

Who decides?

Key Decision-Making Bodies in European Defence and Security

European defence and security decisions are made through a **shared institutional framework** involving national governments and EU institutions.

The **European Council** and **Council of the EU** are the main decision-making bodies, with input from the **European Commission** and the **European External Action Service**.

The **European Parliament** influences decisions through oversight and budgetary control, while **PESCO** enables deeper cooperation among willing member states. Coordination with **NATO** is also essential for collective defence.

Ultimately, EU defence and security policy involves a complex balance between **national sovereignty** and **EU-level cooperation**.



1. European Council



Who?



>>> The heads of state or government of the 27 EU member states, with the facilitation of the **European Council President, Antonio Costa**.



What they do



>>> The European Council is the highest decision-making body in the EU, providing overall strategic direction on defence and security. They shape the EU's broad policy framework, such as agreeing on the EU's defence priorities or responding to crises.

Example



>>> In 2022, the European Council adopted the **Strategic Compass**, which outlined the EU's defence and security goals for the next decade.



2. Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Who?



>>> National ministers from each EU member state, typically defence or foreign ministers.

What they do



>>> The Council of the EU is where specific legal decisions on defence and security are made, including sanctions, defence policy frameworks, and military operations. It works with the European Council to implement broader decisions.

Example



>>> The Council of the EU has played a key role in approving military operations, such as **EUNAVFOR Atalanta** in the Horn of Africa, which aims to combat piracy.



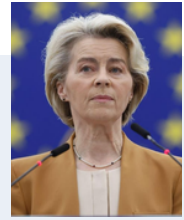
3. European Commission



Who?



>>> Led by the **President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen**, and composed of appointed Commissioners.



What they do



>>> The Commission primarily supports and coordinates EU defence and security initiatives. It handles funding and implements projects like the **European Defence Fund (EDF)**, which aims to improve EU military capabilities by fostering cooperation between member states and the defence industry.

Example



>>> The **EDF** provides grants and investments for joint defence research and the development of military technology.

4. European External Action Service (EEAS)

Who?



>>> Led by the **High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, currently Kaja Kallas**.



What they do



>>> The EEAS is responsible for the EU's diplomatic and foreign policy, including crisis management and conflict prevention. The High Representative coordinates the EU's actions in areas like peacekeeping, sanctions, and strategic partnerships.

Example



>>> The EEAS coordinates civilian and military operations in crisis zones, such as **EUTM Mali**, a mission that trains and advises the Malian military.

5. European Parliament



Who?



>>> The directly elected members of the European Parliament (MEPs), under the presidency of President **Roberta Metsola**.



What they do



>>> While the European Parliament does not have direct decision-making power over defence and security policy, it plays an important role in scrutinizing and shaping policies. It holds the EU institutions accountable, approves the budget, and influences the legislative process through debates, resolutions, and votes.

Example



>>> The Parliament debates issues like defence spending and military cooperation and has the power to approve or reject the EU budget, including funding for defence initiatives.



Additional Mechanisms:

PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation):



Who?



>>> Participating EU member States that voluntarily commit to deeper defence cooperation.



What they do



>>> PESCO allows those member states to work together on defence projects and increase their military capabilities. Decisions regarding PESCO projects are taken by the participating countries, with input from EU institutions.

NATO-EU Cooperation:



Who?



>>> Both NATO and the EU make decisions related to European security, often in parallel.

What they do



>>> NATO remains the primary defence alliance for most EU members, but the EU complements NATO's work with its own defence initiatives. Key decisions often involve coordinating with NATO on crisis response and military operations.