

# Foreign affairs and security policy



**The EU's foreign and security policy enables it to speak and act as one in world affairs, allowing the Member States to tackle challenges they cannot solve alone and ensuring the security and prosperity of EU citizens.**

The **policy** is implemented by the EU's foreign affairs chief, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (who is also a Vice-President of the Commission), and supported by the **European External Action Service**, the EU's diplomatic service. The EU's external actions are guided by the principles that inspired its own creation and development, and which it seeks to promote in the wider world, including peace, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## What the EU does

In 2016 the High Representative/Vice-President launched the **Global Strategy** for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy to enhance stability in the European neighbourhood and beyond, boost security and defence and deal with challenges such as energy security, irregular migration, climate change and terrorism. The follow-up on security and defence has been particularly swift, with the adoption of a wide-ranging EU security and defence package in 2016 to see Europe take more responsibility for these areas. The global strategy set the following five priorities for EU action:

- the security of the EU;
- state and societal resilience;
- an integrated approach to conflicts and crises;
- cooperative regional orders; and
- global governance for the 21st century.

The EU supports countries facing conflict and crisis. It is the leading donor in the international response to the Syria crisis, with over €11 billion provided to support the **Syrian people**, and it continues to support international efforts to bring peace to the **Middle East** by supporting a two-state solution with a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. The agreement reached in 2015 on the **Iranian nuclear programme** demonstrated the EU's role in leading peace talks on behalf of the

international community. In 2018 there were **16 ongoing civilian missions and military operations** on three continents. Deployment decisions are made jointly by national ministers from EU countries. Success stories include EU peacekeeping missions in several of the world's trouble spots, the training of police, soldiers and coastguards, support for state-building in post-conflict situations and fighting piracy off the Horn of Africa. The EU has no standing army, but brings together forces contributed by its Member States under the EU flag.

The **European Defence Fund** launched in 2017 coordinates, supplements and amplifies national investments in defence so as to increase outputs and develop defence technology and equipment to meet current and future security needs.



Find out more: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/foreign-affairs-and-security-policy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/topics/foreign-affairs-and-security-policy_en)  
European Commission reflection paper on the future of European defence



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[https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/contact/local-offices-eu-member-countries\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/contact/local-offices-eu-member-countries_en)

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LIAISON OFFICES

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This factsheet is part of the publication **'The European Union: What it is and what it does'**. An interactive version, containing links to online content, is available in PDF and HTML format at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/eu-what-it-is/en/>

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