addition, this system assures that procedures for migration questions are fast and efficient, guaranteeing people's life, having clear asylum rules and EU standards for refugees status qualification. When Asylum and Migration Management Regulation provided a key feature of a solidarity mechanism, it allowed member states to contribute by relocating migrants or providing financial support.

Despite these measures, immigrants are still finding new ways to come in. According to the the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the number of illegal border crossings decreased by about 146,000 or 38 percent to 239,000 compared to the previous year, which level was the lowest since 2021 when migration was still affected by covid as stated by Frontex.

EU protecting us from illegal immigrants

Agency recorded 21,500 irregular border crossings on the so-called Western Balkan route, a decrease of more than three quarters (78%) compared to 2023. The countries of the region have made great efforts, these include a stricter visa policy, stricter border controls and close cooperation with the European Border Agency.

The West Africa route, on the other hand, shows record numbers of arrivals. The Canary Islands recorded an increase in arrivals of almost a fifth (18 %) to almost 47,000, the highest number since the start of data collection by Frontex in 2009. According to the data, the figures also increased in the east of the EU. Especially at the borders with Ukraine and Belarus, the number of border crossings has tripled to around 17,000 entries.

With increasing levels of population and European legal or illegal refugees, technical progress among all the countries is going so furious that the issue of cyber-security is rising.

What are the four steps used in the counterterrorism strategy?

In 2005, the European Union adopted a Counterterrorism Strategy that promotes democracy, dialogue, and good governance to address the root causes of radicalization based on four pillars (also graded according to risk with levels on a scale of 1 to 5):

1. "Prevent"; carry out a security check in each
2. "Protect"; if the slightest hint of terrorism is detected, the impact of a terrorist attack will be minimized as much as possible.
3. "Pursuit"; search for signs of terrorist movements or
4. "Responder"; It seeks to stop terrorist movements or

In addition, firearms are controlled, and support for terrorism is not disseminated on social media or in the media.



Broader Strategic Implications and Economic Context

While the EU's implementation of policies on migration, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism provides immediate security needs, they are also aligning with EU's broader strategic objectives. For example, migration and Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) are having similar policies, ensuring that economic recovery includes sustainable migration management, cybersecurity initiatives contribute to the Digital Europe Program, strengthening Europe's leadership in digital security. In the same time, counterterrorism strategies are supporting the Strategic Compass, which is the EU's roadmap for security and defense, ensuring a unified approach to emerging threats.

EU and Cyber-security management

EU is a big institution that is working for behalf of its citizens and prioritizing on their cyber-security. EU cyber-security program is focused on protecting essential services such as hospitals, energy grids, schools and railways, as well as the growing number of connected devices in various sectors. For that purpose, a NIS2 Directive (Network and Information Security Directive 2) was applied. It requires EU Member States to ensure that they have well-functioning Computer Security Incident Response Teams which provide deal with cybersecurity incidents and risks in practice. They cooperate with each other at EU level, and also work together with the private sector. For implementation of the NIS directive there is the EU cybersecurity agency that deals with cybersecurity providing support to Member States, EU institutions and businesses in key areas. Also, the EU cooperates with other countries to help build up their capacity to defend against cybersecurity threats by supporting various cybersecurity programs in the enlargement countries, as well as in other countries worldwide through its International Cooperation and Development department, which is helping to raise the overall cyber-security around the world as well as in the EU.

EU Counterterrorism Measures

Irregular migration can sometimes be linked to security risks, including terrorism. According to EU law, terrorist offenses aim to intimidate populations, excessively constrain governments, or destabilize political and economic structures. To counter such threats, the EU adopted the Regulation on Addressing the Dissemination of Terrorist Content Online in April 2021, which has been in force since June 7, 2022.

The EU has done even more by strengthening its anti-money laundering framework (2018) to prevent the financing of terrorism. In 2017, the Council introduced stricter regulations on the purchasing and possession of weapons and enhanced cooperation with non-EU countries to curb illegal arms trafficking. These and other counterterrorism measures have positively impacted security across the EU.

Conclusion

The EU's commitment to protect its citizens illustrates its continuous efforts to regulate migration management, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity. The EU as a very crucial institution is maintaining its core values as it adapts to the nowadays challenges by implementing newer, more effective policies, strengthening institutions and international cooperation. These measures are not only protecting the EU, but contribute in overall safety and global stability.



EU Economy Shaped by Its Organizations

The European Union, which started out as the **European Coal and Steel Community**, had forethought a systematic plan and set of goals to be accomplished over the years, such that it would empower and shape Europe's future. Its social unity and economical strength would be incomparable to any other governing body, present or past. The core and backbone of this plan were the many organizations that were built and founded along the way, laying down the groundwork and foundation for the achievement of the aforementioned goals. The organisations like the **Euratom** originally founded to regulate and monitor any use or trade of atomic energy or the European Council which would steer any political conflicts or conversations.

One of the most well-known EU economical features and idea that came into existence is the European common market officially called the **Single Market** and it is one of the most important achievements when it comes to European integration. Established on March 27, 1957, it allows goods, services, and capital to move freely between EU member states. By removing trade barriers and fostering cooperation, it has bolstered economies and increased the GDP of member states drastically, making doing business across Europe much easier. Statistics also show that from 1958 to 1968, the value of trade amongst EEC members almost quadrupled. It achieved this by implementing its core idea, which is to eliminate obstacles that slow down trade, such as tariffs, customs duties, and quotas. This makes it simpler, cheaper, and quicker for businesses to sell their products and services across borders. At the same time, consumers benefit from better prices, more choices, and strict EU-wide quality and safety regulations.

Similarly the **Treaty of Maastricht** signed on 7 February 1992 presented The EU to a concept which shook things up a bit. The introduction of the Common Euro made a huge impact socially and economically but also ended up setting up a huge debate between the citizens of the member states whether or not they would like to take the Euro as their currency or stay with their current currency. The main reason that citizens were against the implementation of the common euro was that they would total control over their economy and having external variables play a noticeable role on the inflation of the euro leading to risk of an unexpected rise in prices. Conversely people were enticed to agree to the common currency because it would make the whole of Europe more open to investors and it would make the migration of citizens between the member states effortless which would later play a key role in the EU future

The Next big EU feature that positively changed the work force and worked in synergy with the **EU Common Market** initiative intern the economy of the EU is the introduction of the Schengen Area .Implemented on the basis of the **Schengen Agreement** (26 March 1995) it allows EU citizens can live and work in any member state without restrictions, helping fill job shortages and ensuring that skills are shared across borders. The free movement of capital also means companies and individuals can invest anywhere in the EU without unnecessary restrictions, encouraging economic growth and innovation. Despite its many successes, the **Common Market** also faces challenges. Differences in national regulations and political disagreements sometimes slow down full integration, like the Brexit.

The EU also focuses on the environmental growth of its countries and has already set many goals regarding its future. The most well-known of these is the **Green Deal**, which has set its eyes on turning Europe **Carbon neutral by the year 2050**. To achieve this ambitious goal the group of has set a cluster of steps that would dramatically and positively effect the pollution side of the EU such as limiting and even outlawing the practise of burning fossil fuels to produce energy. This goal on face value looks great but might lead to severe financial consequences because some members of the EU rely on coal as their best and most developed source of energy. Their coal industry would be



demolished and be uprooted if the use of coal would be banned causing many people who joined the industry due to a lack of education.

Furthermore the plan is to also to put restrictions on the **agriculture industry** which would positively affect the quality of products available for the common consumer but would intern cause the rise of such basic products like eggs and bread which would allow companies that are not in the EU to sell their products for cheaper which would increase their profit Margin.

To sum up, the EU has conducted and gone through with many projects which have boosted the EU's economy by a lot, like the Common market , the Treaty of Maastricht that introduced the Euro or even the introduction of a open Europe in the form of the **Schengen Area**.

European Pillar of Social Rights: A Path Toward a Fairer and More Inclusive Europe

Introduction

With rising inequalities and evolving labor markets, the EU has prioritized social rights as a cornerstone of its policy framework. The European Union is home to some of the most equitable societies in the world, boasting high standards of working conditions and broad social protection systems. However, the recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have demonstrated the urgent need for stronger cooperation between European states and resilient welfare systems. As Europe faces future challenges like the green and digital transitions, demographic changes, and economic instability, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) has become more essential than ever in shaping a fair, inclusive, and resilient future. This essay will explore how the principles of the EPSR contribute to the social cohesion of the EU and the practical impact of its implementation.

President von der Leyen, in January 2021, stated: “As we overcome the pandemic, as we prepare necessary reforms and as we speed up the twin green and digital transitions, I believe it is time to also adapt the social rulebook. A rulebook which ensures solidarity between generations, rewards entrepreneurs who care for their employees, and focuses on jobs and social protection.”

The European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)

The EPSR, proclaimed in 2017 by the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission, comprises 20 principles structured around three key areas: equal opportunities and access to the labor market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. These principles guide Europe towards becoming a more socially fair and inclusive society by addressing societal, technological, and economic challenges. While some principles reaffirm existing rights, others set specific objectives to address new challenges, such as climate change, technological transformation, and post-pandemic recovery.

Further efforts are required to ensure that the 20 principles of the Pillar effectively contribute to fairer and more efficient labor markets and better welfare systems for all Europeans. The **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan** translates these principles into concrete actions, with headline targets to achieve by 2030. The EU's three core priorities are to create quality employment opportunities — including in the emerging green and digital sectors — ensure people acquire relevant skills for today's and tomorrow's job markets, and reduce the number of individuals at risk of poverty or social exclusion.



1. Employment

As outlined in the EU Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights, by 2030, at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 should be in employment. Achieving this target will be essential for advancing gender equality across EU member states. To ensure gender equality in the labor market, the EU aims to halve the gender employment gap compared to 2019. A key part of this strategy is increasing access to formal early childhood education and care (ECEC), allowing for better **work-life balance and supporting women's participation** in the labor market. A comprehensive and integrated approach is vital to addressing social needs at all stages of life, ensuring inclusive growth and social cohesion. Moreover, policies to create quality jobs must support sectors undergoing transition due to climate policies or digitalization, such as renewable energy, digital technologies, and climate-resilient industries.

2. Skills and Equality

In line with the **EU Action Plan**, by 2030, at least 60% of all adults should be participating in training every year. This is critical for ensuring that individuals can continuously adapt to evolving labor market demands. To make this a reality, the EU focuses on equipping adults with the foundational and transversal skills required for reskilling and upskilling later in life, particularly among disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, to foster a more inclusive and equitable society, the EU aims to ensure that **80% of individuals aged 16 to 74** possess **basic digital skills**. These skills are essential for participation in the labor market and society, particularly in a digitally transformed Europe. Policies also aim to reduce early school leaving and increase participation in upper secondary education, creating better educational pathways for future generations.

3. Social Protection and Inclusion

The EU Action Plan also sets a target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030. An integrated approach that addresses social needs at all stages of life is necessary to target the root causes of poverty and exclusion. The EU's commitment to strengthening social protection systems aims to protect vulnerable groups and create a safety net for those affected by economic crises, including the ongoing effects of COVID-19. Policies that support social inclusion must also consider the impact of environmental and economic changes. For instance, the **Just Transition Mechanism** and the **EU Social Climate Fund** provide targeted support to vulnerable workers in sectors affected by climate policy, such as fossil fuel industries, and assist low-income households in adjusting to green transitions.

Challenges and Implementation

Despite these ambitious goals, the practical implementation of the EPSR remains challenging due to the diversity of EU member states and the varying political, economic, and social contexts across Europe. Some member states may face difficulties in adopting the necessary reforms, particularly in the context of differing welfare systems, labor market conditions, and social protection schemes. There are also ethical concerns related to balancing economic growth with social equity, especially when addressing disparities in wealth and opportunities among EU citizens. Another challenge lies in monitoring and evaluating the impact of EPSR reforms. **The European Economic and Social Committee** (EESC) and Eurostat provide valuable data, but continuous collaboration between the EU institutions, member states, civil society, and social partners is essential for ensuring the successful implementation of the EPSR.

The Role of the EPSR in Advancing Social Policies



The **European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)** plays a critical role in supporting the European Parliament's decision-making process. By providing objective, independent, and authoritative research, the EPRS helps policymakers better understand complex political issues and the impact of proposed laws. The EPRS is instrumental in informing EU social policies, including the EPSR, by providing in-depth analysis of employment trends, social protection frameworks, and the broader geopolitical context influencing EU social policy.

Conclusion

As Europe navigates the challenges posed by the green and digital transitions, demographic changes, and persistent inequalities, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** is central to ensuring a fair, inclusive, and resilient social framework for the future. By investing in employment opportunities, digital skills, and social protection, the EU is advancing a more equitable society for its citizens. Building on its commitment to social resilience, the EU has introduced several initiatives, such as the NextGenerationEU fund, to promote social recovery and support vulnerable populations during economic disruptions. To complement these policy frameworks, the EPSR promotes fairness, equality, and inclusion across all levels of society, ensuring that no one is left behind. By prioritizing social rights, the EU is fostering a future where solidarity and opportunity are accessible to all, helping citizens navigate the complexities of an evolving global economy.

The Need for a Digital Transition: The Eu Strategy

In March 2021, the Digital Decade was defined. It paves the path for a new transformation of both society and economy with the guidance of the 2030 Digital Compass.

The importance of improving the European Union to fit our “digital age” has lately been recognized, especially by the European Commission. They developed a strategy that was presented with the creation of the Digital Compass.

The European Digital Compass

The four cardinal points that constitute the Digital Compass are: improving digital skills to expand common technological knowledge to 80% of the population, transforming business especially with technological uptake, developing secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, for example by ensuring connectivity for everyone, and digitalizing public services like healthcare.

These designs are large-scale goals that single member states might be unable to reach on their own.

The cooperation cycle

To achieve these goals, a cooperation cycle with the member states and European Commission was organized, along with the Commission's EU-level trajectories.

This mechanism guarantees a transparent monitoring system for each target, annual reports (the second one of which was published in July 2024), biennial “strategic roadmaps” in which each state displays its plans and actions for the Digital Decade, and finally, the institution of the European Digital Infrastructure Consortium to support the multi-country projects.

The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles



An addition to the original 2021 project was made in December 2022, when President Ursula von der Leyen signed the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, which states that the EU aims for a human-centred, sustainable, and inclusive digital transition that will allow citizens to participate in a safe online space

Even though there is a long road ahead to transform Europe into a state-of-the-art digital Union, in 2026 the European Commission will review the targets to discuss developments in fields like technology and economy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation

What is artificial intelligence and automation? Why are they important in today's digital world?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation are often confused with each other, but they have different meanings. Artificial Intelligence is a technology that does tasks, with human instructions. It helps machines make decisions, comprehend, think, learn, or generate innovative ideas. Automation is the use of technology to do difficult or simple and repetitive tasks that. Machines are set to follow clear scripts and finish tasks without changing or learning new things.

AI and automation in industry

Automation and AI are important in today's digital world because they help with personalization, for example, they present you content and services based on what you like. They also help with healthcare, because they help doctors quickly diagnose diseases like Alzheimer's using machine and deep learning.

AI and Automation can do tasks faster than humans ever could. Since AI can operate 24/7 it can reduce costs by saving employee time spent. This means that tasks are completed quicker. Automation can replace jobs, but it can also provide new opportunities for others. Simple tasks may be done by machines instead of people, but, for example, programming robots or designing them, are jobs that automation made higher in demand.

AI and automation in public services

Education: AI can be meaningful in education and learning, because of personalized learning that adjusts lessons to fit each student's needs. Teachers can also use Artificial Intelligence to oversee tasks like grading.

Smart cities: AI helps cities work better, because it can control things like traffic lights to make the roads more efficient.

Public transport: smart ticket systems and AI planning make travel easier. It helps buses or trains run on time and choose other routes in case of an accident. It can also help citizens pick the best route, using public transport.

The EU AI Act – new rules for Artificial Intelligence.

In August 2024, a new law named EU AI Act was introduced, it helps make artificial intelligence safe and fair for people.

It groups the systems of artificial intelligence into four risk groups:



Unacceptable AI is unauthorized (for instance: AI that controls people's behaviour)

High-risk AI must follow strict rules (AI in healthcare or education)

Limited risk AI must be transparent (chatbots must tell you that they are AI)

Minimal-risk AI does not have rules (for example: AI in videogames)

EU wants AI to be safe and good for the economy, this law can protect people but also supports innovation in Europe

AI Factories in the European Union

Artificial Intelligence factories will help develop AI in Europe. Factories aim to make AI more advanced, so European Union plans to build six AI Factories in the following countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Poland, and Slovenia

Artificial Intelligence and Automation have many benefits, like helping people work faster, improving education, and business. However, they also bring challenges, like changes in the job market. People have to learn new skills and use AI responsibly to make our future better.

What is The European Green Deal?

In 2019 the European Commission launched the “European Green Deal”, an ambitious plan that should lead Europe to be carbon-neutral by 2050.

The project has been described by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as a landmark response to climate change. She explained that the aim of the deal is to balance economic activity with environmental awareness, hence ensuring sustainable consumption and production.

The main objective of this plan is to reduce climate change, eliminate pollution, and set up a sustainable economic model in Europe in order to build a more prosperous society with less reliance on consumption and the depletion of natural resources.

The Deal also explores areas such as energy, transport, and agriculture, with the objective of making Europe a leading force in carbon-neutral technology and sustainable production.

It entails a set of policy initiatives, among which is the expected climate legislation that is to be implemented by the year 2023, and intends to increase the 2030 emission reduction targets from 40% to 50-55%.

The transition plan

The Just Transition Mechanism is implemented to ensure a seamless transition from fossil fuel consumption in areas with a predominantly fossil fuel-dependent consumption pattern.

In addition, the EU supports the introduction of carbon border tax, aiming to tax imported goods from countries with less stringent carbon laws, in order to obtain level playing conditions for EU industry and enhance global trade fairness.

The plan also involves yearly investments worth around 260 billion euros, which are instrumental in the quest to meet climate goals.



The obstacles

The project is expected to cause more friction among countries in Western Europe, whose focus is placed more strongly on the environment, against countries in Eastern Europe.

Countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and, Poland requested financial support in order to meet set targets, because of their dependence on carbon-emitting economies.

In addition, the policies are likely to spur rows with trade allies, especially the United States, whose former administration, Donald Trump, pulled out from the Paris climate accord.

Can the EU achieve a plastic-free economy?

What is a plastic-free economy?

Plastic-free is an expression meaning “free from Plastic” and a commitment to a more appropriate handling of this material.

Plastic-free is not Plastic-free world. Instead, it implies substituting or removing Plastic where Plastic is used for something disposable and are there alternatives on the market which are reusable, maintain hygiene, preservation, and integrity.

The reality of plastic and its effects. Nobel laureate in Chemistry in 1974, Paul John Flory, characterized plastics as the material that “nature forgot to invent” due to their lightness, strength, impermeability, durability, and economic viability.

Plastic’s attributes have made it an ideal substitute for many natural materials. The rising economic prosperity, which has brought with it new needs for sanitation and food preservation among others, has made Plastic the leading material produced during the 20th century.

The application of plastics in food packaging, for instance, has enabled the extension of food preservation lifespans and thus the elimination of food wastage. Equally, its use in healthcare and logistics sectors has assisted in enhancing sanitation practices and transport networks. In most industries, plastic continues to demonstrate its irreplaceability in the present context, primarily because other materials that provide the same functionality, particularly flexibility, hygiene, and cost-effectiveness, are not available. A clear illustration of this reality is observed in the medical device sector, where substitution with alternative materials is not viewed as a feasible alternative. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that most non-disposable plastics like office equipment and office furniture are of lesser environmental impact because they have an exceptionally long life and extensive applications. Therefore, the campaigns of Plastic-free primarily focus on single-use items.

How does the EU move towards a plastic-free?

The European Union is already midway through many plastic-free projects to vastly reduce plastic waste. Member states, guided by deals and plans, such as the European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan aim to enhance recycling and lessen both plastic and microplastic pollution. An example of a somewhat recent directive EU citizens experienced firsthand is the Single-Use Plastics Directive, which banned certain disposable products and promoted the use of alternatives.