

# NATO – EU Relations

## Framework for cooperation

NATO and the European Union (EU) cooperate on issues of common interest and are working side by side in crisis management, capability development, cyber defence, political consultations and in areas such as addressing hybrid threats, capacity building and maritime security.

NATO and the EU share strategic interests and the European Union is a unique and essential partner for NATO. The two organisations also share a majority of members (22), and all members of both organisations share common values.

The **2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy** has defined the NATO-EU relationship as a **strategic partnership**. It reaffirmed that the EU could have assured access to NATO's planning capabilities for its own military operations. It reiterated the underlying political principles of the strategic partnership, including mutually reinforcing crisis management; effective mutual consultation; equality and due regard for the decision-making autonomy; respect for the interests of the member states; respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and a coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of the military capability requirements.

Since 2003 the **“Berlin Plus” arrangements** provide the basis for NATO-EU cooperation in crisis management in the context of EU-led operations that make use of NATO's collective assets and capabilities, including command arrangements and assistance in operational planning. In effect, the “Berlin Plus” arrangements allow the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged.

Close cooperation between NATO and the EU is an important element in the development of an international **“Comprehensive Approach”** to crisis management and operations, which requires the effective application of both military and civilian means.

NATO and the EU meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. The NATO Secretary General engages with his EU counterparts and has addressed the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in joint session with the sub-committee on Security and Defence on numerous occasions.

Meetings also take place at the level of foreign ministers, ambassadors, military representatives and defence advisors. There are regular staff-to-staff talks at all levels between NATO's International Staff and International Military Staff, and their respective EU interlocutors (the European External Action Service, the European Defence Agency, the EU Commission and the European Parliament).

Permanent military liaison arrangements have been established to facilitate cooperation at the operational level. A **NATO Permanent Liaison Team at the EU Military Staff** has been operating since 2005 and an **EU Cell at SHAPE** (NATO's strategic command for operations in Mons, Belgium) was set up in 2006.

## Cooperation in the field

**Crisis management and operations** is a key area of NATO-EU cooperation, in particular in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan. In recent years cooperation has expanded to **maritime security** as NATO and EU naval forces have cooperated in anti-piracy missions and in the migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea.

In July 2003, the EU and NATO published a “Concerted Approach for the Western Balkans”. It outlines core areas of cooperation and emphasises the common vision and determination that both organisations share to bring stability to the region.

In 2003, the EU-led Operation Concordia took over the responsibilities of the NATO-led mission, Operation Allied Harmony, in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. This mission, which ended in December 2003, was the first “Berlin Plus” operation in which NATO assets were made available to the EU.

In 2004 following the conclusion of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the EU deployed Operation EUFOR Althea, which operates under the “Berlin Plus” arrangements, drawing on NATO planning expertise and on other Alliance assets and capabilities. The NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe is the Commander of Operation Althea. The EU Operation Headquarters (OHQ) is located at SHAPE.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, on 3 Dec. 2014

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 current 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). The EU has also funded civilian projects in NATO-run Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that were led by an EU member country. Both NATO and the EU supported the African Union's mission in Darfur, **Sudan**, in particular with regard to airlift rotations.

Since September 2008, NATO and EU naval forces are deployed side by side (respectively Ocean Shield and EUNAVFOR Atalanta), with other actors, off the coast of Somalia for anti-piracy missions.

In February 2016 NATO defence ministers decided to assist with the growing refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. 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's Frontex agency.

## Other areas of cooperation

The range of subjects discussed at **political consultations** between NATO and the EU has expanded considerably over the past two years, particularly on security issues within the European space or its immediate vicinity. Since the crisis in Ukraine, both organisations have regularly exchanged views on their respective decisions, especially with regard to Russia, to ensure that their messages and actions complement each other. Consultations have also covered the Western Balkans, Libya and the Middle East.

Together with operations, **capability development** is an area where cooperation is essential and where there is potential for further growth. The **NATO-EU Capability Group** was established in May 2003 to ensure the coherence and mutual reinforcement of NATO and EU capability development efforts. Experts of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and NATO contribute to the work of the Capability Group, inter alia, to address common capability shortfalls such as countering improvised explosive devices and medical support. Staffs are also ensuring transparency and complementarity between NATO's work on "Smart Defence" and the EU's Pooling and Sharing initiative.

Both NATO and the European Union are committed to **combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction** (WMD). They have exchanged information on their activities in the field of protection of civilian populations against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) attacks. NATO and the EU also cooperate in civil emergency planning by exchanging inventories of measures taken.

Several new areas of cooperation with the EU are taking place, in particular **hybrid threats, energy security** and **cyber defence**. In this context, NATO and EU staffs have been holding consultations in order to identify the specific areas which could enhance cooperation in these fields. In February 2016, NATO and the EU concluded a **Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence**, which provides a framework for exchanging information and sharing best practices between emergency response teams.

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