

EPP Leaders' Statement 18 February 2025

Europe stands for peace, in security and freedom

Europe stands with Ukraine. Russia's illegal war of aggression has not only caused devastating war crimes, hundreds of thousands of deaths and wounded victims as well as terrible displacements, but is also jeopardising the security of the whole of Europe. We need just and lasting peace that guarantees security and freedom for Europe in the long term. In the geopolitical uncertainty, a self-confident and self-assertive Europe has to step up its own security as a matter of urgency.

A decisive support to Ukraine

The EPP is fully committed to supporting Ukraine. In order to strengthen Ukraine's negotiating power, every EU member state should, in accordance with its capabilities, reconsider intensifying its arms deliveries - especially with highly-advanced equipment, respecting the national security and defence policy of member states. Any future peace order must respect Ukraine's sovereignty and be agreed with Ukraine at the table. Nothing on Ukraine without Ukraine, nothing on Europe without Europe.

Ukrainian interests are European interests. The negotiations cannot lead to limiting the sovereign right of a country to choose their own security arrangements, including joining EU or NATO, nor can they lead to a renegotiation of the security architecture of Europe. Any post-war order can only be concluded with and not against the will of the EU and its member states, as only Europe can secure a long-term peace order and create an economic future for Ukraine. The threat posed by Russia for Europe is long-term and will remain after the end of Russia's war of aggression. It is crucial to achieve a sustainable and lasting peace that does not offer Russia the possibility for a new aggression.

Meanwhile, all sanctions against supporters of Putin's war of aggression must be continued and reinforced. War crimes must be investigated by the International Criminal Court.

Ukraine belongs to Europe. The first chapters must be fully negotiated by the end of 2025.

A decisive surge of our defence capabilities

We have reached a pivotal moment in the collective security of Europe. It is about Ukraine, but it is also much more fundamentally about our own security. This moment requires a new urgency mindset. Europe needs a surge in defence. Simplification, standardization and economies of scale are now of the essence. The following steps should be taken immediately:

Step up defence funding: We need an exceptional increase in Member-State defence spending to 'north of 3%' and on the basis of commitments already agreed. To make it possible, Member States should jointly activate the escape clause in the Stability and Growth Pact, in a controlled and conditional way. We stress our commitment to joint investment on defence. The EIB should review its lending practices, which would also send a strong message to private banks.

Focus on joint procurement and capabilities: Investments should focus on European investment priorities, starting with defence projects of common European interest. EDIRPA

has also shown the value of joint procurement for the most urgently needed defence goods: it lowers costs and creates economies of scale. We should extend this model at scale.

Strengthen investment into military mobility: Moving troops and assets across Europe will be even more crucial in the years ahead. Member States should mobilise Cohesion funds for military mobility needs.

Simplify procurement: A simplification Omnibus Package for defence should align rules on procurement, intra-EU transfers, and permits.

Step up defence European cooperation with non-EU allies: Pragmatic solutions should be found to increase technological, procurement and operational cooperation with our partners in the face of common threats.

Finalise existing defence legislation: It is urgent to finalise the European Defence Industrial Programme, strengthen cooperation with the Ukrainian defence industry, and lay the foundations of a European defence production regime.

Set up a self-standing defence council and a standing defence committee: Now above all else, undivided focus is needed on reaching speedy and effective decisions.

With the help of the Polish Presidency, these immediate priorities can be achieved fast.

We call for extraordinary and inclusive EU and NATO Summits to take decisive steps to boost the EU's strategic autonomy, defence capabilities **and build a European pillar in NATO** that will also be able to operate autonomously.