

17. NATO-EU: a strategic partnership

NATO and the European Union are working together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts in Europe and beyond. The two organizations share common strategic interests and cooperate in a spirit of complementarity and partnership.

Beyond cooperation in the field, other key priorities for cooperation are to ensure that our capability development efforts are mutually reinforcing, as well as to combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NATO attributes great importance to its relationship with the European Union. A strong European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) can only benefit NATO and foster a more equitable transatlantic security partnership.

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

NATO seeks a strong NATO-EU partnership not only on the ground, where both organizations have deployed assets such as in Kosovo and Afghanistan, but also in their strategic dialogue at the political headquarters level in Brussels. It is important to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, to ensure transparency and to respect the autonomy of the two organizations.

Institutionalized relations between NATO and the European Union were launched in 2001, building on steps taken during the 1990s to promote greater European responsibility in defence matters. The political principles underlying the relationship were set out in the December 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP.

With the enlargement of both organizations in 2004 followed by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union in 2007, NATO and the European Union now have 21 member countries in common¹.

- [Framework for cooperation](#)
- [Cooperation in the field](#)
- [Other areas of cooperation](#)
- [Participation](#)
- [Evolution of NATO-EU relations](#)

Framework for cooperation

NATO and EU officials meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. Meetings take place at different levels including at the level of foreign ministers, ambassadors, military representatives and defence advisors. There are regular staff contacts between NATO's International Staff and International Military Staff, and the European Union's Council Secretariat and Military Staff as well as the European Defence Agency.

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

An exchange of letters between the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency in January 2001 defined the scope of cooperation and modalities of consultation on security issues between the two organizations. Cooperation accelerated with the signing of the NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP in December 2002 and the agreement, in March 2003, of the framework for cooperation.

NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP

The NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP, agreed on 16 December 2002, reaffirmed the EU assured access to NATO's planning capabilities for its own military operations and reiterated the political principles of the strategic partnership: effective mutual consultation; equality and due regard for the decision-making autonomy of the European Union and NATO; respect for the interests of EU and NATO members states; respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations; and coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of the military capability requirements common to the two organizations.

The "Berlin-Plus" arrangements

As part of the framework for cooperation adopted on 17 March 2003, the so-called "Berlin-Plus" arrangements provide the basis for NATO-EU cooperation in crisis management by allowing the European Union to have access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations, including command arrangements and assistance in operational planning. In effect, they allow the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged.

Cooperation in the field

The Balkans

In July 2003, the European Union and NATO published a "Concerted Approach for the Western Balkans". Jointly drafted, it outlines core areas of cooperation and emphasises the common vision and determination both organizations share to bring stability to the region.

- *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*²
On 31 March 2003, the EU-led Operation Concordia took over the responsibilities of the NATO-led mission, Operation Allied Harmony, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia *. This mission, which ended in December 2003, was the first "Berlin Plus" operation in which NATO assets were made available to the European Union.
- *Bosnia and Herzegovina*
Building on the results of Concordia and following the conclusion of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union deployed a new mission called Operation Althea on 2 December 2004. The EU force (EUFOR) operates under the "Berlin-Plus" arrangements, drawing on NATO planning expertise and on other Alliance's assets and capabilities. The NATO Deputy Supreme Allied

Commander Europe is the Commander of Operation Althea. There is also an EU Operation Headquarters (OHQ) located at SHAPE.

- *Kosovo*
NATO has been leading a peacekeeping force in Kosovo (KFOR) since 1999. The European Union has contributed civil assets to the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for years and agreed to take over the police component of the UN Mission. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which deployed in December 2008, is the largest civilian mission ever launched under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The central aim is to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs areas. EULEX works closely with KFOR in the field. NATO and EU experts worked in the same team to support the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Martti Ahtisaari, in negotiations on the future status of the province of Kosovo.

Cooperation in other regions

- *Afghanistan*
NATO and the European Union are playing key roles in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan, within the international community's broader efforts to implement a comprehensive approach in their efforts to assist the country. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force helps create a stable and secure environment in which the Afghan government as well as other international actors can build democratic institutions, extend the rule of law and reconstruct the country. NATO welcomed the EU's launch of an ESDP Rule of Law mission (EUPOL) in June 2007. The European Union has also initiated a programme for justice reform and is helping to fund civilian projects in NATO-run Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that are led by an EU member country.
- *Darfur*
Both NATO and the EU supported the African Union's mission in Darfur, Sudan, in particular with regard to airlift rotations.
- *Piracy*
Since September 2008, NATO and EU naval forces are deployed side by side, with other actors, off the coast of Somalia for anti-piracy missions.

Other areas of cooperation

Capabilities

Together with operations, capability development is an area where cooperation is essential and where there is potential for further growth. The NATO-EU Capability Group was established in May 2003 to ensure the coherence and mutual reinforcement of NATO and EU capability development efforts. This applies to initiatives such as the EU Battle Groups, developed within the "Headline Goal" for 2010, and the NATO Response Force, and efforts in both organizations to improve the availability of helicopters for operations.

Following the creation, in July 2004, of the European Defence Agency (EDA) to coordinate work within the European Union on the development of defence capabilities, armaments cooperation, acquisition and research, EDA experts contribute to the work of the Capability Group.

Terrorism and WMD proliferation

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

Participation

Since the enlargement of NATO and the European Union in 2004 and the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union in 2007, the organizations have 21 member countries in common¹.

Canada, Iceland, Norway, Turkey, and the United States, which are members of NATO but not of the EU, participate in all NATO-EU meetings. So do Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and since 2008, Malta, which are members of the EU and of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme.

However, Cyprus which is not a PfP member and does not have a security agreement with NATO on the exchange of classified documents, cannot participate in official NATO-EU meetings. This is a consequence of decisions taken by NATO and the EU in December 2002 – before the 2004 rounds of enlargement – when NATO had 19 members and the EU 15. Informal meetings including Cyprus take place occasionally at different levels (foreign ministers, ambassadors and military delegates).

Evolution of NATO-EU relations

In the 1990s, there was a growing realization of the need for European countries to assume greater responsibility for their common security. In parallel, NATO recognized the need to develop a “European Security and Defence Identity” within the organization that would be both an integral part of the adaptation of NATO's political and military structures and an important contributing factor to the development of European defence capabilities.

This led to the development of arrangements between NATO and Western European Union (WEU), which, at that time, was acting for the European Union in the area of security and defence (1992 Maastricht Treaty). These arrangements laid the groundwork for the subsequent development of the NATO-EU strategic partnership, after the WEU's crisis-management role was transferred to the European Union in 1999.

In January 2001, an exchange of letters between the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency formalized the start of direct relations between NATO and the EU. Since then, considerable progress has been made in developing the NATO-EU strategic partnership, though its full potential is yet to be realized.

Key milestones:

- Feb 1992** The EU adopts the Maastricht Treaty, which envisages an intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the eventual framing of a common defence policy (ESDP), with the WEU as the EU's defence component.
Close cooperation established between NATO and the WEU.
- June 1992** In Oslo, NATO foreign ministers support the objective of developing the WEU as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance and as the defence component of the EU, that would also cover the "Petersberg tasks" (humanitarian search and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks, crisis management tasks including peaceenforcement, and environmental protection).
Allied leaders agree to make collective assets of the Alliance available, on the basis of consultations in the North Atlantic Council, for WEU operations undertaken by the European allies in pursuit of their Common Foreign and Security Policy. NATO endorses the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces, which provides for "separable but not separate" deployable headquarters that could be used for European-led operations and is the conceptual basis for future operations involving NATO and other non-NATO countries.
- Jan 1994** In Berlin, NATO foreign ministers agree for the first time to build up an ESDI within NATO, with the aim of rebalancing roles and responsibilities between Europe and North America. An essential part of this initiative was to improve European capabilities. They also decide to make Alliance assets available for WEU-led crisis management operations. These decisions lead to the introduction of the term "Berlin-Plus".
- June 1996** At a summit in St Malo, France and the United Kingdom make a joint statement affirming the EU's determination to establish a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).
- Dec 1998** At the Washington Summit, Heads of State and Government decide to develop the "Berlin-Plus" arrangements.
- April 1999** European Council meeting in Cologne decides "to give the European Union the necessary means and capabilities to assume its responsibilities regarding a common European policy on security and defence".
- June 1999** At the Helsinki Council meeting, EU members establish military "headline goals" to allow the EU, by 2003, to deploy up to 60 000 troops for 'Petersberg tasks'. EU members also create political and military structures including a Political and Security Committee, a Military Committee and a Military Staff. The crisis management role of the WEU is transferred to the EU. The WEU retains residual tasks.
- Dec 1999** The North Atlantic Council and the interim Political and Security Committee of the European Union meet for the first time to take stock of progress in NATO-EU relations.
- Sep 2000** Signature of the EU's Treaty of Nice containing amendments reflecting the operative developments of the ESDP as an independent EU policy (entry into force February 2003).
- Dec 2000**

Jan 2001	Beginning of institutionalised relations between NATO and the EU with the establishment of joint meetings, including at the level of foreign ministers and ambassadors. Exchange of letters between the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency on the scope of cooperation and modalities for consultation.
May 2001	First formal NATO-EU meeting at the level of foreign ministers in Budapest. The NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency issue a joint statement on the Western Balkans.
Nov 2002	At the Prague Summit, NATO members declare their readiness to give the EU access to NATO assets and capabilities for operations in which the Alliance is not engaged militarily.
Dec 2002	EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP.
Mar 2003	Agreement on the framework for cooperation. Entry into force of a NATO-EU security of information agreement. Transition from the NATO-led operation 'Allied Harmony' to the EU-led Operation 'Concordia' in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*
May 2003	First meeting of the NATO-EU capability group.
July 2003	Development of a common strategy for the Western Balkans.
Nov 2003	First joint NATO-EU crisis-management exercise..
Feb 2004	France, Germany and the United Kingdom launch the idea of EU rapid reaction units composed of joint battle groups.
Dec 2004	Beginning of the EU-led Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Sep 2005	Transatlantic (NATO-EU) informal ministerial dinner (New York).
Oct 2005	Agreement on Military Permanent Arrangements establishing a NATO Liaison Team at EUMS and an EU cell at SHAPE.
Dec 2009	Transatlantic (NATO-EU) informal ministerial dinner (Brussels)
Nov 2005	NATO Permanent Liaison Team set up at the EU Military Staff.
Mar 2006	EU Cell set up at SHAPE.
Jan 2009	NAC agreement to schedule a joint NATO-EU crisis management exercise (CMX/CME) in 2010
