

NATO – EU Relations

NATO and the European Union (EU) are essential partners who share common values, strategic interests and a majority of member nations. Over the last five years, the two organisations have developed closer cooperation, focused on concrete results and improved security for European citizens. This cooperation ranges from cyber defence and addressing hybrid threats, through maritime security to building up the capacities of partners beyond our borders.

A new framework for cooperation

NATO and the EU regularly discuss issues of common interest. The NATO Secretary General engages with his EU counterparts and addresses the European Council, EU Ministerial meetings and the European Parliament several times a year. Meetings also take place between ministers, ambassadors and military leaders, as well as at the staff level.

NATO and the EU took their relationship to a higher level in July 2016. In a [Joint Declaration](#) in Warsaw, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, and the President of the European Commission Jean- Claude Juncker pledged to boost cooperation between the two organisations. This commitment was renewed with another joint declaration on NATO-EU cooperation, signed in the margins of the NATO Summit in July 2018. At their meeting in London in 2019, NATO Leaders welcomed unprecedented progress in NATO-EU cooperation.

Currently, NATO and the EU are cooperating on more than seventy measures, endorsed by NATO and EU ministers. These include:

- Measures to bolster resilience to hybrid threats, ranging from countering disinformation to civil preparedness.
- Operational Cooperation including in the maritime field. Cooperation on military mobility in order to ensure that NATO forces can cross borders faster and more easily, when needed.
- Cooperation to ensure that our capability development efforts are coherent and mutually reinforcing.
- Exchange of information on cyber threats and the sharing of best practices on cyber security.
- Parallel and coordinated exercises.
- Efforts to support the local capacities of partner countries in the sectors of security and defence.
- Promoting the role of women in peace and security.

The NATO Secretary General and the EU High Representative regularly report to NATO Allies and EU Member States on this cooperation, which has seen substantial progress.

Political Dialogue

NATO and the EU hold regular political consultations on security issues in Europe and its neighbourhood. In December 2020, the NATO Secretary General met with the College of EU Commissioners, and in February 2021, he addressed the European Council. The EU HRVP regularly takes part in meetings of NATO Foreign and Defence ministers. The North Atlantic Council meets regularly with the EU's Political and Security Committee, and NATO and EU representatives routinely engage with all NATO Allies and EU Member States through mutual cross-briefings.

Political dialogue covers the full spectrum of issues relevant to both Organizations, including inter alia the geopolitical implications of COVID-19, cyber and hybrid threats, Russia, China, the Western Balkans, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. Since the start of the crisis in Ukraine, both organisations have worked to make sure that their actions complement each other, especially with regard to Russia.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of the European Council Charles Michel, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and the High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell

Practical Cooperation

In 2020, NATO and the EU continued to deepen their long-standing cooperation. Progress was made in a number of areas within the 74 common proposals, including those that have emerged as particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as countering disinformation and hostile propaganda, responding to cyber threats and strengthening resilience as well as civil preparedness. NATO and the EU maintained close contacts on their respective COVID-19 responses.

Regarding other areas of cooperation, NATO continued to work hand in hand with the European Union to improve transport, infrastructure and regulatory aspects of military mobility, with a focus on coordinated border-crossing legislation, regulations and procedures, including for the transportation of dangerous goods. NATO staffs participated in a scenario based discussion on military mobility in the context of EU Exercise Integrated Resolve 20. Both organisations continued to ensure coherence between their respective planning instruments and processes. NATO and the EU are also increasingly involved in each other's exercises. Parallel crisis management exercises with related scenarios will take place in 2022 and 2023, as was already done in 2017 and 2018. These type of exercises help NATO and the EU to improve their knowledge of each other's working methods and are improving their ability to coordinate.



Navy officers from NATO and EU Operations work together regularly in the Mediterranean Sea.

Working together in the field

NATO and the EU have long cooperated on crisis management and operations.

The EU's Operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates under the "Berlin Plus" arrangements, drawing on NATO planning expertise and on other Alliance's assets and capabilities. The Vice-Chief of Staff SHAPE is the Commander of Operation Althea, and the EU Operation Headquarters (OHQ) is located at SHAPE.

In **Kosovo**, the NATO peacekeeping force KFOR works closely in the field with the EU's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).

In **Afghanistan**, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission and its predecessor, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have cooperated with the EU's Rule of Law Mission (EUPOL) and maintain regular contact with the EU Delegation in Kabul.

NATO's training and capacity-building in **Iraq**, implemented through the NATO Mission Iraq, is undertaken in close cooperation with the EU's stabilisation support in the country, ensuring complementarity of effort.

NATO and EU naval forces work together in response to the refugee and migrant crisis in the Mediterranean. NATO has deployed a maritime force to the Aegean Sea to conduct reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings, supporting Turkish and Greek authorities and the EU. In the Central Mediterranean, NATO's Operation Sea Guardian supported EU Operation Sophia until its termination with information and logistics.

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