

# Annual report on implementation of the common foreign and security policy, 2023

The EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) contributes to the Union's objectives of preserving peace, strengthening international security, promoting international cooperation, and developing and consolidating democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Parliament's Committee for Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted its annual report on the implementation of the CFSP on 28 November 2023. The report highlights the need for stronger, more ambitious and credible EU action on the world stage, in the face of the threat posed to the rules-based international order and peace by autocratic regimes and their alliances. Parliament is scheduled to hold a debate and vote on the report during its second February 2024 plenary session.

## Background

The key Treaty provisions on EU external action and the CFSP are enshrined in Title V (Articles 21–46) of the [Treaty on European Union](#). Decisions made under the CFSP hinge on unanimity in the European Council and the Council, making the policy intergovernmental and limiting the say of other EU institutions in this domain. The CFSP budget has been boosted under the 2021-2027 [multiannual financial framework](#): Heading 6 – Neighbourhood and the World – has been allocated €98.4 billion and Heading 5 – Security and Defence – €13.1 billion (in 2018 prices). The mid-term [MFF review](#) was eventually agreed by all 27 Member States at the European Council meeting on 1 February 2024. If Parliament gives its consent during the February II session, the amendments brought in under the review would reassign funding from other areas and prioritise investment in Ukraine, in defence, and in migration management.

In 2023, the EU strengthened its commitment to reinforcing its geopolitical power by taking more responsibility for its own security and, in the area of foreign and security policy, by pursuing a strategic course of action and increasing its capacity to act autonomously in a challenging international environment. While supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russia's war of aggression, at the European Council meeting on 14-15 December 2023 EU leaders [decided](#) to endorse [enlargement policy reforms](#) and to open EU accession negotiations with [Ukraine](#) and Moldova. They also decided to grant Georgia candidate country status, and reiterated their support for the European integration of the Western Balkans, stating that the EU would open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once it had achieved the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria. EU leaders remain concerned by the fact that [Türkiye](#) has not sufficiently reversed the deterioration of its standards of democracy and fundamental rights.

The war in Ukraine has exposed strong Russian political and economic [interference](#). Responding to this challenge, the EU [decided](#) to accelerate enlargement policy and investment in accession countries through the [growth plan for the Western Balkans](#), including €6 billion in grants and loans to accelerate economic convergence with the EU. In 2023, some progress was [achieved](#) in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue; on 18 March Kosovo and Serbia agreed on the implementation annex to the Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, which they had endorsed on 27 February.

Russia's aggression has highlighted the urgent need to deliver new defence systems and accelerate the delivery of missiles and ammunition to Ukraine, including through the [Act in support of ammunition production](#) (ASAP). Strengthening the industrial and technological base of the EU defence sector is of key importance in this regard, as is the transatlantic bond in the [EU Strategic Compass](#) and [NATO's Strategic Concept](#). During 2023, the EU also adopted proposals that are set out in the [Versailles Declaration](#) and the [joint communication on defence investment gaps](#), such as the 27 June [agreement](#) on new rules to boost common procurement ([EDIRPA](#)).



The off-budget [European Peace Facility](#) (EPF) has been enhanced since it became operational in July 2021. In response to Russia's war on Ukraine, the EU has used the EPF to mobilise funds for the delivery of lethal weaponry by the Member States to assist a partner country; a first in the EPF's history. The December 2023 European Council meeting invited the Council to step up work on the reform of the EPF and further increase its financing. This builds on a July 2023 [proposal](#) by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, for a €20 billion envelope to be set aside for Ukraine within the EPF.

The war in Ukraine has also accentuated global challenges, such as the rise of authoritarian states and cooperation among them, undermining the rules-based international order. China's assertive foreign policy could potentially destabilise the Indo-Pacific region and poses a new threat to its neighbours. The EU has responded with increased cooperation with its partners, and held the first ever [EU-ASEAN summit](#) in December 2022. In June 2023, the Commission adopted a new [agenda](#) for relations between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean. Together with its global partners, the EU is committed to implementing the [2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals](#) as well as the [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#). Regional tensions, such as the [Nagorno-Karabakh conflict](#), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in [Gaza](#), and several coups in African countries have also been sources of great concern.

## 2023 annual report on the implementation of the CFSP

The [report](#) drafted by David McAllister (EPP, Germany) was adopted by the AFET committee on 28 November 2023. The report outlines four major challenges that the EU must tackle in order to remain a strong international actor. First, the EU must address the **consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**, including economic uncertainty, food insecurity and high energy prices that have increased instability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. This has prompted the EU to give renewed priority to its enlargement policy, which has proven to be its most effective foreign policy instrument. The report welcomes the [enlargement package](#) presented by the Commission on 8 November 2023, and stresses the urgent need to deliver consistent messages and mark out a clear path towards European integration for candidate countries, as these are vital for keeping the pro-European perspective alive. Stability in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea is paramount for the security of Europe, including its energy security, as declared in the EU's Strategic Compass and by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Furthermore, the EU must **progressively adapt its structures, instruments, capabilities, funds and decision-making procedures** with a view to achieving a genuine European defence union, supporting qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council, operationalising a concept of strategic autonomy and mitigating the global threats emanating from climate change. Member States must adhere to the principles of the Treaties, not least [Articles 24](#) and [42\(7\)](#) of the Treaty on European Union and [Article 222](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which call for the Member States to support the European Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity.

Emphasising that multilateral forums, in particular the UN and its agencies, should be the EU's cooperation format of choice, **reinforcing and defending rules-based multilateralism** remains a priority. In the area of human rights, the report highlights the increasing phenomenon of transnational threats against human rights defenders and political activists. The impacts of climate change are also [undermining global peace and security](#) while accentuating existing vulnerabilities. The report calls for stronger engagement in the field of global climate diplomacy, in particular through increased bilateral and multilateral engagement within the [Paris Agreement](#). Finally, the report calls on the Commission to move effectively and swiftly to use the [Global Gateway](#) as a sustainable alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, and as an instrument to increase the EU's presence and profile worldwide.

Lastly, the report emphasises the urgent need for the EU to **asserting its interests by developing robust strategic alliances and like-minded partnerships**. The report notes the complementarity of EU and NATO efforts to uphold international peace and security; also underlining that NATO remains the cornerstone of European security. The report recognises that several actors in the Global South are becoming more assertive international actors, but that the term 'Global South' projects a degree of unity onto what is in reality a very diverse group of actors characterised by diverging aspirations and alignments.

Own-initiative report: [2023/2117\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: David McAllister (EPP, Germany).