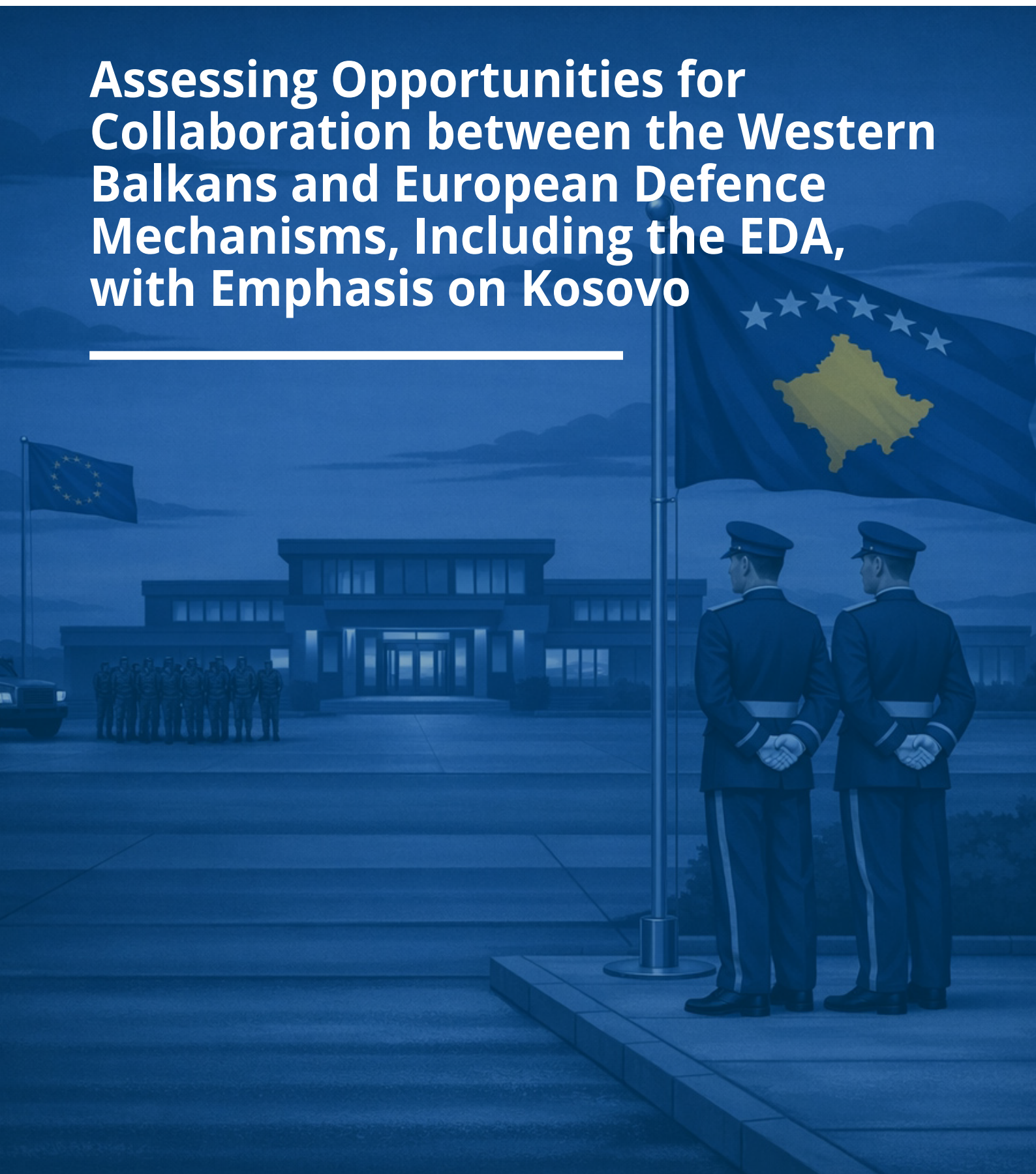


# Assessing Opportunities for Collaboration between the Western Balkans and European Defence Mechanisms, Including the EDA, with Emphasis on Kosovo

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## **ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE MECHANISMS, INCLUDING THE EDA, WITH EMPHASIS ON KOSOVO**

### **PUBLISHED BY:**

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# Executive Summary

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The European Union's defence posture has changed fundamentally since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The March 2025 White Paper for European Defence—Readiness 2030 and the “ReArm Europe” agenda signal a shift from incremental cooperation to readiness, industrial scale-up, and joint procurement. For Kosovo and the entire region, this evolution creates an opportunity to move from being treated primarily as a stabilisation and enlargement arena to becoming a practical security partner. The EU increasingly recognises that resilience in Europe's neighbourhood depends on closing capability gaps, improving interoperability, and constraining malign external influence, including in the Balkans. Furthermore, the EU needs to exercise influence in its own yard before assuming any meaningful role overseas. In the times of global disruption, the EU should make it easier for the Western Balkans as a whole to have direct partnership on defence and security, beyond the existing enlargement related mechanisms.

Before zooming in on Kosovo's specific challenges and opportunities for defence cooperation, this paper reviews the main EU defence instruments relevant to the region and the current position of the Western Balkans countries. The analysis finds that the primary avenue for Western Balkan engagement with the EU's defence domain is the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), mainly through mission engagement and contributions. The most accessible instrument for direct capability support is the European Peace Facility (EPF), which has become the EU's most practical tool for assisting partners. By contrast, the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) remain difficult to access because Western Balkans states are classified as non-associated third countries. Third-country participation in PESCO projects is, in principle, possible but highly restricted and remains far-fetched for the Western Balkans countries. The European Defence Agency (EDA) sits between these categories: it can cooperate with non-EU states through administrative arrangements, but such

arrangements require unanimous approval by EU defence ministers, making cooperation politically challenging even when technical collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

The paper examines the depth of each Western Balkan country's cooperation with the EU in the defence domain depends which is based on three factors: strategic alignment with the EU, institutional capacity, and the broader political context—both domestically and inside the EU. Albania illustrates how clear pro-Western alignment and predictable institutions translate into deeper engagement, including the conclusion of a Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) and follow-on support through the European Peace Facility (EPF). Montenegro remains widely viewed as a frontrunner in the accession process, but persistent domestic political volatility risks slowing momentum. North Macedonia demonstrates how bilateral disputes can constrain cooperation even after NATO accession, despite also having concluded an SDP with the EU. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains structurally constrained by internal fragmentation and chronic governance deadlock. Serbia is the most cautionary case: it is the only country in the region with a formal EDA administrative arrangement (2013) and significant industrial capacity, yet its refusal to align with EU foreign policy on Russia and its destabilising posture toward neighbours, particularly Kosovo, undermine trust and limit the strategic value of such cooperation<sup>1</sup>. Kosovo, by contrast, has remained on the margins of EU defence cooperation, constrained by the continuing non-recognition of its statehood by five EU member states and by the unresolved dispute with Serbia, while its defence sector consolidation is ramping up.

Focusing on Kosovo's specific challenges, paper notes that its defence sector has been developed almost exclusively through NATO support arrangements and bilateral cooperation with allied NATO countries, explaining that in parallel, and because the defence sector has remained in a consolidation phase, Kosovo has not yet pursued

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, “Commission Staff Working Document: Serbia 2024 Report”, 30 October 2024, [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3c8c2d7f-bff7-44eb-b868-414730cc5902\\_en?filename=Serbia%20Report%202024.pdf](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3c8c2d7f-bff7-44eb-b868-414730cc5902_en?filename=Serbia%20Report%202024.pdf)

a structured effort to expand cooperation with the EU in the defence domain. Nevertheless, as the EU's defence profile expands, Kosovo's defence sector too has entered an accelerated pace. Since the 2018 decision to transform the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into a defence force – a target to be reached by 2028 – Kosovo has sharply increased defence spending and broadened capability ambitions in response to a deteriorating security environment. With the 2028 milestone approaching, the most urgent tasks are to consolidate force development in a sustainable way, adopt missing legal and regulatory frameworks, and invest in defence-industrial development so that initiatives such as ammunition production and a defence-industry zone can mature into credible, accountable capability support.

The paper notes that Kosovo's security and defence-sector development is also driven by a more challenging and threatening environment. In particular, this development is shaped by Serbia's continued non-recognition and its demonstrated capacity to enable violent escalation, including through Belgrade-linked structures in northern Kosovo. The 2023 Banjska terrorist attack, subsequent security incidents, and the broader pattern of pressure against Kosovo's institutions underscore that the key risk is not only conventional military imbalance, but also a blend of coercion, sabotage, disinformation, and mobilisation of proxy actors. Russia's war against Ukraine further amplifies this risk by creating incentives for Moscow to encourage crisis dynamics in the Balkans in order to distract Western attention and weaken Euro-Atlantic cohesion.

Mitigating these threats requires a dual approach. Kosovo has a legitimate need to build credible deterrence and resilience through professional capability development and internal cohesion; however, given its unique political context, it should also coordinate closely—and communicate consistently—with the EU and other Western allies that have been key sponsors of Kosovo's statehood. In return, the EU and its Western partners should treat Kosovo as part of their neighbourhood security, pairing diplomacy with more consistent deterrence messaging, stronger support for rule-of-law and counter-hybrid capacities, and practical defence cooperation that reduces Kosovo's isolation.

Defence cooperation between Kosovo and the EU has so far been limited and largely indirect, shaped by the post-2008 division of roles in which NATO carried the main burden of KSF development while the EU focused on rule of law through EULEX and maintained a status-neutral posture. However, the EU's emergence as a stronger defence actor makes this division increasingly outdated. Judging from the existing cooperation between Kosovo and the United States, including prospective deployment in Gaza as part of the peacekeeping mission, there is solid ground to rely on the trade-off of potential cooperation between the EU and Kosovo in the field of defence. The paper identifies practical entry points that can work even under political constraints:

- > pursue a Kosovo–EU Security and Defence Partnership as the central political gateway, aligned with the model used for Albania and North Macedonia;
- > prepare for contributions to CSDP missions to demonstrate Kosovo's transition from security consumer to security provider;
- > seek structured engagement with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) to build human capital and interoperability through training and education;
- > follow a graduated EDA pathway, starting with technical consultations and domain-specific cooperation (notably cyber defence, medical support, mine action, standards, and training) rather than an immediate comprehensive arrangement; and
- > deepen bilateral defence cooperation with recognising EU member states to build capabilities and cultivate a coalition of political champions inside the EU system.

The paper also identifies a list of short-term, mid-term, and long-term priority actions for Kosovo institutions:

**Short term (2026–2027):** launch a dedicated diplomatic track for an EU Security and Defence Partnership; expand bilateral defence agreements and joint training with key recognising EU states; initiate EDA technical consultations in low-sensitivity domains; secure systematic access to ESDC courses;

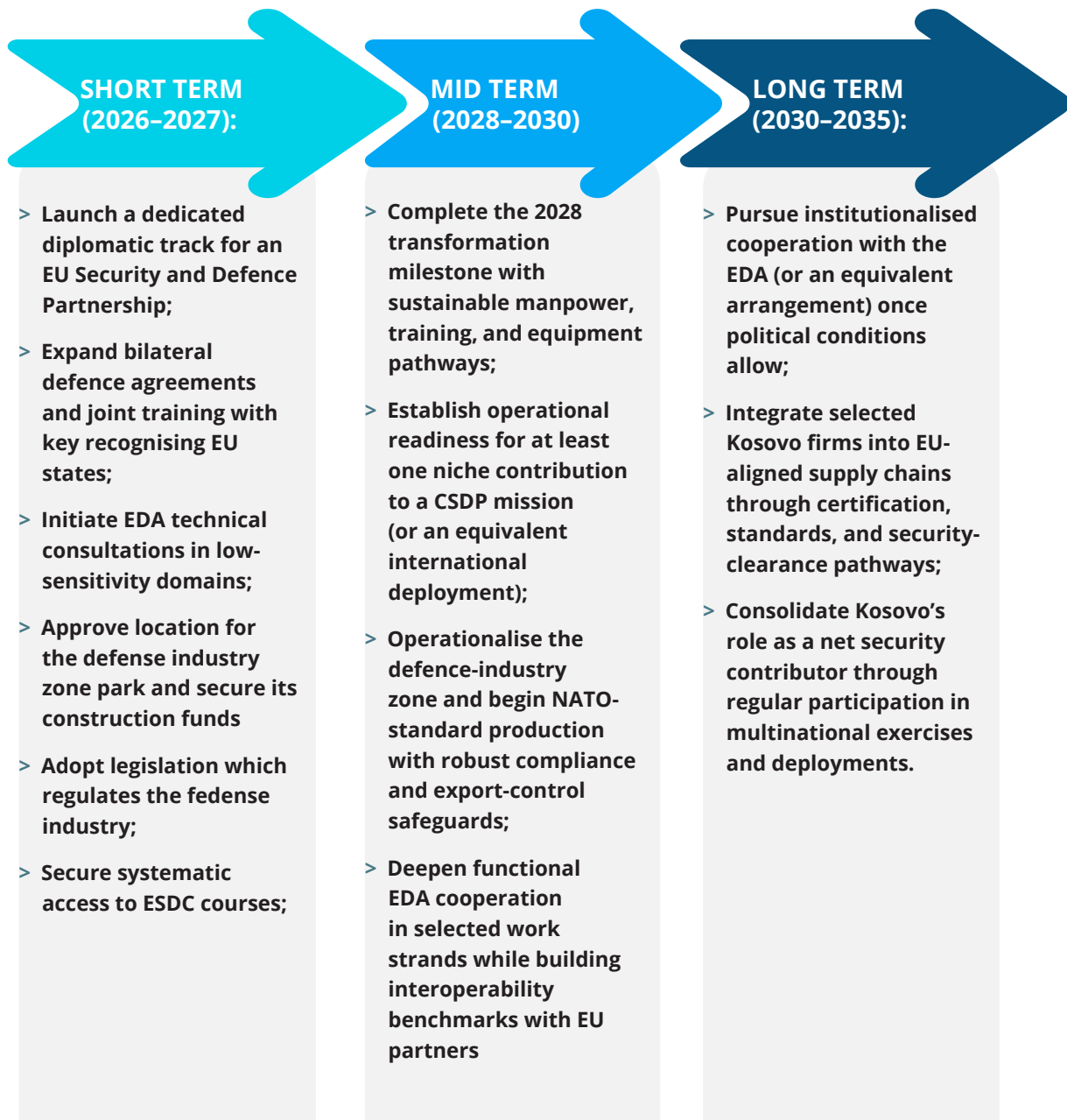
adopt legislation which regulates the defence industry; approve location for the defence industry zone park and secure its construction funds;

**Mid term (2028–2030):** complete the 2028 transformation milestone with sustainable manpower, training, and equipment pathways; establish operational readiness for at least one niche contribution to a CSDP mission (or an equivalent international deployment); operationalise the defence-industry zone and begin NATO-standard production with robust compliance and export-control safeguards; deepen functional EDA cooperation in selected work strands while building interoperability benchmarks with EU partners.

**Long term (2030–2035):** pursue institutionalised cooperation with the EDA (or an equivalent arrangement) once political conditions allow; integrate selected Kosovo firms into EU-aligned supply chains through certification, standards, and security-clearance pathways; consolidate Kosovo's role as a net security contributor through regular participation in multinational exercises and

deployments.

The overarching recommendation is to treat Kosovo's defence consolidation and Kosovo–EU defence cooperation as mutually reinforcing. For Kosovo, the immediate priority is to pair accelerated capability development with institutional credibility—transparent procurement, strong oversight, professional education, and a clear legal basis for any defence-industrial expansion. For the EU, the priority is strategic consistency: maintain a status-neutral approach if the existing non-recognisers insists, but widen functional defence cooperation where possible, using SDPs, EPF-style assistance, training, and technical cooperation to reduce Kosovo's isolation and strengthen regional deterrence. In a security environment where Serbia-linked escalation and Russia-enabled hybrid pressure remain plausible, Kosovo's exclusion from emerging European defence mechanisms is not only a Kosovo problem; it is a vulnerability for the EU's neighbourhood security. A phased, politically calibrated engagement strategy offers a realistic path to close this gap.



# Introduction

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The European Union's defence policy landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, acting as what the European Council termed a 'tectonic shift in European history'<sup>1</sup> that fundamentally reshaped the continent's approach to security and defence. This geopolitical shift accelerated transformations initiated by the 2016 EU Global Strategy, which advocated 'strategic autonomy'.<sup>2</sup> In the current context, however, the approach has become notably more resolute due to genuine concerns for European security. Thus, just weeks after Russia began its full-scale invasion, the EU adopted the **Strategic Compass for Security and Defence**, an ambitious plan of action aimed at enhancing the EU's security and defence policy.<sup>3</sup> This successfully guided the bloc's initial security integration and joint procurement before proceeding with the White Paper for European Defence and the ReArm Europe Plan (Readiness 2030) in March 2025.

The recent ReArm Europe Plan is the most ambitious action to date resulting to unprecedented commitment to defence readiness, mobilizing over €800 billion to strengthen Europe's defence infrastructure and industrial base.<sup>4</sup> For the Western Balkans, this strategic shift presents both opportunities and challenges, as the six countries of the region—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia—stand at different stages of integration into EU defence mechanisms, particularly cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA).

This paper analyses the rapid transformation of the EU's defence sector and explores the increasing opportunities for substantial cooperation between

Western Balkans countries, with a particular emphasis on Kosovo. It seeks to answer several key research questions: How has the EU defence policy and cooperative mechanisms changed since 2016, and in what ways has this process accelerated since 2022? What are the aims and tools outlined in the White Paper for European Defence and the ReArm Europe initiative? How does the EU facilitate cooperation with non-EU countries, such as those in the Western Balkans and particularly Kosovo, through the European Defence Agency and other mechanisms? What precedents exist for Western Balkan engagement with EU defence structures? Most importantly, what realistic and legally or politically viable pathways are available for Kosovo, given its status as neither an EU member nor candidate and the limitations resulting from non-recognition?

This analysis reviews EU policy documents, Council conclusions, EDA frameworks, strategic papers, academic literature, and an expert interviews with officials from Kosovo's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence (February 2026) respectively. The paper is structured in 4 main sections. First session analysis the overall context of EU defence sector transformation with special focus from 2016 to present. Session provides a brief mapping of key EU defence instruments and initiatives and whether WB countries have access to them or not. Forth session analyses the position of each Western Balkans with regards to EU defence cooperation. The fourth session focusses on Kosovo, analysing its specific context of development of the defence sector and the current state in this sector, current position and identifying concrete policy options for enhanced cooperation with the EDA and broader EU defence mechanisms.

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1 European Council, Versailles Declaration, 10-11 March 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54773/20220311-versailles-declaration-en.pdf>.

2 European External Action Service (EEAS), Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en)

3 European External Action Service (EEAS) (2022) A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence. Available at: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en)

4 European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, 19 March 2025, [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030_en)

# I. The Evolution of EU Defence Sector: Development and Cooperation Policies

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The European Union first began developing its security and defence mechanisms in the early 2000s, prompted by its limited ability to manage crises independently during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Progress remained gradual for many years, as numerous EU member states, also NATO members, consistently prioritized the Atlantic Alliance as their principal security structure. These states resisted substantive development of EU defence capabilities, fearing it could rival NATO's role in European security. This stance reflected both the military guarantees provided by the United States through NATO and concerns that duplicating defence structures would waste resources and complicate command arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these reservations, the EU made notable advances throughout the 2000s. Key milestones included the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004, the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) in 2005, and the consolidation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in 2009. The 2016 EU Global Strategy then provided a strategic framework, leading to the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) in 2017. Furthermore, it also led to establishing of the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Peace Facility (EPF) in 2021.

A decisive turning point, however, came after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This event triggered a rapid transformation in the EU's defence policy, described by High

Representative Josep Borrell as an "awakening moment for Europe".<sup>2</sup> The war exposed critical gaps in European defence capabilities and industrial capacity, highlighting years of underinvestment and prompting urgent calls for collective readiness. In direct response, the EU adopted the Strategic Compass for Defence and Security in 2022, just weeks after Russia's invasion. This document outlined the EU's goal to develop comprehensive capabilities and strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). However, this did not reduce pressure from the United States on European allies to increase defence spending and assume greater responsibility for deterring Russian threats, reinforcing the need to go beyond NATO's 2 percent of GDP benchmark. At the 2025 NATO Summit, the U.S. administration urged allies to commit to raising defence spending to 5 percent of GDP; while Spain publicly pushed back, the rest of the European allies ultimately endorsed the new target despite differing national sensitivities.<sup>3</sup> This U.S. pressure and heightened threat perception drove the EU to shift from gradual, specialized cooperation toward comprehensive defence initiatives with unprecedented financial resources which culminated in March 2025 with White Paper for European Defence-Readiness 2030 that serves as the strategic backbone for the €800 Billion "ReArm Europe" Plan dedicated to scale up the European Defence Technological and Industrial Bases (EDTIB). Below will be analysed in detail the White Paper for European Defence—Readiness 2030 and the ReArm Europe Plan.

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1 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (n.d.) Relations with the European Union. 20 June 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-the-european-union>

2 Josep Borrell, Europe in the Interregnum: Our Geopolitical Awakening after Ukraine, European External Action Service (EEAS), 24 March 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/europe-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/europe-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine_en)

3 CNBC, "NATO allies agree to higher 5% defense spending target," CNBC, 25 June 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/06/25/nato-allies-agree-to-higher-5percent-defense-spending-target.html>

## 1.1. The White Paper for European Defence and ReArm Europe

The White Paper for European Defence—Readiness 2030, presented jointly by the European Commission and High Representative Kaja Kallas on March 19, 2025, represents the most ambitious articulation of EU defence strategy since the policy's inception.<sup>4</sup> The document opens with an unequivocal assessment: 'Europe faces an acute and growing threat. The only way we can ensure peace is to have the readiness to deter those who would do us harm'<sup>5</sup>. This framing reflects a fundamental shift from the EU's traditional emphasis on soft power and conflict prevention toward acknowledgment of hard security imperatives driven by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, China's military buildup and assertive regional behavior, and uncertainties regarding long-term United States commitment to European security.

The White Paper identifies Russia's transition to a total war economy—with 40 percent of its federal budget directed toward military spending—and its persistent use of nuclear threats and hybrid strategies as the primary acute threat to European security, while characterizing China as a systemic long-term challenge due to its opaque defence buildup, rapid advances in cyber and space capabilities, and coercive behavior in the Indo-Pacific.

The core strategic objectives articulated in the White

Paper encompass both immediate and long-term priorities. In the short term, the focus centers on supporting Ukraine through sustained military aid including annual supply of 2 million artillery shells, air defence systems and missiles, and continuation of training and equipment regeneration programs. Simultaneously, it requires from the EU to urgently close critical capability gaps in areas such as missile defence, drone systems, artillery ammunition production, and cyber security—domains where European capacity has proven insufficient relative to the scale and intensity of contemporary threats.

Medium-term objectives emphasize building a genuine EU-wide market for defence that reduces fragmentation, eliminates 'national biases' in procurement that have historically led to duplicative and incompatible systems, and creates economies of scale that enhance both efficiency and industrial competitiveness. Long-term priorities focus on preparing the defence of tomorrow through disruptive innovation in emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, autonomous systems, and space-based capabilities.

The ReArm Europe Plan on the other hand provides the financial architecture to implement White Paper objectives, mobilizing over €800 billion through multiple complementary mechanisms<sup>6</sup>, such as:

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4 European Defence Agency (EDA), Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030, EDA news release, 19 March 2025, <https://eda.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/2025/03/19/joint-white-paper-for-european-defence-readiness-2030>

5 European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, Brussels, 19 March 2025, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019\\_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf)

6 European Parliament Research Service (EPRS), EU defence: White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, Briefing, European Parliament, 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769566/EPRS\\_BRI\(2025\)769566\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769566/EPRS_BRI(2025)769566_EN.pdf)

| INITIATIVE COMPONENT                                    | FUNDING MECHANISM                                     | SCALE                         | PRIMARY OBJECTIVES   |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Security Action for Europe (SAFE) Instrument</b> | Loans raised on capital markets                       | €150 billion                  | Joint military procurement involving at least two countries; funds disbursed to member states based on national defence investment plans |
| <b>National Escape Clause</b>                           | Budgetary flexibility under Stability and Growth Pact | €650 billion over four years  | Allows member states to increase defence expenditure without breaching EU fiscal rules   |
| <b>EIB Defence Investment</b>                           | European Investment Bank funding                      | €2 billion annually (doubled) | Focus on drones, quantum technologies, and cyber security  |
| <b>Total Mobilization</b>                               | Combined mechanisms                                   | €800+ billion                 | Comprehensive defence infrastructure and capability development  |

The White Paper and the ReArm Europe Plan offer new opportunities for integrating European value chains and cooperation. It emphasizes the urgency of pan-European collaboration to address defence gaps, noting Russia's continued destabilizing role in regions including the Western Balkans, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, and Africa.<sup>7</sup> Technically, this is a clear indication that the document does recognize the strategic importance of the WB and

offers an open door policy for the countries in this region.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the practical outcomes will necessarily depend on the region's alignment with EU defence values, institutional strength, and political factors—particularly skepticism from some EU members. On the Kosovo's case the attitude of five non-recognizing EU states will be of particularly important, despite its strong alignment with EU and the west.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, White Paper for European Defence—Readiness 2030, European Commission, 19 March 2025, [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/white-paper-european-defence-readiness-2030_en)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

## II. Mapping of the Key European Defence Instruments and Initiatives

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As EU defence policies have changed over time, so too also the EU instruments and initiatives have evolved, with the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) functioning as the principal framework for coordination, crisis management, and peacekeeping efforts. The civilian and military missions conducted under the CSDP have contributed to stabilization in the WB, including Kosovo and facilitated nations' preparations for integration into EU security structures. The European Defence Agency (EDA) is instrumental in enhancing defence capabilities, coordinating procurement processes, and promoting innovation; its administrative arrangements, such as those established with Serbia, serving as a potentially advanced collaboration platform also for the other WB, although political challenges continue to limit access for additional partners.

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) allows for more comprehensive, legally binding defence integration among EU member states and provides for restricted third-country participation; however, Western Balkans countries have yet to join. The European Security and Defence College (ESDC) delivers CSDP training, with the most notable cooperation involving Serbia and Albania, while

engagement with Kosovo remains constrained due to issues of recognition.

The European Defence Fund (EDF) supports joint research and capability development, but Western Balkans nations are currently excluded from receiving EU funding, restricting their involvement. The European Peace Facility (EPF) serves as the primary means for practical cooperation, offering essential military assistance where other financial mechanisms are less accessible, as exemplified by direct support provided to Kosovo's Security Force.

Below will be provided an analysis for each of these EU mechanisms. As will be seen on the bellow sessions, the CSDP, EDA, and EPF constitute the most straightforward and adaptable channels for Western Balkans involvement, whereas PESCO, EDF, and ESDC present greater barriers due to political and eligibility limitations. The EDA's administrative arrangements and the EPF's support mechanisms offer significant opportunities to advance EU–Western Balkans defence collaboration. The aim of this mapping analysis is to inform policymakers in Kosovo and region about the scope of each of these mechanisms and highlight potential avenues for engagement.

### 2.1. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is the European Union's main framework for defence cooperation and crisis management, formally launched in 1999 as the ESDP and renamed by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. Originally focused on crisis management and peacekeeping—known as Petersberg tasks,<sup>1</sup> the CSDP has evolved, especially following the EU Global Strategy (2016) and the

Strategic Compass (2022), into a tool for strategic autonomy and deeper defence integration.

Today, the CSDP oversees civilian missions and military operations abroad while guiding member states toward harmonized defence planning and reducing fragmented procurement. Decisions are made intergovernmental: the European Council sets priorities, the Foreign Affairs Council implements

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<sup>1</sup> Petersberg tasks (as defined in the Petersberg Declaration), adopted 19 June 1992 and later incorporated into the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, EURLex summary, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:petersberg\\_tasks](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:petersberg_tasks)

them, and unanimity is required except in certain areas like the European Defence Agency and PESCO.

The High Representative coordinates CSDP actions, heads the EEAS and EDA, and represents the EU externally.<sup>2</sup> The Political and Security Committee directs crisis management operations. There are several mechanisms supporting the CSDP. This is a result of the expansion of the CSDP introducing gradually new mechanisms such as the European Defence Agency (2004), Permanent Structured Cooperation (2017), and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), which monitors national defence spending and identifies gaps. The European Peace Facility (2021) also contributes by covering shared CSDP military operation costs and supplying

equipment to partner countries.

The CSDP is the main EU framework for promoting stability and defence cooperation in the Western Balkans. Through missions like EUFOR Althea and EULEX, CSDP have been directly contributing on security and rule of law in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo respectively. CSDP actively engages with the candidate countries to participate in EU operations and transition from security consumers to providers. The CSDP also supports coordinated responses to hybrid threats and cybersecurity, building a shared strategic culture to prepare the region for integration into European security structures.

## 2.2. European Defence Agency

The European Defence Agency is established on 12 July 2004 through Council Joint Action 2004/551/CFSP, becoming operational as the EU's armaments cooperation agency.<sup>3</sup> The EDA emerged from recognition that fragmented national defence procurement was creating duplication, interoperability problems, and inefficient spending across European armed forces.<sup>4</sup> Its initial mandate focused on four key functions: developing defence capabilities to meet CSDP operational requirements, promoting and enhancing European armaments cooperation, strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), and supporting defence research and technology. The Agency operates under the High Representative's authority, with all 27 EU member states participating (Denmark initially opted out but joined in 2024).<sup>5</sup> The EDA's Steering Board, composed of defence ministers, provides strategic guidance and approves the Agency's work programme and budget.

In May 2024, EU Defence Ministers approved the

EDA's Long-Term Review (LTR), expanding core tasks from three to five areas: supporting the full capability development cycle, aggregating demand for joint procurement, enabling collaborative defence research and innovation, voicing member states' joint positions at EU level, and ensuring coherent alignment of EU defence initiatives.<sup>6</sup> This reinforced mandate reflects the deteriorated security environment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and positions the EDA as a more strategic actor in coordinating European defence efforts.

The EDA plays crucial implementation and support roles across all major EU defence initiatives. For the Capability Development Plan, the Agency coordinates with member states to identify priority capability areas and development pathways. As the primary implementing body for the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the EDA analyses national defence planning and spending to identify collaboration opportunities and reduce duplicative investments.<sup>7</sup> The Agency provides secretariat functions for Permanent Structured Cooperation

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<sup>2</sup> Council of the European Union, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Consilium (Council of the EU), accessed February 2026, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/high-representative-foreign-affairs-security-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> European Defence Agency (EDA), European Defence Agency – official website, European Union, accessed February 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> European Defence Agency (EDA), European Defence Fund (EDF), EDA – EU defence initiatives, European Union, accessed February 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-%28edf%29>

<sup>5</sup> Defence Industry Europe, Denmark joins the European Defence Agency, Defence Industry Europe, 25 March 2023, <https://defence-industry.eu/denmark-joins-the-european-defence-agency>

<sup>6</sup> European Defence Agency (EDA), EU Defence Ministers approve reinforced mandate for EDA, 28 May 2024, <https://eda.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/2024/05/28/eu-defence-ministers-approve-reinforced-mandate-for-eda>

<sup>7</sup> European Defence Agency (EDA), 2024 Long-Term Review of the European Defence Agency: EDA as the intergovernmental defence nexus at EU level, 2024, <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/2024-long-term-review-of-the-european-defence-agency.pdf>

alongside the European External Action Service, facilitating project development and monitoring binding commitments. While the European Defence Fund is managed by the European Commission, the EDA provides technical expertise and helps align EDF-funded projects with operational requirements identified by ministries of defence. The recently established Hub for European Defence Innovation (HEDI) connects short-term innovations with military end-users, accelerating the pathway from concept to operational deployment.<sup>8</sup>

EDA actively cooperates with the non-EU countries through carefully structured administrative bilateral

arrangements which are concluded under member state authority following assessment of benefits for the Agency and member states. To date, the EDA has established administrative arrangements with 5 non-EU countries which include: Norway (signed March 7, 2006) was the first third country partner; Switzerland (initially signed March 16, 2012, updated December 1, 2025); Serbia (signed December 13, 2013); Ukraine (signed December 7, 2015), reflecting its strategic partnership with the EU; and the United States Department of Defence (signed April 26, 2023), acknowledging the transatlantic dimension of European defence .



**FIGURE 1: EDA Administrative Arrangement Signed with Non-EU Countries**

As can be seen, from WB6 currently only Serbia have advanced structural administrative arrangement with EDA. Neither Albania, North Macedonia nor Montenegro as the NATO members have such arrangements. Albania and North Macedonia did recently concluded Security and

Defence Partnerships (SDP) with EU which is considered the first initial step towards such arrangement. Meanwhile, Montenegro who is largely considered a frontrunner when it comes to EU Accession is yet so sign such partnership.

### 2.3. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a legally binding framework for defence integration among interested EU member states, initiated in December 2017 after being introduced by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty.<sup>9</sup> PESCO's activation was driven by several geopolitical events, including the Syrian Civil War, the European migrant crisis, Russia's annexation of Crimea, Brexit, and U.S. pressure on NATO. Currently, 26 member states participate, with Malta opting out and Denmark joining in May 2023.

Members commit to 20 obligations across five areas: increasing defence budgets, allocating funds for equipment and research, harmonizing operational needs, improving force interoperability, and addressing capability gaps. These commitments are monitored annually, with possible suspension for non-compliance.<sup>10</sup>

PESCO coordinates 75 projects spanning training, land, maritime, air, cyber defence, and strategic enablers. Projects are led by participating states,

<sup>8</sup> European Defence Agency (EDA), Hub for EU Defence Innovation (HEDI), EDA – Research & Technology, European Union, February 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/research-technology/hedi>

<sup>9</sup> Council of the European Union, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), accessed March 13, 2026, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pesco/>

<sup>10</sup> Council of the European Union, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), accessed March 13, 2026, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pesco/>

which set objectives and timelines.<sup>11</sup> Notable examples include Military Mobility, European Medical Command, cyber rapid response teams, and maritime surveillance. Projects receive priority for European Defence Fund support.<sup>12</sup>

Third-country participation is allowed under strict

criteria such as added value and political alignment. The Military Mobility project includes the U.S., Canada, Norway, and the UK.<sup>13</sup> As of early 2026, none of the Western Balkans Six countries have joined any PESCO projects.

## 2.4. European Security and Defence College (ESDC)

The European Security and Defence College (ESDC), established in July 2005, is an autonomous EU body providing training and education in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and broader Common Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>14</sup> Operating as a network of members and associated partners, the ESDC currently gathers about 277 national training institutes, including defence academies, police colleges, diplomatic institutes, and EU bodies.<sup>15</sup> Its mission is to develop a shared European security and defence culture among civilian and military personnel.<sup>16</sup>

The College is governed by three main bodies: the Steering Committee (quarterly meetings to assess training needs and approve curricula), Executive Academic Board (ensuring academic quality and coherence), and Secretariat (led by the ESDC Head, mainly Seconded National Experts).<sup>17</sup>

Training ranges from newcomer courses to strategic leadership programs like the annual CSDP High Level Course.<sup>18</sup> Specialized offerings include courses for political advisors in EU missions, cyber security, electromagnetic activities, and the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) course.

The Military Erasmus program (European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers) exchanges over 4,000 cadets annually to foster common security culture and interoperability.<sup>19</sup> Each year, several thousands of personnel participate in ESDC training through in-person modules and e-learning. The ESDC also produces training materials, distance learning modules, and contributes to the CSDP Handbook used across EU institutions and member states.

Western Balkan cooperation with the ESDC centres on tailored CSDP training, e-learning, and seminars. Serbia and Albania are most integrated: Serbia's Peacekeeping Operations Centre is a formal associate member, and Albania participates in Military Erasmus and has embedded ESDC cooperation in its 2024 Security and Defence Partnership. North Macedonia regularly hosts CSDP courses. Kosovo, however is yet to formally join with ESDC activities until now being limited to training EULEX personnel only. As the KSF consolidation deadline approaches, Kosovo should urgently seek to be included in ESDC activities.

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11 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), PESCO – Member States Driven, accessed March 13, 2026, <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/>.

12 European Defence Agency, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), accessed March 13, 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/permanent-structured-cooperation-%28PESCO%29>

13 Questions & Answers: Third States' participation in PESCO projects, 23 May 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/questions-answers-third-states%E2%80%99-participation-pesco-projects\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/questions-answers-third-states%E2%80%99-participation-pesco-projects_en)

14 European Union, European Security and Defence College, Summary of Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515, EURLex, accessed March 13, 2026, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/1\\_european-security-and-defence-college.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/1_european-security-and-defence-college.html).

15 European Security and Defence College, Network – Becoming an Associate Network Partner, accessed February 13, 2026, [https://www.esdc.europa.eu/about-us-0/network\\_en#becoming-a-associate-network-partner](https://www.esdc.europa.eu/about-us-0/network_en#becoming-a-associate-network-partner)

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17 European Security and Defence College, Structure, accessed March 13, 2026, [https://www.esdc.europa.eu/about-us-0/structure\\_en](https://www.esdc.europa.eu/about-us-0/structure_en).

18 Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID), "High Level Course (HLC)" (ESDC CSDP High Level Course overview), accessed March 2026, <https://www.defence-institute.be/en/high-studies/hlc/>

19 European Union, "European Security and Defence College" (overview page), accessed March 2026, [https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-security-and-defence-college\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-security-and-defence-college_en)

## 2.5. European Defence Fund (EDF)

The European Defence Fund (EDF) marks a major change in EU defence policy by providing direct funding from the EU budget for joint research and capability development. Proposed in 2016 and fully operational since 2021, the EDF has a budget of €7.953 billion for 2021–2027, with €2.7 billion for collaborative research and €5.3 billion for capability project.<sup>20</sup>

EDF was created to address underinvestment in defence R&D, market fragmentation—80% of procurement was national—and costly duplication, which amounted to €25–100 billion per year.<sup>21</sup> Prior pilot programs were PADR (€90 million over three

years) and EDIDP (€500 million over two years), both aimed at strengthening EU defence collaboration, competitiveness, and innovation.<sup>22</sup>

EDF offers grants covering up to 100% of research costs and co-funding for development, prioritizing SMEs, cross-border cooperation, and PESCO-linked projects.<sup>23</sup> Projects require at least three entities from two member states (three for capability actions). Associated countries like Norway may join,<sup>24</sup> while Western Balkans nations can participate under strict conditions but without EU funding, and have not participated as of 2026.

## 2.6. The European Peace Facility (EPF)

Established in March 2021, the European Peace Facility (EPF) is an off-budget EU instrument, funded directly by Member States, designed to finance the EU's global security activities that cannot be supported by the regular EU budget due to treaty restrictions. Originally capped at about €5 billion for 2021–2027, the EPF's ceiling now exceeds €17 billion, reflecting the EU's expanded military support for Ukraine. It merges previous mechanisms into a single fund with two core mandates: one covers the common costs of EU military missions (like EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina), while civilian missions such as EULEX remain funded via the

regular EU budget to maintain a strict separation between military and civilian operations.

The second mandate, the assistance measures pillar, enables the EU to provide direct support to partner governments for building their armed forces, including specialized training, logistics, and both non-lethal and lethal military equipment. This makes the EPF the main channel for EU defence cooperation with non-EU countries, especially in the Western Balkans, where other EU defence funds remain largely inaccessible.

## 2.7. The EU Military Committee (EUMC)

The EUMC is the highest military body in the EU, advising the Political and Security Committee and directing the EU Military Staff. Made up of Chiefs of Defence from all member states (or their representatives), it meets biannually at CHOD level and weekly at representative level. The EUMC

provides military expertise, assesses situations, and oversees operations, including direct oversight of EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It regularly invites non-EU partners contributing troops to crisis missions to its meetings, promoting regional cooperation and integration into EU

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20 European Commission, "European Defence Fund (EDF) – official webpage," Defence Industry and Space, accessed March 2026, [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en)

21 European Commission, European Defence Fund (EDF) – Factsheet (PDF), 29 April 2021, <https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-04/20210429%20-%20EDF%20Factsheet.pdf>

22 European Defence Agency (EDA), European Defence Fund (EDF), EDA – EU defence initiatives, accessed March 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/european-defence-fund-%28edf%29>

23 European Commission, "European Defence Fund (EDF) – official webpage," Defence Industry and Space, accessed March 2026, [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en)

24 European Defence Agency (EDA), Administrative Arrangement between the European Defence Agency and the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 7 March 2006, <https://ebrokerage.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/aa---eda---mod-norway-07-03-06.pdf>

military structures like the Battlegroups. The EUMC is the main authority for EU hard-power and crisis response in the region.

## 2.8. The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB),

The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) consists of EU defence industries, research institutions, and technology providers supporting military equipment and services. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine revealed Europe's reliance on external suppliers, strengthening EDTIB became a priority. The 2024 European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) outlines goals for EDTIB development by 2035, focusing on collaborative investment, crisis responsiveness, secure supply

chains, and strategic partnerships.<sup>25</sup>

Non-EU countries like those in the Western Balkans (WB) mainly interact with EDTIB as buyers (e.g., French helicopters, German armored vehicles). For WB countries to participate, local defence firms must integrate into EU supply chains, but most currently lack necessary technological certification and security clearance, as they focus on legacy products or basic manufacturing.

## 2.9. European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP)

The European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), adopted in December 2025 with €1.5 billion for 2025-2027, funds common procurement actions, industrial reinforcement to ramp up production capacity, and European Defence Projects of Common Interest.<sup>26</sup> EDIP represents the EU's first-

ever structural, long-term legal framework designed to permanently scale and integrate the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). Officially, also EDIP categorizes WB countries as 'non-associated third countries' which means they are entirely excluded from receiving funding.

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<sup>25</sup> European Commission, "EDIS – Our Common Defence Industrial Strategy," Defence Industry and Space, accessed March 2026, [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edis-our-common-defence-industrial-strategy\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edis-our-common-defence-industrial-strategy_en)

<sup>26</sup> Council of the European Union, "European defence industry programme: Council gives final approval" (press release, PDF), 8 December 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/12/08/european-defence-industry-programme-council-gives-final-approval/pdf/>

# III. Internal Dynamics of the Western Balkans and Collaboration with EU Defence Mechanisms

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The WB6, the region comprised of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, occupy a critical position in Europe's security architecture. As explained above Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has fundamentally reshaped the strategic calculus for European defence, prompting the European Union to accelerate engagement with candidate countries in the region.<sup>1</sup> The WB6 collectively host approximately 200 defence sector companies and have increased military expenditures by 40 to 120 percent between 2020 and 2025.<sup>2</sup> Yet their pathways toward deeper defence cooperation with the EU diverge sharply based on NATO membership status, internal political stability, and alignment with EU foreign policy.

The WB6 although small in size as region, each of its countries present quite distinct models for EU defence cooperation. Albania and Montenegro, as NATO members with clear EU accession paths, have been demonstrating successful integration trajectories despite Montenegro's internal political risks. North Macedonia exemplify how bilateral disputes with EU members can paralyze progress regardless of NATO membership or defence capabilities. Bosnia & Herzegovina continues to

remain hostage of its domestic fragmentation. Serbia due to its persistence to maintain close ties with Russia and China,<sup>3</sup> governmental authoritarianism tendencies,<sup>4</sup> as well as its role as main regional obstructor, primarily in Kosovo<sup>5</sup> and Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>6</sup>. Kosovo on the other hand, due to non-recognition by EU member states faces noticeable challenges in its EU path, albeit aligning 100% with EU Foreign and Security Policy and being staunchly pro-EU.

On the other hand, defence spending trends reveal that the WB region has also joined the global rearmament trend, and this is occurring in varying and to some extent concerning ways. Serbia's €2.2 billion budget dwarfs Albania's €526 million, Montenegro's €150 million, and Kosovo's €208 million.<sup>7</sup> In the North Macedonia some reports suggest that the defence budget in 2025 is around €180 million,<sup>8</sup> while in Bosnia and Herzegovina the official data are missing however, there are some suggestions that it circles at around €260 million. Although higher spending can help WB countries collaborate with the EU, current rhetoric suggests that rearmament is aimed at each other rather than towards building regional peace and security.

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1 European Security & Defence (ESD), EU security in the Western Balkans, European Security & Defence Magazine, July 2025, <https://euro-sd.com/2025/07/articles/exclusive/45585/eu-security-in-the-western-balkans/>

2 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), How the Western Balkans can contribute to European defence, ECFR / Carnegie Europe, October 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/10/how-the-western-balkans-can-contribute-to-european-defence>

3 European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document: Serbia 2024 Report, 30 October 2024, [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3c8c2d7f-bff7-44eb-b868-414730cc5902\\_en?filename=Serbia%20Report%202024.pdf](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3c8c2d7f-bff7-44eb-b868-414730cc5902_en?filename=Serbia%20Report%202024.pdf).

4 Freedom House, "Serbia," Nations in Transit 2024, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/nations-transit/2024>.

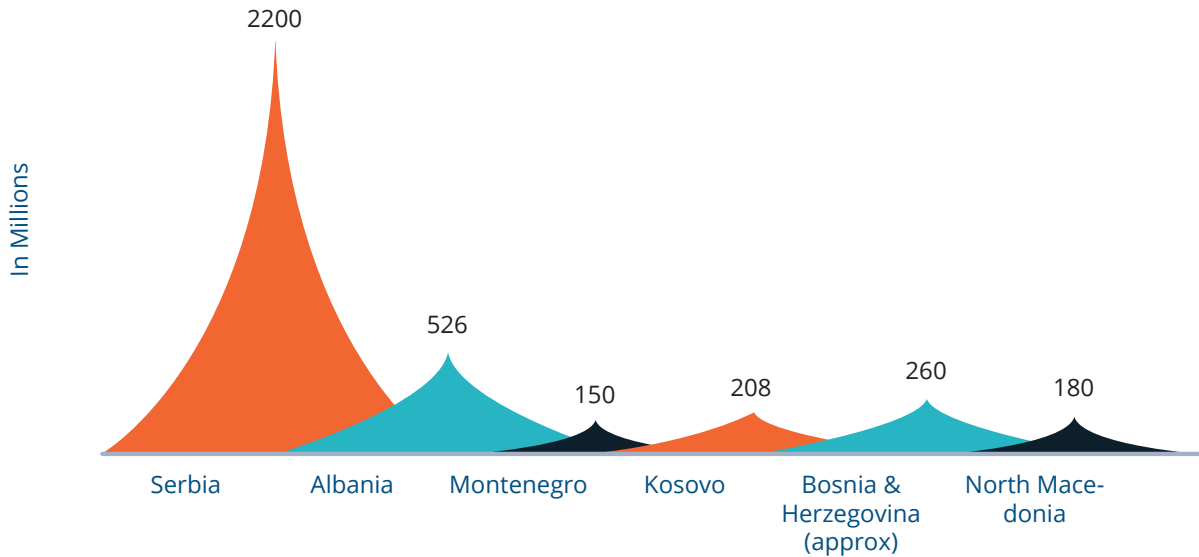
5 European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 19 October 2023 on the recent developments in the Serbia-Kosovo dialogue, including the situation in the northern municipalities in Kosovo (2023/2880(RSP)), 29 April 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/2654/oj/eng>.

6 European Parliament, Report on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina (2025/2018(INI)), A10-0108/2025, 11 June 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0108\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0108_EN.html).

7 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

8 ALTAX, Western Balkans budgets for 2025, 22 December 2024, <https://altax.al/en/western-balkans-budgets-for-2025/>

**The Reported Defence Budget Spending in 2025 - WB Countries in Millions**



Bellow will be analysed briefly each WB6 country's defence cooperation prospects with the EU, evaluating defence capabilities, political alignment,

internal stability factors, and obstacles posed by EU member states.

### 3.1. Albania

Although Albania's is behind Serbia when it comes to establishing formal Defence Cooperation with the European Union, it serves as an important positive example of progress within the Western Balkans Six (WB6) countries. Albania distinguishes itself as a nation with a clear pro-Western orientation, free from significant internal political challenges and major bilateral disputes with neighbouring states that could jeopardize its EU integration process. While being a NATO member since 2009 and, along with Montenegro, Albania over the past three years has also emerged at the forefront of the EU Accession process. This progressive trend is reflected also in the defence sector. In July 2024 Albania received €13 million from EU for its Armed Forces through the European Peace Facility, followed by an additional €15 million package in July 2025, bringing total EU defence support to

€28 million.<sup>9</sup> In November 2024 Albania signing a Security and Defence Partnership (SDP) with EU in November 2024 which is expected to bring a new momentum when it comes to their mutual defence cooperation. This partnership is considered an important step which establishes a framework for enhanced dialogue on crisis management, support to Ukraine, efforts to counter hybrid threats, and cybersecurity.<sup>10</sup> It also demonstrates advanced level of alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Albania has significantly boosted its defence investment over the past five years, with its 2025 budget reaching €526 million—almost double the amount allocated in 2021.<sup>11</sup> It also deploys 500 military personnel in NATO and EU missions at any given time, contributing actively to battlegroups in

<sup>9</sup> BalkanView, EU approves additional €15 million to boost Albania's defence capabilities, BalkanView, 2024, <https://balkanview.com/eu-approves-additional-e15-million-to-boost-albanias-defence-capabilities/>

<sup>10</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), Security and Defence Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Albania, EEAS, 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EU-AL%20Security%20and%20Defence%20Partnership\\_online.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EU-AL%20Security%20and%20Defence%20Partnership_online.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

Latvia and Bulgaria,<sup>12</sup> demonstrating its willingness to provide its share of contribution also when it comes to European defence.

In April 2025 Albania's defence cooperation with the EU received further momentum with the First EU-Albania Security and Defence Dialogue held in Tirana, where Defence Minister Pirro Vengu

emphasized Albania's commitment to participating in EU-led crisis management missions and accessing instruments like the SAFE facility for armed forces modernization.<sup>13</sup> Despite modest domestic defence industry capabilities, Albania is attracting foreign investment and developing dual-use logistics capabilities to support NATO missions.<sup>14</sup>

## 3.2. Montenegro

Montenegro, a NATO member since 2017, over the past decade have constantly been on the forefront when comes to EU accession negotiations, targeting 2028 membership.<sup>15</sup> The country has opened all 33 negotiating chapters and provisionally closed 12 as of December 2025, making it the only candidate to meet interim benchmarks for chapters 23 and 24 on rule of law.<sup>16</sup>

However, unlike Albania, Montenegro does face some noticeable internal challenges. The political landscape over the past few years have been considerably fractured, with pro-Serbian nationalist parties wielding significant political influence and the Serbian Orthodox Church playing a contentious role in domestic politics.<sup>17</sup>

Montenegro's defence budget for 2024 reached €150 million, and the country allocates 1.8 percent of GDP to military spending.<sup>18</sup> The First EU-Montenegro Security and Defence Dialogue was held in Brussels in December 2025, where High Representative Kaja Kallas emphasized EU support for Montenegro's 2028 membership goal. Montenegro has committed to aligning with EU defence initiatives and received an Assistance Measure under the European Peace Facility to enhance armed forces capabilities and interoperability.<sup>19</sup> The country's strategic value lies in its full NATO integration combined with rapid progress toward EU membership, though pro-Russian and pro-Serbian political currents pose ongoing risks to its Western orientation.

## 3.3. North Macedonia

From a defence perspective, North Macedonia has maintained a relatively robust level of effort: its 2024 defence budget was reported at €329 million, including €106 million earmarked for equipment and modernisation, corresponding to around

2.1 percent of GDP.<sup>20</sup> The country also hosts the Krivolak training range, which has become an important site for allied training and exercises, and it has concluded a Security and Defence Partnership with the EU, placing it, at least formally, among the

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12 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), How the Western Balkans can contribute to European defence, In Depth Reports, 7 November 2025, <https://indepthreports.eu/2025/11/07/how-the-western-balkans-can-contribute-to-european-defence/>

13 Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania, Minister Vengu at the First EU-Albania Security and Defence Dialogue: Strengthening defence capabilities for a safer region, MoD Albania, 2024, <https://www.mod.gov.al/eng/newsroom/1879-minister-vengu-at-the-first-eu-albania-security-and-defence-dialogue-dialogue-strengthening-defence-capabilities-for-a-safer-region>

14 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), How the Western Balkans can contribute to European defence, In Depth Reports, 7 November 2025, <https://indepthreports.eu/2025/11/07/how-the-western-balkans-can-contribute-to-european-defence/>

15 European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Montenegro, European Parliament, 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/772900/EPRS\\_ATA%282025%29772900\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/772900/EPRS_ATA%282025%29772900_EN.pdf)

16 New Union Post, Montenegro accession negotiations 2025: Closing chapters and prospects for EU membership, New Union Post, 16 December 2025, <https://newunionpost.eu/2025/12/16/montenegro-accession-negotiations-2025/>

17 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), The integration of Montenegro in the European Union amidst Russian and Serbian influence, Blue Europe, 2024, <https://www.blue-europe.eu/analysis-en/full-reports/the-integration-of-montenegro-in-the-european-union-amidst-russian-and-serbian-influence/>

18 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

19 Government of Montenegro & European External Action Service (EEAS), First EU-Montenegro Security and Defence Dialogue held: Strengthening cooperation and strategic partnership, Government of Montenegro, 2024, <https://www.gov.me/en/article/first-eu-montenegro-security-and-defence-dialogue-held-strengthening-cooperation-and-strategic-partnership>

20 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

region's more advanced partners in the EU defence domain.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, North Macedonia continues to illustrate how bilateral disputes can stall EU integration, and, by extension, complicate deeper defence cooperation with the Union—even after NATO accession (2020). After settling the long-running name dispute with Greece through the 2018 Prespa Agreement, Skopje encountered a new blockage from Bulgaria centred on historical

and linguistic questions.<sup>22</sup> Sofia has additionally conditioned progress on constitutional changes, including formal recognition of a Bulgarian minority, an issue the North Macedonian government has approached with caution.<sup>23</sup> Thus, although North Macedonia has been an EU candidate since 2005 and formally opened accession negotiations in 2022, the process remains effectively frozen due to the Bulgarian veto.

### 3.4. Serbia

Serbia occupies a unique and contradictory position in WB6 defence dynamics. Despite maintaining close ties with Russia and refusing to impose sanctions following the Ukraine invasion, Serbia signed an Administrative Arrangement with the European Defence Agency in 2013. Serbia allocated €2.2 billion to defence in 2024, the highest in the Western Balkans and nearly five times Albania's budget.<sup>24</sup> The country for decades has been playing a double game, procuring weapons from both East and West, purchasing Rafale fighter jets from France while maintaining Chinese drone and missile-defence systems.<sup>25</sup>

Serbia is the largest weapons manufacturer in the WB6, yet its exports have become controversial. Russian intelligence accused Belgrade in May 2024 of delivering ammunition to Ukraine through intermediaries, claims Serbia officially denies while implicitly claiming credit.<sup>26</sup> In June 2025, President Aleksandar Vučić announced a complete halt to

weapons exports, citing international pressure and the appearance of Serbian ammunition on both sides of the Ukraine conflict.<sup>27</sup>

Serbia's defence posture is further complicated by its ambitious vis-à-vis the state of Kosovo. The September 2023 Banjska terrorist attack, where an armed terrorist group killed a Kosovo police officer, implicated Serbian state involvement and demonstrated Belgrade's destabilizing capacity.<sup>28</sup> Russia supports Vučić's potential efforts to incite armed incursion in Kosovo, a scenario that would fundamentally challenge regional stability. Thus, although when it comes to EU defence Serbia may be better positioned, given its industrial capacity and EDA arrangement, in principle it represents a fundamental challenge due to its refusal to align with EU foreign policy on Russia, its territorial disputes with Kosovo and overall instability that it brings in the whole WB region.

21 ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, "Ongoing operations within the framework of the international exercise IR 25" (training activities at ATA 'Krivolač' with NATO and partner units), 30 May 2025, <https://mil.mk/exercises/techat-aktivnostite-vo-ramki-na-megjunarodnata-vezhba-ir-25/?lang=en>.

22 Euronews, Marina Stoimenova, Neighbourly conflicts hinder North Macedonia at the gates of the EU, Euronews, 31 October 2025, <https://www.euronews.com/2025/10/31/neighbourly-conflicts-hinder-north-macedonia-at-the-gates-of-the-eu>

23 Ibid

24 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

25 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Jelena Jankovic and Ljudmila Cvetkovic, Serbia deepens military ties with China through drones and air defence systems, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 7 January 2026, <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-china-military-cooperation-drones-air-defence-security/33626646.html>

26 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), How the Western Balkans can contribute to European defence, ECFR / Carnegie Europe, October 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/10/how-the-western-balkans-can-contribute-to-european-defence>

27 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Mila Manojlovic, Vučić halts ammunition exports, says supplies will go to Serbian army, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 June 2025, <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-arms-exports-ukraine-russia-vucic/33453578.html>

28 Prishtina Insight, Blerta Begisholli, Kosovo's report reveals Banjska terrorist attack details, Prishtina Insight, 27 October 2023, <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovos-report-reveals-banjska-terrorist-attack-details-mag>

## 3.5. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina presents the most complex case among WB6 countries due to its tripartite political structure and internal divisions. The country remains in NATO's Membership Action Plan since 2010 but faces systematic obstruction from Republika Srpska, one of its two constituent entities.<sup>29</sup> Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik has enacted legislation banning state-level judicial and police institutions from operating in RS territory and was sentenced in February 2025 to one year in prison for defying High Representative decisions, though he continues to serve.<sup>30</sup> Bosnia's defence budget is thought to be the lowest in the region at 0.7 percent of GDP.<sup>31</sup>

Despite political dysfunction, Bosnia possesses significant defence industry capacity inherited from Yugoslavia. The country is home to roughly 200

defence companies, including Pretis Vogošća, BNT Novi Travnik, and Binas Bugojno, with combined production potential exceeding some EU ventures.<sup>32</sup> Bosnia's defence exports reached €200 million in 2025, double the 2023 figure, with products including NATO-standard and Soviet-caliber ammunition.<sup>33</sup>

The EU maintains Operation Althea (EUFOR) in Bosnia with over 1,000 troops, and NATO approved a Defence and Related Security Capacity Building package in February 2023 covering crisis management, cyber defence, and counter-terrorism.<sup>34</sup> However, Bosnia's internal political crisis—characterized by Dodik's secessionist rhetoric and constitutional challenges—renders defence cooperation highly unstable and dependent on international oversight.

## 3.6. Kosovo

Kosovo declared independence in 2008 with strong backing from the United States and broad support across the European Union. Nevertheless, its progress toward EU and NATO integration remains constrained by the continued nonrecognition of its statehood by five EU member states, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, four of which are also NATO members<sup>35</sup>, despite Kosovo's unequivocal pro-Western alignment. Kosovo's defence architecture centers on the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), established in 2009 in accordance

with the Ahtisaari Plan as a lightly armed civil protection bod.<sup>36</sup> In December 2018, Kosovo's parliament voted to transform the KSF into a regular army, the Kosovo Armed Forces, expanding from 2,500 to 5,000 active personnel with territorial defence missions—a transformation projected for completion by 2028.<sup>37</sup> Prime Minister Albin Kurti has committed over €1 billion to defence over four years, with the 2025 budget reaching €208 million, up from €69 million in 2021.<sup>38</sup> Public support for NATO membership in Kosovo stands at 92 percent

29 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO Topic Page, 09 December 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

30 Security Council Report, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monthly Forecast, May 2025, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2025-05/bosnia-and-herzegovina-13.php>

31 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

32 European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), How the Western Balkans can contribute to European Defence, ECFR / Carnegie Europe, October 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/10/how-the-western-balkans-can-contribute-to-european-defence>

33 Fair Observer, Bosnia's quiet rearmament: How a small defence industry is becoming Europe's hidden supplier, Fair Observer, 2024, <https://www.fairobserver.com/business/bosnias-quiet-rearmament-how-a-small-defence-industry-is-becoming-europes-hidden-supplier/>

34 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina," NATO (topic page), <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

35 Balkans Policy Research Group (BPRG), Kosovo: Unlocking its Euro-Atlantic Path – The EU, Dialogue on Normalisation of Relations with Serbia, and the Prospects for Recognition by Five European Non-Recognisers, Balkans Policy Research Group, March 2023, <https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Kosovo-Unlocking-its-Euro-Atlantic-Path-1.pdf>

36 United Nations, Martti Ahtisaari, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (Ahtisaari Plan), UN Security Council document S/2007/168/Add.1, 26 March 2007, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/595359>

37 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 06/L123 on the Kosovo Security Force (as amended) and accompanying defence legislation establishing the Ministry of Defence and governing the transformation of the KSF, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, 14 December 2018 (as amended through 27 December 2024), <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=18375&langid=2>

38 Central European Report, Western Balkans double down on defence spending, Central European Report, 2024, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

among all citizens and 99.5 percent among Kosovo Albanians.<sup>39</sup>

However, the direct political relations between NATO and Kosovo have faced limits since 2018, mainly due to rigid stance of the non-recognizers.<sup>40</sup> Kosovo's security remains guaranteed by NATO's KFOR mission with approximately 5,200 troops,<sup>41</sup> who is continuing to support the development of KSF and its Ministry albeit, formally ignoring the transformation process that began in 2018.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, cooperation between Kosovo and the European Union in the defence sector has, to date, remained relatively limited and has primarily been conducted through indirect mechanisms and capacity-building initiatives, rather than via the formal partnership frameworks accessible to other Western Balkans Six countries. This situation is largely attributable to the post-independence arrangements outlined in the Ahtisaari Plan, which although not explicitly, implicitly assigned specific roles to both the EU and NATO. The EU through deployment of EULEX took responsibility

of monitoring, mentoring, and advising rule of law institutions and the judiciary, while also temporarily retaining reserved police and judicial powers. Concurrently, the development of KSF and its Ministry was entrusted to NATO.

At the time, this division of roles were considered pragmatic and appropriate, given the EU's undeveloped military capabilities. However, in the past four years, the EU's role as a defence actor has expanded substantially, underscoring the growing importance for Kosovo to seek and establish direct cooperation with the EU in this domain. With the announcement of the launching of first elements of Kosovo defence industry, it has been transmitted the production of ammunition, rockets and drones will serve the purchase of Kosovo authorities, including its allies. Kosovo has listed as one of its priorities exploring the ways of increasing defence cooperation with the EU, considering this one of its objectives serving mutual interest while indicating it as a niche in the existing relations between Kosovo and the EU.

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39 Qendra Kosovare për Studime të Sigurisë (QKSS), Leureta Lumi, Diskutim i marrëdhënieve KosovëNATO: Perspektivat për bashkëpunim më të madh, QKSS, 26 qershor 2024, <https://qkss.org/al/publikimet/diskutim-i-marredhenieve-kosove-nato-perspektivat-per-bashkepunit-me-te-madh>

40 Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS/QKSS), Ramadan Ilazi and Jeta Loshaj, Exploring options for advancing KosovoNATO relations, KCSS, 10 March 2025, <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/exploring-options-for-advancing-kosovo-nato-relations/>

41 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), NATO's role in Kosovo, NATO Topic Page, updated 9 February 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/operations-and-missions/natos-role-in-kosovo>

42 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), NATO's role in Kosovo, NATO Topic Page, updated 9 February 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/operations-and-missions/natos-role-in-kosovo>

| COUNTRY                       | NATO STATUS          | EU STATUS           | EDA COOPERATION                   | KEY STRENGTHS   | MAIN CONSTRAINTS  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Albania</b>                | NATO member (2009)   | Candidate           | None                              | Peacekeeping contributions; logistics hub                         | Limited industrial base                                     |
| <b>Montenegro</b>             | NATO member (2017)   | Candidate           | None                              | Strategic Adriatic position                                       | Very limited resources                                      |
| <b>North Macedonia</b>        | NATO member (2020)   | Candidate           | None                              | Krivolak military training range                                  | Small scale capabilities                                    |
| <b>Serbia</b>                 | Nonmember            | Candidate           | Administrative Arrangement (2013) | Inherited defence industrial base                                 | Russia–China alignment; nonrecognition of Kosovo;           |
| <b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b> | Nonmember            | Potential candidate | None                              | Yugoslava defence infrastructure                                  | Internal divisions; Republika Srpska obstruction            |
| <b>Kosovo</b>                 | Nonmember (aspiring) | Potential candidate | None                              | Cybersecurity/ ICT potential; very high proWestern public support | Nonrecognition by 5 EU member states (incl. 4 NATO members) |

**Western Balkans Defence Cooperation Comparison Table**

# IV. Kosovo's Defence Sector Development and its Cooperation with EU

## 4.1. Overview of Kosovo's Defence Sector Development

Kosovo's defence sector emerged from the post-conflict state-building process following independence on February 17, 2008. The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and its Ministry were established from the ground up under the framework of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, known as the Ahtisaari Plan, which recommended supervised independence and stipulated that the KSF would hold only a civil protection mandate for its initial years.<sup>1</sup> This responsibility felt under NATO supervision<sup>2</sup> reflecting both presence of the KFOR mission in Kosovo since 1999 and the limited military focus of EU at that time. This division of labor meant that the EU would be largely spared from direct involvement with Kosovo's defence institutions, leading to uncertainties about how it will engage with this sector going forward.

The KSF consolidated rapidly, achieving full operational capability within its initial civil protection mandate by September 2013.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, Kosovo institutions initiated a Strategic Security Sector Review published in March 2014, which proposed transforming the KSF into a small-scale defence force.<sup>4</sup> However, political circumstances delayed this process until December 2018, when the Kosovo Assembly adopted a comprehensive legislative package consisting of

three interconnected laws: the Law on the Kosovo Security Force, the Law on the Ministry of Defence, and the Law on Service in the Kosovo Security Force.<sup>5</sup> This legislative framework gave the KSF a defence force mandate with military capabilities, transforming it from a limited civilian protection force into an institution responsible for territorial defence, collective security contributions, and crisis response.

The transformation established a ten-year period from 2018 to 2028, structured in three progressive phases designed to build capabilities systematically while managing international sensitivities. The initial force structure targets envisioned 5,000 regular active members and 3,000 reserve force personnel, equipped exclusively with defensive weapons.<sup>6</sup> NATO's response to the transformation once again reflected the political complexities created by non-recognition from four NATO members (Spain, Slovakia, Romania, and Greece). While NATO is yet to formally recognize this transformation process, it maintained similar cooperation with the new transformed KSF, allowing functional collaboration to continue despite political limitations.

The transformation of the KSF into a defence force holds great significance for several reasons. First, it addresses the security gap that until now have

1 Martti Ahtisaari, Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Annex VIII: Kosovo Security Sector, UN Doc. S/2007/168/Add.1 (New York: United Nations, 26 March 2007), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/595359>.

2 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "NATO's role in Kosovo", NATO, last updated 9 February 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/operations-and-missions/natos-role-in-kosovo>

3 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "NATO's role in Kosovo", NATO, last updated 9 February 2026, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/operations-and-missions/natos-role-in-kosovo>

4 Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Analysis of the Strategic Security Sector Review of the Republic of Kosovo, March 2014, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Analysis-of-Strategic-Security-Sector-Review-of-RKS-060314.pdf>.

5 Florian Qehaja and Ramadan Ilazi, Busting Myths about KSF Transition into a Defence Force, Prishtina: Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), June 2021, [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/KSF\\_Eng\\_223324.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/KSF_Eng_223324.pdf)

6 Florian Qehaja and Ramadan Ilazi, Busting Myths about KSF Transition into a Defence Force, Prishtina: Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), June 2021, [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/KSF\\_Eng\\_223324.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/KSF_Eng_223324.pdf)

been only filled by KFOR, offering NATO a potential alternative should its members decide to adjust their mission in the future. It provides an additional layer of security for Kosovo's citizens, especially given that Kosovo remains formally threatened by Serbia, which refuses to recognize its statehood. Importantly, this transformation has enabled Kosovo to expand both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with allied countries in the defence

sector, marking a major shift from being solely a beneficiary of international defence support to gradually becoming a contributor to peace and security elsewhere. Meanwhile, the geo-political development which resulted with growing security and defence threats have triggered an accelerated process of its consolidation which will be highlighted below.

## 4.2. Kosovo's Response to Growing Security Challenges: Between Necessary Action and EU Escalation Concerns

Over recent years, political relations between Kosovo and Serbia have deteriorated markedly, and constructive engagement in the EU-facilitated dialogue has declined. This trend is closely linked to political developments in Serbia, where nationalist forces returned to prominence in 2016, thereby complicating the EU-facilitated dialogue and increasing bilateral tensions, particularly in the northern part of Kosovo.

The dynamics shifted also when Albin Kurti returned to power following a brief interruption in 2020. Among the new government's first steps was to tighten rule-of-law enforcement in the four northern municipalities, with the stated aim of dismantling parallel structures and strengthening legal compliance. These measures were challenged both by 'Lista Srpska'—a Belgrade-linked satellite party—and by illegal structures controlled by Belgrade. The most consequential step came in November 2022, when Kosovo Serb representatives collectively resigned from Kosovo's institutions in the four northern Serb-majority municipalities, including police officers, prosecutors, judges, and mayors—following a meeting in Serbia organised by Lista Srpska.

To address the resulting institutional vacuum, Kosovo authorities promptly deployed personnel from other regions, largely from the Albanian majority. They also organised early local elections in the four northern municipalities, shortly after

the EU-facilitated Brussels "Agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia" and its implementation annex were reached. However, the elections were boycotted despite calls from the international community for participation; as a result, Albanian candidates won all four mayoral seats. The international community largely accepted the legality of Kosovo's steps, including the election results, but urged restraint due to escalation risks.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these concerns, the government proceeded with installing the new mayors in the northern municipalities. This decision prompted the EU to impose temporary, reversible measures, including freezing certain funding and suspending high-level Stabilisation and Association meetings. Yet, the EU's critical tone appears to have been misperceived by Belgrade-linked parallel structures as a shift in momentum, consequently fueling further escalation. As a result, protests in these 4 municipalities intensified and became increasingly violent.

On May 29, 2023, violent clashes erupted in the Serb-majority northern municipality of Zvečan when protesters attacked NATO peacekeeping forces (KFOR) and Kosovo Police with clubs, Molotov cocktails, improvised explosive devices, and firearms. The unprovoked attacks injured 93 KFOR soldiers, including 11 Italian and 19 Hungarian troops who sustained fractures and burns, with three Hungarian soldiers wounded by firearms.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (on behalf of France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US), "Joint Statement on Kosovo," 18 May 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-kosovo>

<sup>8</sup> NATO KFOR, "KFOR update on unprovoked attacks in Zvečan," Allied Joint Force Command Naples (KFOR News), 30 May 2023, <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/media-center/archive/news/2023/kfor-update-on-unprovoked-attacks-in-zvecan>.

Nevertheless, despite the severity of the attack, in attempt not to escalate the situation the language of the international community towards this violence used by protestors was largely moderate.

Two weeks later, on June 14–15, 2023, three Kosovo police officers were reportedly kidnapped by a masked, uniformed group inside Kosovo near the border and then taken into Serbia, where they were detained by Serbian forces. Kosovo authorities described the incident as a “kidnapping” and an act of “revenge” for Kosovo’s earlier arrest of a Kosovo Serb suspect while as expected Serbia authorities provided opposite version.<sup>9</sup> The international community once again responded cautiously stating only that Kosovo Police did not had intention to pass the border and that they should be released immediately.

However, the careful language used in both of these aforementioned incidents and the harsh stance of EU towards Kosovo did not provided effects of decreasing the tension on Serbia side. On the contrary, those stances only seem to have only encouraged the illegal structures in the North as the most severe incident were yet to come. On September 24, 2023, a heavily armed Serb militant group led by Milan Radoicic, former vice president of the Serbian List party, launched a terrorist attack in the village of Banjska near the Serbia-Kosovo border.<sup>10</sup> Between 30 and 80 militants ambushed a Kosovo Police convoy, with Sergeant Afrim Bunjaku

being killed and two other police officers getting wounded, before barricading themselves in Banjska Monastery. Kosovo Police eventually retook the monastery after hours of gunfire, killing three militants and seizing over thousands of weapons and equipment valued at more than 5 million euros, including weapons produced in Serbia that cannot be found on the open market.

Radoicic later admitted responsibility for organizing and leading the attack, and Kosovo prosecutors indicted him along with 44 others on terrorism charges, alleging the group aimed to use violence to secede northern Kosovo and annex it to Serbia. Kosovo government, the EU High Representative Mr. Joseph Borrell,<sup>11</sup> and European Parliament<sup>12</sup> classified the Banjska incident as a terrorist attack, with Kosovo’s Assembly calling for an international inquiry into alleged Serbian state involvement. Nevertheless, unlike the temporary measures imposed on Kosovo, the EU (clearly due to the veto of some of the EU countries with close ties with Serbian leadership)<sup>13</sup> failed to adopt punitive measures against Serbia, despite the later posing far more serious to security situation in Kosovo and the wider region.

In March 2026 all measures imposed by EU towards Kosovo have been lifted.<sup>14</sup> However during this period very few EU projects and initiatives were implemented in Kosovo.

### 4.3. Kosovo’s Institutional Response to Growing Security Threats: Transforming the Defence Sector

Due to security concerns explained above in four northern municipalities of Kosovo—including direct escalation threats from Serbia—and growing

fears that Russia, following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, may seek to influence Serbian nationalist groups to ignite conflict in the Balkans (particularly

<sup>9</sup> Serbia detains three Kosovo police officers, Kosovo says they were “kidnapped”, France 24, 15 June 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20230614-serbia-detains-three-kosovo-police-officers-kosovo-says-they-were-kidnapped>.

<sup>10</sup> Prishtina Insight, “Kosovo Indicts 45 for Deadly Attack by Armed Serb Group in Banjska,” 11 September 2024, <https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovo-indicts-45-for-deadly-attack-by-armed-serb-group-in-banjska/>

<sup>11</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), “Kosovo: High Representative Borrell speaks to Prime Minister Kurti and President Vučić following attack in Banjska,” 25 September 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/kosovo-high-representative-borrell-speaks-prime-minister-kurti-and-president-vucic-following-attack\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/kosovo-high-representative-borrell-speaks-prime-minister-kurti-and-president-vucic-following-attack_en)

<sup>12</sup> European Parliament, “Serbia and Kosovo must work to de-escalate the situation in northern Kosovo,” Press release, 19 October 2023, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231013IPR07135/serbia-and-kosovo-must-work-to-de-escalate-the-situation-in-northern-kosovo>.

<sup>13</sup> BiEPAG, A Triangle of Mistrust: Hungary’s Enlargement Stakes in Serbia and Kosovo, Policy Brief No. 206, April 2024, <https://www.biepag.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/policy-brief-a-triangle-of-mistrust-hungarys-enlargement-stakes-in-serbia-and-kosovo-206.pdf>.

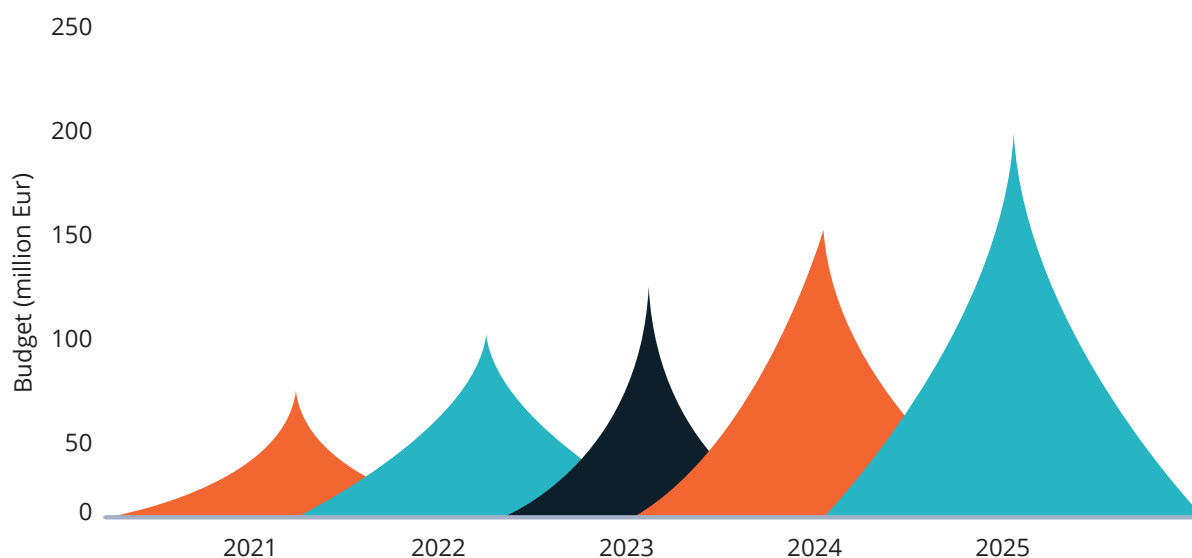
<sup>14</sup> European Western Balkans, “Kosovo leaders welcome lifting of all EU punitive measures,” European Western Balkans, 18 March 2026, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2026/03/18/kosovo-leaders-welcome-lifting-of-all-eu-punitive-measures/>.

in northern Kosovo) in order to divert Western attention and support from Ukraine, Kosovo's institutions have been compelled to rapidly increase investment in the police and defence sectors. As a result, in the recent years defence spending in Kosovo have risen sharply, increasing from €69 million in 2021 to €97 million in 2022, €116.4 million in 2023, €153 million in 2024, and €208 million in 2025.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Prime Minister Albin Kurti has committed more than €1 billion to defence over the four-year period from 2026 to 2029, demonstrating Kosovo's determination to develop credible deterrence capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, increased budget spending is not the only measure undertaken by Kosovo's institutions

in response to the growing security threats. Over the past four years, the transformation goals of the defence sector have expanded far beyond the initial ambitions set in 2018. While the original plan emphasized purely defensive capabilities and avoided actions that could be perceived as provocative, the new amendments to the Law on the KSF have lifted previous limitations on troop numbers and the development of offensive capabilities.<sup>17</sup> This now allows Kosovo's institutions to pursue longer range precision weapons, enhanced intelligence and surveillance systems, and mobile strike forces capable of responding rapidly to incursions.

#### KOSOVO DEFENCE BUDGET GROWTH 2021 -2025



Kosovo has also initiated concrete defence industry development efforts, including agreements with Türkiye on establishing an ammunition factory in accordance with NATO standards and ongoing discussions regarding drone manufacturing.<sup>18</sup> Similar plans have also been mentioned within

the framework of the Kosovo–Albania–Croatia trilateral defence agreement: beyond enhancing military interoperability and joint training, the parties have also emphasized near-term plans to develop synergies in the defence industry, including coordinated investments, shared production

15 CE Report, "Western Balkans double down on defence spending", Central Europe Report, CE Report, 7 April 2026, <https://www.cereport.eu/news/politics/83394>

16 European Western Balkans, "Kurti Re-elected as PM, Government Approves Draft Law on EU Growth Plan," European Western Balkans, 12 February 2026, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2026/02/12/kurti-re-elected-as-pm-government-approves-draft-law-on-eu-growth-plan/>.

17 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 06/L123 on the Kosovo Security Force (as amended by Law No. 08/L157 of 30 November 2022 and by Law No. 08/L276 of 27 December 2024), consolidated entry, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=18375&langid=2>.

18 Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, "Agreement signed with Turkish state-owned defence industry producer 'Makine ve Kimya Endüstrisi' for the functionalization of the ammunition factory in Kosovo," 16 December 2024, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/news/agreement-signed-with-turkish-state-owned-defence-industry-producer-makine-ve-kimya-endustrisi/>.

capacities, and closer alignment of technological and industrial capabilities among the three countries.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, Kosovo is hoping for a breakthrough when it comes to establishing formal cooperation with NATO with the clear aspiration for membership, and it also as it is going to be elaborate bellow, is looking forward to expend its cooperation with EU also in the defence sector.

On the downside, despite these ambitious plans to enhance cooperation in the defence sector, Kosovo

is still lacks comprehensive legislation regulating the defence industry, creating legal uncertainty for potential investors.<sup>20</sup> Plans exist to establish a dedicated defence industry park with specialized infrastructure and security arrangements modeled on Croatian practices, although transitioning from planning to an operational industrial zone will require substantial investment and regulatory development.<sup>21</sup>

## 4.4. Overview of Defence Cooperation Between Kosovo and European Union

The European Union has played a central and multifaceted role in Kosovo's post-conflict development, becoming its largest investor while managing the political constraints created by five non-recognizing member states. Its engagement began through participation in UNMIK (1999–2008), followed by the deployment of EULEX after Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence. As the EU's largest civilian CSDP mission to date,<sup>22</sup> EULEX combined monitoring, mentoring, and advising with direct authority to investigate and prosecute sensitive cases, including war crimes and highlevel corruption. Additionally, the EU has been the largest investor in Kosovo's postindependence transition. However, the EU's neutral stance, shaped by the position of the five nonrecognizing member states, has also created complications for Kosovo's integration processes. This has been particularly evident in the defence sector, where the Union has largely avoided direct involvement with the Ministry of Defence or the Kosovo Security Force so as not to duplicate NATO's primary role in mentoring and supporting this sector. Back in 2008-2009, in the aftermath of Kosovo's independence, both NATO and EU faced similar dilemmas, due to same non-recognizing countries. Therefore, this division of responsibilities

regarding the KSF was rather done for strategically and practical purposes: NATO, through the KFOR mission present since 1999, was best positioned to develop Kosovo's defence institutions, while the EU, still not a defence-oriented actor, focused its engagement on broader institutional development rather than defence structures. Otherwise, NATO's approach towards Kosovo has been characterized as even more rigid than the EU's creative neutrality, limiting cooperation to enhanced interactions without formal partnership frameworks despite Kosovo's overwhelming public support for NATO membership, which stands at approximately 90 percent among all citizens.<sup>23</sup> Due to it, the direct political relations between NATO and Kosovo have seen minimal advancement since 2018, mainly due to non-recognizers, even as NATO's KFOR mission with approximately 5,200 troops continues to support KSF development while formally ignoring the transformation process that began in 2018. Henceforth, Kosovo's situation with EU defence cooperation differs from its NATO relationship in important ways.

Most notably, Kosovo already has a proclaimed EU accession path as a potential candidate country,<sup>24</sup> creating institutional frameworks for

19 Albania, Croatia and Kosovo, Joint Declaration on Defence Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of Albania, 22 March 2025, <https://www.mod.gov.al/en/newsroom/1805-albania-croatia-and-kosovo-sign-joint-declaration-on-defence-cooperation>,

20 Qualitative Interview with a MoD Official, February 2026

21 Ibid

22 Council of the European Union, "EULEX: Council Renews the Mandate of the EU Civilian Mission in Kosovo\*," Council press release, 17 June 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/06/17/eulex-council-renews-the-mandate-of-the-eu-civilian-mission-in-kosovostar/>.

23 BalkanWeb, "International Republican Institute: Kosovo and Albania, the Most ProWestern Countries in the Western Balkans," BalkanWeb, 29 April 2024, <https://www.balkanweb.com/en/international-republican-institute-kosovo-and-albania-the-most-pro-western-countries-in-the-western-balkans/#gsc.tab=0>

24 European External Action Service, "EU and Kosovo," EEAS webpage, accessed February 2026, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/eu-and-kosovo\\_en?s=321](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/eu-and-kosovo_en?s=321)

gradual integration that do not exist with NATO. The EU has demonstrated greater flexibility in developing creative solutions to accommodate political sensitivities while maintaining functional cooperation, as reflected in EULEX's sustained operations, the European accession prospect, and its role in facilitating the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue. This demonstrated creativity in the EU's neutrality approach to Kosovo's status offers potential templates for defence cooperation capable of overcoming individual member state objections by prioritising collective European security interests.

Bilateral relations are essential in this context. Kosovo has built significant defence partnerships with Germany, Italy, France, Austria, the Baltic states, Scandinavian countries, Croatia, and most other EU members that recognize Kosovo. These countries could help promote innovative inclusion mechanisms within EU defence frameworks. These bilateral partnerships provide immediate cooperation opportunities while building political momentum for eventual institutional engagement with EU defence mechanisms like the European Defence Agency.

## 4.5. Entry Points to Enhance Kosovo-EU Defence Cooperation

Despite formidable political obstacles created by non-recognition, multiple potential entry points exist for Kosovo to engage with the European Defence Agency and broader EU defence sector, differentiated by timeframe, political feasibility, and institutional requirements.

### a. CSDP Mission Contributions

Although Kosovo does not currently participate in any CSDP missions, beyond hosting EULEX, it has demonstrated a clear willingness to move from being a recipient of peacekeeping and stabilisation support to becoming a contributor to international peace and security operations. This shift reflects both the development of practical capabilities and a broader political and psychological commitment to reciprocating the international support received during and after the 1998–1999 conflict. Kosovo also benefits from extensive experience in hosting international missions, having served as the deployment location for NATO's KFOR mission since 1999 and EULEX since 2008. This longterm exposure has provided Kosovo's personnel with a solid understanding of international operational standards, logistical requirements, and civil–military coordination practices. Participation in CSDP missions would therefore demonstrate Kosovo's reliability as a partner, enhance interoperability with EU member

states, and provide valuable operational experience that cannot be replicated through training exercises alone.

Kosovo must prioritize also a Security and Defence Partnership with the EU, similar to agreements made by Albania and North Macedonia. Such a partnership would enable Kosovo to participate in EU CSDP missions and act as a gateway for cooperation with the EDA and other EU defence-related instruments and initiatives.

### b. Direct EDA Cooperation Pathway

The Direct EDA Cooperation Pathway represents the most direct but politically challenging approach. The fundamental barrier is the unanimous approval requirement for administrative arrangements by all 27 defence ministers serving on the EDA Steering Board, with non-recognizing states able to block such arrangements even if supportive states push for inclusion. However, precedents exist for creative institutional solutions: Serbia's 2013 administrative arrangement demonstrates that Western Balkans non-EU states can achieve formal EDA cooperation; Ukraine's 2015 arrangement shows that countries in complex political situations can be accommodated;<sup>25</sup> and the 2025 update of Switzerland's arrangement

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<sup>25</sup> European Defence Agency, "Administrative Arrangement between the European Defence Agency and Ukraine," EDA document, accessed 16 March 2026, <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/aa---eda---ukraine-mod-07-12-15.pdf>.

indicates that existing frameworks can be modernized and expanded<sup>26</sup>.

Having said that, Kosovo needs to be aware of challenges and should pursue a graduated approach beginning urgently with informal technical consultations on areas of mutual interest such as cybersecurity, where capabilities exist and security imperatives create incentives for cooperation. Functional cooperation arrangements focused on specific domains—cyber defence, medical support, mine clearance—might prove more politically achievable than comprehensive administrative arrangements for the time being, allowing Kosovo to demonstrate value while building trust with reluctant member states.

### c. European Security and Defence College Engagement

ESDC engagement offers a less politically fraught entry point focused on education and training rather than operational cooperation or procurement. Kosovo could seek to formalize participation in ESDC training activities, exchange programs, and research initiatives, building institutional relationships and demonstrating professional competence while avoiding the political sensitivities of operational military cooperation. Such engagement would develop human capital within Kosovo's defence institutions, enhance interoperability through shared professional education, and create networks between Kosovo defence personnel and their EU counterparts that could facilitate cooperation in other domains over time.

### d. Alternative and Complementary Mechanisms

Several promising avenues exist beyond traditional EDA pathways. The EU Democracy Shield initiative, which focuses on protecting European democratic values and institutions

from hybrid threats, has provided indications that Kosovo will be included according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials. Formal participation in this initiative could create precedent for Kosovo's involvement in EU security mechanisms despite non-recognition obstacles.

Joint procurement with individual EU member states, particularly those with supportive policies toward Kosovo such as Germany, France, Croatia, or Baltic states, represents a pragmatic approach that could provide access to better pricing, faster delivery, and interoperable equipment while building bilateral defence relationships. The Readiness 2030 framework, while not explicitly including mechanisms for non-EU candidate countries to access SAFE instrument loans, does enable participation in common procurement projects involving at least two countries, suggesting Kosovo could explore whether trilateral arrangements (Kosovo plus two EU states) might enable participation in joint procurement initiatives.

### e. Bilateral Defence Cooperation

Bilateral defence cooperation agreements with individual EU member states offer the most immediately achievable pathway and should be prioritized in short-term strategy. Countries like Croatia, which has successfully developed defence industries during its EU integration process, could serve as models and partners for Kosovo's industrial development. Germany and France, as the EU's leading defence powers and Kosovo recognizers, could provide political backing for creative inclusion mechanisms while offering direct cooperation in capability development. Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark) have demonstrated sophisticated approaches to non-aligned defence cooperation and might be willing to pioneer innovative frameworks for engaging Kosovo.

<sup>26</sup> Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), "Security Policy Report," Swiss Government webpage, accessed 16 March 2026, [https://www.vtg.admin.ch/en/newnsb/jqeY1\\_dgIyb3wlQ2pZqUs](https://www.vtg.admin.ch/en/newnsb/jqeY1_dgIyb3wlQ2pZqUs).

## 4.6. Phased Strategy for Enhanced Cooperation

Kosovo does not yet have a clearly articulated, phased strategy for enhanced cooperation with the European Union. Several factors help explain this gap. First, Kosovo has not fully consolidated its defence sector, even as the 2028 transformation deadline is rapidly approaching. Second, the development of Kosovo's defence sector has largely taken place under the NATO umbrella. When Kosovo began laying the foundations of its defence institutions, NATO's KFOR mission was already present, while the EU lacked defence-specific instruments comparable to those of NATO. This dynamic was further reinforced by the EU's status-neutral approach, shaped by the non-recognition of Kosovo by five EU member states.

Nevertheless, unlike NATO—which has refrained from establishing formal cooperation frameworks with Kosovo—the EU already has a track record of engagement, most notably through EULEX, the accession perspective, and its facilitation of the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue. Moreover, recent geopolitical developments have accelerated the EU's evolution as a security and defence actor, with the most significant changes occurring precisely in the defence domain. As a result, cooperation between Kosovo and the EU in the defence sector has become increasingly important. This underscores the need for a comprehensive strategy, urgently sequenced across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons, with clear priorities and realistic expectations shaped by existing political constraints.

For this to happen, Kosovo institutions should do both the homework and should also undertake a sophisticated diplomatic engagement. Among others, they must invest systematically in bilateral relationships with Germany, France, and Scandinavian countries to cultivate champions for Kosovo's defence cooperation; internal capacity building within Ministry of Defence international cooperation department to ensure institutional readiness to manage complex partnership frameworks when opportunities arise; investment in professional and technical education oriented toward defence industry and technology; legislative action to adopt comprehensive regulatory framework for defence industry;

strengthening parliamentary oversight of defence sector to mitigate corruption risks; and strategic communications emphasizing Kosovo's unique value proposition including highest popular support for Euro-Atlantic integration in Europe, proven loyalty to Western partners, specific capabilities in emerging technology domains like cybersecurity and ICT, and the security risks created by Kosovo's continued isolation.

Bellow will be provided a short overview of what the realistic but also ambitious short-term, mid-term and long-term priorities of the Kosovo institutions when it comes to developing defence cooperation would mean:

### i. Short-Term Priorities (2026-2027)

The short-term phase should focus on prioritising EU defence cooperation through a dedicated diplomatic campaign centred on engagement with the European Defence Agency (EDA), alongside the pursuit of bilateral defence agreements, particularly in the area of joint procurement. Key priorities should also include accelerating the development of a defence industrial zone, concluding CSDP administrative arrangements, intensifying lobbying efforts with EU member states, and enhancing participation in international peacekeeping operations. Expected outcomes include the initiation of formal diplomatic engagement with EU defence institutions, the establishment of initial joint procurement arrangements, and the creation of foundational infrastructure for defence industrial development.

In parallel, Kosovo should advance internal institutional reforms by adopting the necessary legislative framework, including comprehensive legislation regulating the defence industry. Priority should also be given to the development of domestic defence-industrial capacities, such as assigning the area where the defence industry park is going to be built, and strengthening bilateral cooperation focused on joint defence initiatives, including weapons and ammunition production.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with a representative from MoD, February 2026

## ii. Medium-Term Objectives (2028-2030)

The medium-term timeframe should target active participation in the regional defence projects supported by EU, build advanced bilateral cooperation with key EU states with a goal of building special partnerships, defence industry park being constructed and at use, initial weapon and ammunition production built; advanced capacities in niche areas like cybersecurity and ICT being developed, completion of KSF transformation by 2028 deadline, and pursuit of functional EDA arrangements in specific domains. Expected outcomes include first multilateral participation achieved, capability development advanced, and 2028 transformation milestone completed.

## iii. Long-Term Goals (2030-2035)

The long-term timeframe should pursue integration of EU defence industry in Kosovo through direct investment, diversification of international partnerships beyond Turkey, advancement of regional technological and industrial capacities through Balkans cooperation, and achievement of EDA administrative arrangement or equivalent institutionalized cooperation framework. Expected outcomes include industrial integration with mutual dependencies, resilient partnership network established, and institutionalized cooperation achieved.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendations

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The paper shows that the European Union's rapid defence transformation since 2022 has created a more favourable context for deeper cooperation with the Western Balkans, but access to EU defence mechanisms remains uneven and politically conditioned. For Kosovo, the key constraint is not lack of strategic alignment or political will, but the continued obstacle created by non-recognition by five EU member states and the dynamics related to EU facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that Kosovo's defence sector has advanced substantially, that the EU has already demonstrated flexibility through indirect and functional engagement that have overcome this political obstacles, and that several realistic entry points exist for deeper cooperation, especially through bilateral partnerships, technical cooperation, participation in missions, and gradual institutional engagement. Kosovo should therefore pursue a phased, pragmatic, and politically calibrated strategy that combines diplomacy, domestic reform, and practical security cooperation.

- 1. Make a Security and Defence Partnership with the EU a top political priority.**

The paper identifies such a partnership—similar to those already concluded by Albania and North Macedonia—as the most important gateway for Kosovo's deeper participation in EU defence cooperation and as a possible stepping stone toward wider engagement with EU defence instruments.

- 2. Pursue gradual and functional cooperation with the European Defence Agency.**

Rather than focusing immediately on a full administrative arrangement, Kosovo should begin with technical cooperation in areas explicitly highlighted in the paper, particularly cybersecurity, medical support, mine action, and other less politically sensitive domains where it can demonstrate practical value.

- 3. Use bilateral partnerships to build political support inside the EU.**

The paper makes clear that Kosovo's bilateral relations with Germany, France, Italy, Croatia, the Baltic states, and Scandinavian countries are essential not only for direct defence cooperation, but also for cultivating champions that can advocate for Kosovo's inclusion in EU defence frameworks.

- 4. Prepare Kosovo to contribute to CSDP missions and other international peace operations.**

Kosovo should invest in the legal, institutional, and human capacities needed to move from being primarily a host of international missions to becoming a contributor. Such participation would enhance interoperability, strengthen Kosovo's credibility as a security provider, and reinforce its political case for closer EU defence cooperation.

**5. Reduce avoidable political friction and strengthen strategic alignment with the EU.**

As the Albania case suggests, steady alignment with EU foreign and security policy, fewer disputes with neighbours, and careful handling of sensitive domestic issues can accelerate integration. Kosovo should therefore ensure that actions affecting interethnic relations and local stability are politically calibrated, coordinated with key partners where possible, and strategically communicated in order to preserve strong backing from supportive EU member states and create better conditions for faster EU and defence integration.

**6. Align domestic reforms with the EU's new defence-industrial and readiness agenda.**

In line with the paper's analysis of the White Paper for European Defence and Kosovo's own transformation process, Kosovo should adopt a comprehensive defence-industry legal framework, improve procurement governance, strengthen parliamentary oversight, and accelerate development of its planned defence industrial zone. These reforms would make Kosovo a more credible partner for future bilateral and EU-linked defence cooperation.

## **ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE MECHANISMS, INCLUDING THE EDA, WITH EMPHASIS ON KOSOVO**

### **PUBLISHED BY:**

© Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS)

© Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

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Katalogimi në botim – (CIP)  
Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës “Pjetër Bogdani”

355.45:061.1(4-6)(496.51:497-15)

Naka, Tringa

Assessing Opportunities for Collaboration between the Western Balkans and European Defence Mechanisms, Including the EDA, with Emphasis on Kosovo / Tringa Naka, Mentor Vrajolli. - Prishtinë : QKSS, 2026. - 36 f. ; 24 cm.

1. Vrajolli, Mentor

ISBN 978-9951-842-57-0

## About KCSS

Established in April 2008, the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) is a specialized, independent, and non-governmental organization. The primary goal of KCSS is to promote the democratization of the security sector in Kosovo and to improve research and advocacy work related to security, the rule of law, and regional and international cooperation in the field of security.

KCSS aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) by supporting SSR programs through its research, events, training, advocacy, and direct policy advice.

Advancing new ideas and social science methods are also core values of the centre. Every year, KCSS publishes numerous reports, policy analysis and policy briefs on security-related issues. It also runs more than 200 public events including conferences, roundtables, and debates, lectures – in Kosovo, also in collaboration with regional and international partners.

A wide-range of activities includes research, capacity-building, awareness raising and advocacy. KCSS's work covers a wide range of topics, including but not limited to security sector reform and development; identifying and analyzing security risks related to extremism, radicalism, and organized crime; foreign policy and regional cooperation; and evaluating the rule of law in Kosovo.

## About KAS

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is a German political foundation that developed from the Society for Christian Democratic Educational Work that was founded back in 1955. Since 1964, it has borne the name of the first Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. We feel bound to Adenauer's political memory and legacy; his principles serve as our guidelines, mission, and commitment. We are therefore politically affiliated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany but are financially and organisationally independent.

The promotion of liberal democracy and a social market economy, of peace and freedom, transatlantic relations, and European unification – this is what the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung stands for.

Although the work in Kosovo started much earlier through various projects, KAS was formally registered in Pristina in June 2007. Since then, KAS has focused on political education, civic education and strengthening of civil society, European integration, support of inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, promotion of free market economy and other topics, which together with our local and international partners, we have addressed through seminars, conferences, discussions and numerous publications.



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ISBN 978-9951-842-57-0



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