

European Peace Facility

Investing in international stability and security

SUMMARY

A key objective of the EU's external action is to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. In the context of its common foreign and security policy (CFSP), the Union offers assistance to third states, international organisations and regional organisations engaged in peace support operations. Moreover, the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP) – part of the CFSP – provides the Union with its own operational capacity, allowing it to deploy civilian and military assets (provided by the EU Member States) in third countries. While many of the operations and missions the EU supports have military and defence implications, the EU cannot finance activities with military or defence implications from the EU budget. EU Member States therefore have mechanisms to fund expenditure with military and defence implications directly from national budgets.

The European Peace Facility (EPF) is a new off-budget fund with a financial ceiling of €5.692 billion financed by Member State contributions. The EPF, which will be operational by 1 July 2021, will make it easier for Member States to share the costs of EU military operations. It will also help the EU to support military peace-support operations conducted by third countries and regional organisations, anywhere in the world. Controversially, for the first time, the EU will be able to provide the armed forces of partner countries with infrastructure and equipment, including weapons. Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have warned that the new facility risks fuelling conflict and human rights abuses around the world. They warn that this could exacerbate violence and arms proliferation, and fuel the very dynamics the EPF seeks to address. By contrast, practitioners believe the facility will ensure that the EU is taken seriously as a security provider and is able to maintain its influence in conflict areas. The Council has called for swift operationalisation of the EPF and has invited Member States and the High Representative to present proposals for assistance measures.



IN THIS BRIEFING

- Establishing the European Peace Facility
- Common costs – Replacing Athena
- Assistance measures
- Contributions to African-led peace support operations
- Concerns about military assistance

Establishing the European Peace Facility

In the face of increasing global instability, the EU is committed to strengthening its ability to act as a global security provider. On 13 June 2018, former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini presented a [proposal](#) for a European Peace Facility (EPF), a new instrument designed to allow the financing of all CFSP external action with military and defence implications. On 18 December 2020, EU Member States reached a [political agreement](#) to set up the facility. On 22 March 2021, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted [Council Decision 2021/509 establishing the EPF](#), which came into force on the same day (the EPF Decision). The EPF should be operational by 1 July 2021. Alongside the EPF Decision, the Council has adopted (but not published) 'General guidelines and proposed priorities for assistance measures during the inception period (2021-2023)', and the 'EPF safeguards paper', which sets out the basic principles for compliance and control the EU will apply when providing military technology and equipment in the framework of the EPF. The safeguards paper, which is also referred to as the [integrated methodological framework](#) for assistance measures under the EPF, is a confidential document that lists possible concerns to be addressed when assisting partners in the military and defence areas.

Scope of the European Peace Facility

The EPF will allow Member States to finance interventions under the CFSP that cannot be charged to the Union budget, namely:

- the *common costs* of CSDP missions having military or defence implications (in accordance with Articles [42\(4\)](#) and [43\(2\)](#) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU);
- *assistance measures* for third states, or regional or international (e.g. United Nations) organisations, adopted in accordance with [Articles 28](#) and [30 TEU](#), either
- strengthening military and defence capacities, (including through the provision of arms); or
- supporting the military aspects of peace support operations.

The aim of the facility is, essentially, to work around restrictive rules on the use of the EU budget. The EU budget cannot be used to finance expenditure with military or defence implications. Pursuant to Article [41\(2\)](#) TEU, operating expenditure arising from the implementation of the CFSP can only be charged to the Union budget if it does not result from operations having military or defence implications. However, Article 41(2) TEU also provides that such expenditure can be charged to the Member States. This allows Member States to create off-budget funds to fund activities that are carried out jointly, in the EU's name.

The facility will be used to contribute to the funding of EU military operations under the CSDP and to support military aspects of peace support operations led by a regional (e.g. African Union), or international organisation (e.g. the United Nations, NATO) or by third states. These elements of the new facility are not controversial, since the EPF merely replaces two off-budget mechanisms that EU Member States created in 2003 and 2004 to fund operations with military and defence implications, namely the Athena mechanism and the African Peace Facility (APF). Apart from an increase in the budget, the only material difference here is that the EPF has a larger geographic scope than the APF and is no longer restricted to the African continent, which means that the EU can henceforth contribute to peace support operations in other parts of the world. EU officials [cite](#) the EU neighbourhood as a top priority for EPF assistance measures.

However, the EPF has a third objective, namely to finance 'actions to strengthen the capacities of third states and regional and international organisations relating to military and defence matters'. Essentially, this puts the EU in a position, for the first time in its history, to provide the armed forces and security forces of a third state with infrastructure, equipment or military assistance, including weapons and ammunition. This has generated a lot of controversy. Several Member States have

expressed reservations about this part of the EPF. Civil society organisations have expressed concern that providing arms to conflict zones risks fuelling conflict.

The facility will run alongside the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the 2021-2027 period. The EPF and the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#) (Global Europe Instrument, budget €70.8 billion in 2018 prices), which is part of the 2021-2027 MFF, will together finance the bulk of EU external action in the field of peace and security cooperation, together with the CFSP budget (€2.4 billion). The Council has [called](#) for close and regular coordination between the Council, the EEAS and the Commission, to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication or gaps, in particular between the Global Europe Instrument and the EPF.

Financing the European Peace Facility

The facility has a financial ceiling of €5.692 billion in current prices (€5 billion in 2018 prices) for the 2021-2027 period – half the €10 billion budget proposed originally. A cap on funds that can be made available to the facility each year will increase gradually, from €420 million in 2021, to €1.132 billion in 2027. By comparison, the EU has allocated €3.5 billion to the APF since it was set up in 2003.

Figure 1 – Caps on annual appropriations, in € million, current prices

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Amount	420	540	720	900	980	1000	1132

The EPF will be financed by yearly contributions from all EU Member States (except Denmark, whose opt-out exempts it from participating in the elaboration and the implementation of decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications and from contributing to their financing). Contributions will be determined on the basis of a [gross national income](#) (GNI) distribution key.

Opting out

Member States can decide not to contribute to the financing of CSDP military operations or assistance measures under the EPF. [Procedurally](#), a Member State that abstains in a vote on a Council decision on an operation and makes a formal declaration to that effect is not obliged to contribute to the financing of that operation. By analogy, the EPF provides that, where a Member State has abstained on that basis from the adoption of an assistance measure and made a formal declaration to that effect because the measure allows for the supply of military equipment, or platforms, designed to deliver lethal force, that Member State will not contribute to the costs of the measure. Instead, that Member State will contribute an additional amount to assistance measures other than those concerning such equipment or platforms. This substitute payment will ensure that the overall contribution of that Member State to assistance measures will be in accordance with its share of GNI in the total GNI aggregate of the Member States. However, if one or several Member States decide not to contribute to an assistance measure, the overall funds potentially available for the supply of equipment or platforms designed to deliver lethal force will decrease.

Strategic priorities and strategic orientation

Operations and assistance measures under the EPF must be in line with the strategic priorities of the EU as set out in the Global Strategy for EU foreign policy. These include strengthening security and defence; investing in the resilience of states and societies to the EU's south and east; developing an integrated approach to conflict and crises; promoting and supporting cooperative regional orders; and reinforcing global governance based on international law. Within that framework, the [Political and Security Committee](#) (PSC) will provide strategic orientation for operations and assistance measures, and to this end, hold a debate twice a year. The HR/VP must provide twice-yearly reports on implementation of assistance measures under the EPF, to support that debate. The strategic orientation is to take into account the international situation, the relevant Council conclusions, the

Union's external action under the financial instruments applicable, and relevant reports from the HR/VP, the administrators and the operation commanders.

Decision to finance an operation or assistance measure

The proposal to finance a measure under the EPF can be made by the HR/VP or a Member State. It must mention appropriate safeguards, controls, mitigating and flanking elements and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. Before any operation or assistance measure is financed under the facility, Council must adopt a basic legal act in the form of a decision establishing the operation or assistance measure. The one exception is the financing of common costs during the preparatory phase of an operation, expenditure necessary to wind up an operation, or a situation where Council has authorised the funding of preparatory measures for an assistance measure or of urgent measures pending a decision on an assistance measure. As with all decisions under CFSP, a decision to finance an operation or an assistance measure under the EPF requires unanimity.

Governance of the European Peace Facility

The EPF Decision grants the facility legal capacity, as was the case for its predecessor, the Athena mechanism. This allows the facility to hold bank accounts, acquire and dispose of assets, supplies and services and enter into contracts. It can also employ staff, a feature that the Athena mechanism did not have. The EPF will operate under the authority and direction of a facility committee, composed of representatives of each Member State, chaired by a representative of the presidency of the Council. The facility committee will be responsible for adopting the facility's annual budget, and the implementing rules governing expenditure under the facility. The committee met for the first time on 21 April 2021. Mirroring the administrative structure of the Athena mechanism, the EPF will be managed by an administrator for operations, the operation commander of each operation, an administrator for assistance measures and an accounting officer. As far as possible, staff will be recruited from existing EU institutions, bodies and agencies.

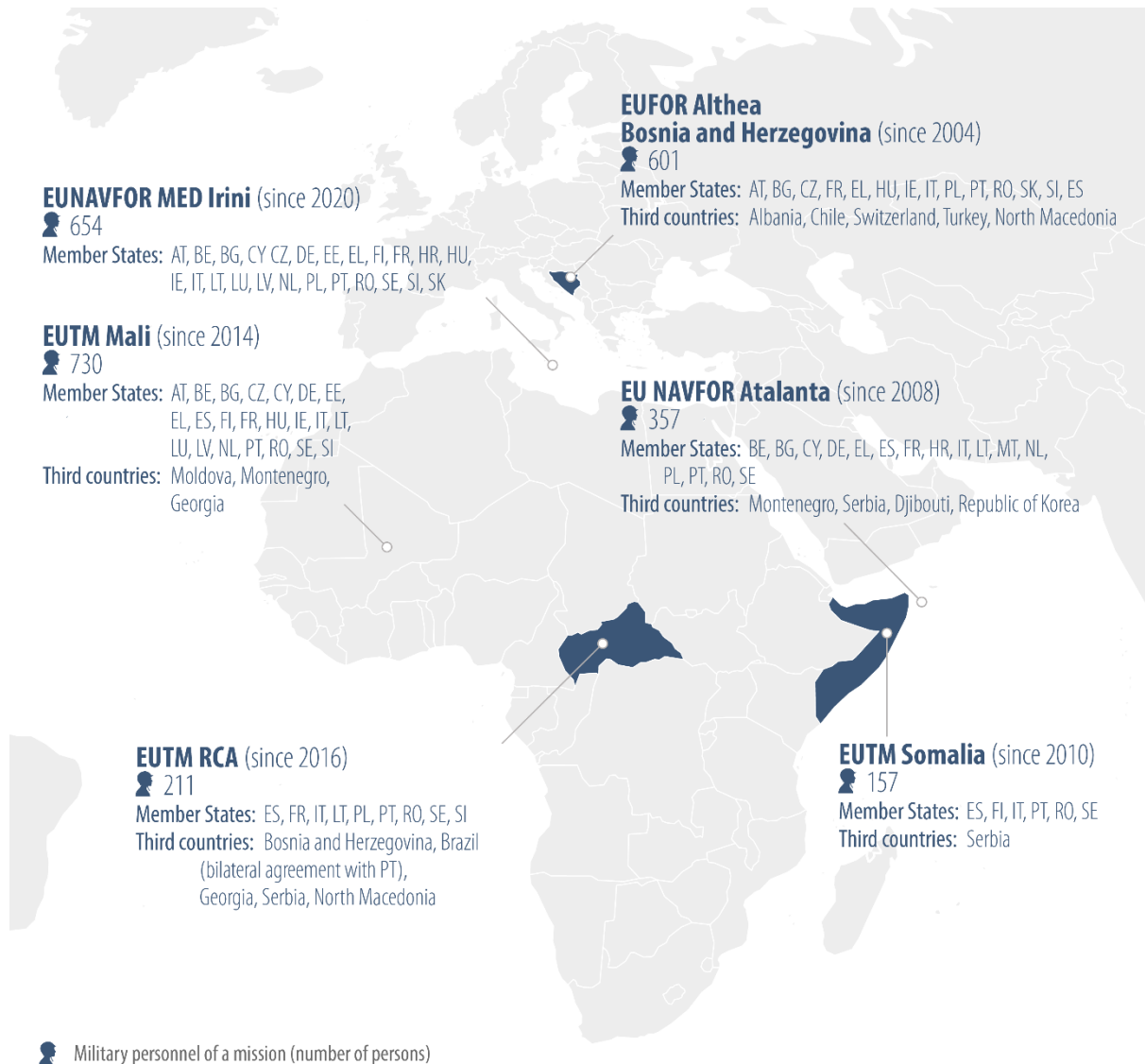
Common costs – Replacing Athena

The cost of military operations cannot be charged to the EU budget. Therefore, a large percentage of the costs associated with [CSDP military operations](#) (i.e. expenditure for troops, arms, equipment and deployment) has to be borne by Member States (and third countries) participating in an operation, in accordance with the principle that 'costs lie where they fall'. This has been [described](#) as a 'substantial disincentive for Member States to contribute their assets' to CSDP operations, unless they have important national interests at stake. In 2004, EU Member States decided to make provisions to share at least some of the costs of military operations among all Member States, including those that do not contribute to the staffing of an operation. On [1 March 2004](#), the Council set up [Athena](#), a mechanism to administer the financing of the common costs of operations, on the basis of Article 41(2) TEU. Most recently, [Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2015/528](#) of 27 March 2015 provided the legal basis for financing the common costs of CSDP operations. All EU Member States, except Denmark, have contributed to financing EU military operations through Athena. Through the Athena mechanism, the EU has been financing the 'common costs' of CSDP operations, covering 5 % to 10 % of the total cost of an operation. Common costs include, inter alia, the financing of exploratory missions, the setting up and running of headquarters, barracks and lodging, transport to and from the theatre of operations, medical services and facilities, and the acquisition of information. The EU currently deploys six military CSDP operations in Europe, Africa and Asia.

Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of 22 March 2021 establishing the EPF repealed [Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2015/528](#). The EPF will thus replace the Athena mechanism, albeit without changing the manner in which common costs will be shared or administered. The EPF decision thus ensures continuity of the arrangements under [Council Decision 2015/528](#). There are only [minor changes](#) compared to the Athena mechanism; most importantly, the EPF can also contribute to the financing of EU battlegroups (Annex IV.3). The EPF has the advantage that it will make EU funding for CSDP

military operations available on a more permanent basis, which the EU [hopes](#) will improve programming, allow for more rapid deployment, and improve both flexibility and predictability. The Secretary-General of the Council is responsible for appointing the administrator for CSDP operations and providing their administrative staff. By contrast, the HR/VP will be responsible for the implementation of assistance measures, and will appoint an administrator for assistance measures.

Figure 1 – Military CSDP operations



Source: EPRS, based on data provided by the European External Action Service, May 2021.

Assistance measures

By financing assistance measures, the EU is pursuing four specific objectives (Article 56):

- strengthening the military and defence capacities of third States and of regional and international organisations;
- contributing to the military response of third States and of regional and international organisations in a crisis situation;
- contributing to conflict prevention, stabilisation and peace consolidation, including in the context of operations, by means of training, advice and mentoring in the security sector, as well as in other pre-conflict or post-conflict situations; and

- supporting cooperation in the area of security and defence between the Union and a third state or a regional or international organisation.

Assistance measures may consist of financial, technical or material support; they can take the form of a specific measure or of a general programme for support with a given geographical or thematic focus. Prospective beneficiaries have to submit a request for an assistance measure. If Council approves the measure, it will formally adopt a Council decision to establish the assistance measure, which will specify its beneficiary, its objectives, its scope, its duration, the nature of the assistance to be provided, and a financial reference amount to cover the estimated costs of its implementation. The decision will also set out the controls and guarantees required from the beneficiary or, where applicable, the implementing actors, as well as the necessary provisions on monitoring and evaluation. The EPF Decision will also lay down special rules allowing Council to authorise funds for urgent measures and for the preparation of a possible assistance measure.

Assistance measures must be consistent with the policies and objectives of the Union's external action aimed at building peace, preventing conflicts and strengthening international security. They must also comply with Union law and with Union policies and strategies, in particular the [EU strategic framework to support security sector reform](#), the [integrated approach to external conflicts and crises](#), and the [EU strategic approach to women, peace and security](#). Assistance measures must respect the obligations of the Union and its Member States under international law, in particular international human rights law and humanitarian law. Finally, they must not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of a Member State and must not contravene the security and defence interests of the Union and its Member States.

Assessment of the security context

Together with a proposal for an assistance measure, the HR/VP must submit an assessment, which must include a conflict sensitivity and context analysis, and a risk and impact assessment. As far as possible, the assessment should take account of the experience acquired by representatives of the EU in the field, including EU delegations and existing CSDP missions and operations.

Contributions to African-led peace support operations

Responding to a request by the [African Union](#) (AU), the EU [setup](#) a [financing scheme](#) in 2003 to fund peace support and peacekeeping operations conducted under the authority of the AU, namely the African Peace Facility (APF). The aim was to allow the AU to play a larger role in promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. The legal framework for the APF was the [Cotonou Agreement](#) between the EU and 78 countries from the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP), which has been [extended](#) until [30 November 2021](#). The [European Development Fund](#) (EDF) has been the main EU instrument for funding the Cotonou Agreement; it has also been the main source of funding for the APF. Since its inception in 1959, the EDF has been intergovernmental in nature and remained outside the EU budget, funded by direct contributions from EU Member States. Consequently, it has been possible to use APF funds to finance activities with military and defence implications that the EU budget could not support. Negotiations on the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework led to the integration of the EDF into the Global Europe Instrument, which is subject to the general prohibition to fund activities with military and defence implications from the EU budget.

The APF has funded three [types of activities](#) taking place under the umbrella of the AU, namely African-led peace support operations (PSOs), reinforcing the [African peace and security architecture](#) (APSA), and contributing to AU-led conflict prevention initiatives under the early response mechanism. Strengthening the APSA was intended to enhance the ability of the African Union to oversee the deployment and the command and control of PSOs. However, the bulk of APF funding between 2004 and 2019 went towards PSOs (€2.68 billion or 93 % of total contracts). Peace support operations aim to provide public security through a range of military and civilian tasks, including

peacekeeping, maintaining public order, policing, infrastructure reconstruction, political dialogue and national reconciliation. Since 2004, 16 African-led PSOs have been deployed in 19 different countries, often in a very hostile environment and a sensitive political context; nine PSOs are currently ongoing. APF funds have paid for transport of troops, providing infrastructure, soldiers' living expenses, salaries of civilian support staff, and medical care. APF funds have not been used to support the military directly with ammunition, arms or specific military equipment, spare parts for arms and military equipment, salaries or military training for soldiers.

African-led PSOs with a *military component* will henceforth be financed through the EPF; by contrast, civilian components will be financed from the EU budget. To ensure a smooth transition from APF to EPF, Member States added a further [€113 million](#) to the APF in [October 2020](#), to guarantee funding for ongoing PSOs until 30 June 2021. The EU must agree on a [multiannual programme](#) for peace and security cooperation with the AU by 1 July 2021, to ensure the continuation of activities under the EPF. The following transition arrangements are already taking shape:

- The African Union's PSO in Somalia, [AMISOM](#), which has received the largest share of overall APF funding (€1.94 billion between 2007 and 2019), has helped to create the conditions for state-building in **Somalia**. Funding for the military component of AMISOM will come from the EPF as of 1 July 2021. The APF will continue to fund the civilian component of AMISOM until the end of 2021, after which the funding will come from the EU budget. As of 1 July 2021, support for the Somali National Army fighting alongside AMISOM will also be provided through the EPF.
- As of 1 July 2021, the EPF will also be used to support the military component of the [G5 Sahel Joint Force](#), an intergovernmental cooperation framework between **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger** seeking to coordinate its members' development and security policies in response to growing regional instability due to the proliferation of armed groups. Support for certain civilian components of the G5 Sahel Joint Force will henceforth come from the Global Europe Instrument.
- As of 1 July 2021, financing for the peace support operation in **Gambia** ([ECOMIG](#)), which has supported a peaceful democratic transition, following presidential elections in 2017, will also come from the EPF.
- APF funds will continue to contribute to the ceasefire-monitoring mission in **South Sudan** ([CTSAMVM](#)), until 31 October 2021, after which financing of this civilian operation will come from the Global Europe Instrument.
- The Multi-National Joint Task Force ([MNJTF](#)) of the **Lake Chad Basin** Commission, which has focused on fighting Boko Haram, has secured financing from residual APF funds until 1 January 2022, after which it will receive funding through the EPF.
- The African Union Military Observers Mission to the **Central African Republic** ([MOUACA](#)) and the **Joint Special Security Units** (USMS) in CAR will continue to receive funding through the APF until 31 July 2022.

APF funding for the human rights monitoring mission in Burundi ([AU HROs/MES](#)) ended in April 2021 without any arrangement for future EU funding. The mission may be wound up. It is likely that funding for the capacity building of the [APSA](#), and the early response mechanism will eventually come from the Global Europe Instrument. However, in the [meantime](#), €40 million from the APF is available to fund these activities until 2024.

In addition to funding peace and security cooperation with the AU, the EPF will allow the EU to contribute to the funding of other African-led peace support operations and military coalitions, even when they are not operating under an AU

The EU signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) on Peace, Security and Governance with the African Union in 2018 and the AU remains a [major interlocutor](#) for the EU when it comes to promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. At the same time, a 2018 European Court of Auditors [report](#) found that EU support for the development of the African Union's APSA 'has had a poor effect' and 'needed refocusing'. The report found that the APSA had become too dependent on donor funding and that EU financial support had largely been used to cover basic operational costs – mainly salaries – rather than for [capacity-building](#).

mandate. This could include, for example, the [Takuba](#) task force in the Sahel, a European military task force set up to complement the French [Barkhane operation](#). The EPF will also allow the EU to provide bilateral financial support for military training and equipment for African armies. Finally, the EPF is not limited geographically to funding peace and security operations in Africa.

Figure 2 – African-led peace support operations with ongoing APF/future EPF funding



Source: EPRS, based partially on [APF Annual Report 2019](#).

From assistance to the military to military assistance

Recognising the potential contribution that more effective and professional armies can make to civilian control over the military, better governance and human security, the EU has increasingly given itself the means to provide foreign armies with assistance. The adoption of the EPF is a key step in the EU's efforts to enhance the effectiveness of its cooperation with military actors.

Military training missions under the CSDP

The EU's peace and security assistance comes in different forms and includes EU advice and training for the security actors of partner countries and organisations, including military organisations. EU training missions (EUTMs) under the [CSDP](#) are an integral part of this approach. There are currently three military training missions deployed: in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Somalia. The EU is also [preparing](#) to send an EUTM to [Mozambique](#), following Mozambique's request for EU assistance to respond to a [surge in armed violence](#) attributed to extremist Islamic groups in the north of the country.

[EUTM Mali](#) was [launched](#) in 2013 to help rebuild the Malian army after it was [heavily defeated](#) by separatists and armed Islamist groups. EUTM Mali's main objective has been to enhance the capabilities of Mali's armed forces to restore state authority throughout the country. The mission comprises 730 military personnel from 22 Member States and 3 partner countries. As of [June 2019](#), EUTM Mali had trained nearly 14 000 soldiers, or nearly two-thirds of the Malian armed forces. In March 2020, the [Council](#) extended EUTM Mali's mandate by another four years, and decided to gradually increase staffing to 1 200. Since [May 2018](#), EUTM Mali's mandate has also included offering advice and training to the [G5 Sahel Joint Force](#) and the national armed forces of other G5 Sahel countries – [notably](#) Niger and Burkina Faso. As part of the [EU strategy for the Sahel](#), EUTM Mali is also tasked with closely coordinating and cooperating with the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)), the French military operation in the Sahel – [Barkhane](#) – and UN operations such as the UN mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)). [EUCAP Sahel Mali](#), the civilian CSDP missions deployed to Mali, provides training to the police, the National Guard and the [gendarmerie](#).

The [EU Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic](#) (EUTM RCA) was [launched](#) in July 2016 to help the national army, the [Forces Armées Centrafricaines](#) (FACA) to become a broadly representative, professional army under democratic control. The training mission's specific tasks included providing the armed forces with operational training. Following strategic reviews in 2018 and 2020, the mission has twice been extended for a further two years [most recently](#) until 19 September 2022. To date, the 221-strong mission, involving military personnel from nine Member States and five partner countries, has trained four deployable battalions and one amphibious battalion. The EU has [for years](#) worked closely with the CAR government, the EU Member States, the UN, the AU, regional actors and technical and financial partners to [stabilise the conflict](#) in the CAR. Moreover, in 2020, the EU added a CSDP civilian advisory mission in the Central African Republic ([EUAM RCA](#)), charged with supporting the reform of the internal security forces.

[EUTM Somalia](#) was [launched](#) in April 2010 to boost the Somali security forces through the provision of specific military training. Its mandate has been extended several times, most [recently](#) until December 2022. Among [other tasks](#), the 157-strong mission comprising military personnel from six Member States and one partner country, has trained light infantry companies and combat engineer platoons, and trained Somali National Army trainers and instructors. The EU currently has three CSDP missions deployed to [Somalia](#), namely the EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA ([EU NAVFOR](#)), the EU civilian maritime security capacity-building mission ([EUCAP Somalia](#)) and EUTM Somalia.

Supporting security forces through the African Peace Facility

Within the framework of the APF, the EU has been engaged in enhanced cooperation with defence sectors and armed forces in African countries since 2004. The APF has a capacity-building component, through which the EU aims to strengthen the regional institutions behind the PSOs, including the African Union and the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and regional mechanisms (RMs). This was designed to have a positive 'knock-on effect' on the planning and conduct of PSOs. In addition, capacity building has been part of the support the EU offers directly to PSOs. For example, within the framework of its support to AMISOM, the EU has supported the Somali Security Forces with a contribution of €20 million from the APF. Funds were used to provide non-lethal basic equipment to four battalions of the Somali National Army engaged in operations alongside AMISOM.

Capacity-building of military actors

In 2017 – for the first time – the EU equipped itself to use its budget to finance capacity-building of military actors, by adopting an [amendment](#) to the 2014 [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#). This followed recognition of the key role that the military can play in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development and in ensuring human security. The '[capacity building in support of security and development](#)' programme was endowed with an initial budget of €100 million and has allowed the EU to finance training, mentoring and advice for armed forces,

provide some equipment, and contribute to infrastructure improvements. However, the amendment stated clearly that assistance could not take the form of recurrent military expenditure (such as salaries); the procurement of arms and ammunition; or training solely designed to contribute to the fighting capacity of the armed forces. The 'capacity-building for security and development' activities under the ICSP have been built into the Global Europe Instrument under the 'capacity-building assistance to military actors in support of development and security for development' provision.

Military assistance under the European Peace Facility

The EPF will for [the first time](#) put the EU in a position to provide the armed forces of a third state – or a military PSO led by a group of third states, a regional or an international organisation – with infrastructure, equipment or military assistance, including lethal weapons. In the first instance, this will be particularly relevant in Africa, where EU efforts to strengthen the security forces of third countries through training have been hampered by the lack of equipment with which such national forces could be trained or operationalised. Crucially, even once trained, national forces often lack the equipment to be effective, including [arms and ammunition](#). This has at times created a 'security vacuum' that others have filled.

[Experts](#) cite the example of the CAR, where the EU has, for several years, provided training for the national army as part of the EUTM RCA. However, the CAR national army lacked even basic weapons and ammunition, which the EU was not able to supply. In January 2018, Russia stepped in to supply light weapons to the CAR government, giving Moscow 'substantial influence over the government ... with limited resources'. Speaking to the [Security and Defence Subcommittee](#) of the European Parliament in November 2020, [Rear Admiral Hervé Bléjean](#), Director-General of the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and Operations Commander, and Head of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), explained that the EU had to be in a position to provide both non-lethal and lethal equipment if it wished to maintain credibility and safeguard its role as an actor in security and defence sector reform. He added that this was the only way to ensure that the EU could continue to present itself as a reliable and predictable partner.

The situation is similar in Mali: soldiers are trained with equipment that the Malian army does not own and is not likely to acquire in the future. EU officials are [reported](#) to be worried about a potential loss of credibility of the EU and the EUTM in the eyes of their Malian partners. They are also reported to be concerned about growing competition from countries, such as Turkey, Russia or China, that are willing to ramp up security-sector assistance in Mali by also providing arms.

Hence, one of the major advantages of the EPF will be the ability to provide assistance to complement the objectives of CSDP military operations, to enhance the effectiveness of these operations on the ground. In particular, as a priority, the EPF will allow the EU to deliver equipment and services to operationalise units trained by EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia, and this will be one of the [first priorities](#) under the new facility.

Moreover, there are expectations that national armies that are better equipped will be less reliant on EU support in the future. An example is Somalia, where the EU provides funding for both AMISOM and the EUTM. The EPF puts the EU in the position to finance military equipment, training and infrastructure for the Somali National Army directly. If the national army takes over operations from AMISOM, the EU will be able to reduce its support for the operation. Similarly, if Malian, Burkinabe and Nigerien forces were better equipped, EU (in particular French) troops could potentially reduce their engagement.

Safeguards

The EPF Decision puts in place special safeguards for assistance measures that involve the supply of arms to third parties. Moreover, the Council has adopted – but not made public – an integrated methodological framework for assistance measures under the EPF, which sets out guiding principles and possible concerns to be addressed when assisting partners in the military and defence areas.

The EPF Decision stipulates that any assistance measures involving the export or transfer of items on the EU Common Military List – which covers 22 categories of arms, munitions, military equipment and technologies – has to respect the principles laid down in [Common Position 2008/944/CFSP](#). Council adopted the common position in 2008, to lay down common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment. The aim of the common position is to enhance the convergence of EU Member States' arms-export-control policies, since arms exports remain ultimately a matter of national competence in accordance with Article 346 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. The common position incorporates eight common criteria (minimum standards) to be taken into account by Member States when assessing export licence applications for military technology and equipment.

The [integrated methodological framework](#) lays down the procedures that Council has put in place to ensure that the granting of any military equipment is subject to stringent controls at all stages. Accordingly, consideration of any assistance measure will commence with an overall assessment and conflict analysis, and an assessment of the impact of the assistance measure envisaged on the situation on the ground. In direct dialogue with the beneficiary of the assistance measure, Council will set out conditions for the granting of the assistance, which will subsequently be included in the Council decision approving the measure. The beneficiary will have to commit to respect relevant international laws and international standards (including, for example, the [Arms Trade Treaty](#)), to use the assistance in an appropriate manner and not to transfer the assistance to another user than the one agreed by Council. Equipment may be marked to ensure traceability. The beneficiary will also have to agree for the EEAS to monitor and control use of any equipment paid for by the EU, possibly for the duration of the entire life cycle of the equipment. Failure by the beneficiary to respect commitments on use of the assistance measure will lead to suspension or termination of the measure. CSDP missions and operations, as well as EU delegations, will play a special role in evaluating assistance measures and monitoring whether beneficiaries respect commitments. Assistance measures for the supply of military equipment, or platforms, designed to deliver lethal force are standalone measures that do not include other items or forms of support. Conversely, assistance measures taking the form of a general programme cannot include the provision of equipment or platforms designed to deliver lethal force.

Concerns about military assistance

NGOs and [commentators](#) have been very critical of the EPF and the possibility it creates to send military aid and equipment to foreign conflicts. These have included several NGOs from or active in the countries in which CSDP military missions are deployed. A [joint civil society statement](#) signed by 40 NGOs from the EU and countries of deployment released on 20 November 2020 accused the Member States of trying to circumvent the EU Treaties, which prohibit use of the EU budget for the provision of arms, and of pushing the EU towards a more militarised approach to foreign policy. Signatories maintain that the facility risks fuelling violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, while increasing the risk of harm to civilians overall. The signatories claim that sending military and security assistance to fragile and conflict-ridden areas has in the past contributed to the escalation of conflict. They point to Afghanistan, Somalia and the Sahel, and claim that international interventions (directly or through support relationships with local forces) to counter terrorism and neutralise armed groups have [fuelled further violence](#), strengthened repressive regimes, enabled armed groups to grow and thrive, failed to protect civilians and increased community tensions. NGOs claim that existing [EU rules on arms transfers](#) will not be enough to ensure that arms transfers under the EPF will comply with international law. Signatories point to 'systematic failures in the implementation of EU rules, resulting in frequent transfers of European arms to repressive regimes'. The danger inherent in providing training and assistance to foreign armies was brought to light by the August 2020 coup in Mali. The Malian army had received extensive training and support from the EU over the course of the seven years preceding the coup, through EUTM Mali. Some of the leading figures of the coup d'état are known to have received training in Germany and France. Following the August 2020 coup, EUTM Mali as well as the civilian

CSDP mission training for the Malian police, [EUCAP Sahel Mali](#), had to be [frozen](#) temporarily, but both resumed their activities a [few months later](#). Following a second coup in [May 2021](#), training for the military is ongoing.

The Council consulted the European Parliament on the EPF, and the Parliament adopted its [recommendation](#) on 28 March 2019, with 328 [votes](#) in favour, 80 against, and 67 abstentions. MEPs welcomed the facility and recalled that Parliament had repeatedly called for additional instruments and tools to ensure that the EU could play its role as a global actor in the field of security, including an expansion of the Athena mechanism for the common funding of CSDP missions and operations. MEPs noted that the EU had always prided itself on its soft power, but that the evolving reality required the EU to develop and strengthen its military capabilities. MEPs noted that the military could play a key role in providing security and peace, especially in countries where civilian authorities were unable to fulfil their tasks in the light of the security situation. MEPs concluded that the facility allowed for stronger engagement of the EU towards partner countries and that was likely to increase the effectiveness of EU external action, allowing the EU to become a relevant stability and security provider in the future. In their recommendation, MEPs called for proper parliamentary control over the EPF. They expect Council and the High Representative to brief them regularly on decisions taken under the EPF and on the facility's implementation, and to take account of Parliament's views when preparing proposals for multi-year action programmes. The European Parliament has no formal oversight role over the EPF, since this was established outside the EU budget. However, Parliamentary committees regularly organise hearings on the EPF, most recently on [14 April 2021](#).

FURTHER READING

International Crisis Group, [How to Spend It: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security](#), Africa Report No 297, 14 January 2021.

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