

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation comprising more than 40 national and European trade union organisations from over 20 European countries, with a total of more than 6 million individual members. Founded in 1990, CESI advocates decent employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU. CESI represents public and private sector workers and is a recognised European sectoral social partner. As such, CESI is the voice of trade unions in the defence sector from across Europe.

As an umbrella organisation of trade unions in Europe, CESI strives to improve the social conditions of public sector employees at European level.

CESI expects the intensification of joint political action and sees the need to give greater importance to strengthening Europe's defence efforts and capacities in order to deter potential aggressors. This strengthening effort must take place both at national and European level. All synergy effects must be explored in order to ensure that the necessary human and financial capabilities are safeguarded so that sufficient resources are available for shaping the European social framework.

Climate change-induced extreme weather conditions are occurring faster and faster around the world and affect continuously more people.

The EU has a responsibility¹ to address the impacts of climate change in all fields of public policy. This includes the area of defence, security and geopolitical stability.

The links between climate change and the EU's defence efforts, which are described in a series of recent EU- and NATO-documents, underline the urgency to take joint action to strengthen the architecture of the European Defence Union (EDU) also from the green perspective.

Given far-reaching possible impacts of climate change on global security, the EU and its Member States need to adapt their defence strategies to climate challenges. By promoting 'green' defence initiatives, engaging in climate diplomacy and prioritising research and innovation, the EU can become a global leader in the tackling of climate-related security risks while maintaining peace and stability both in Europe and beyond.

¹ Climate Change and International Security, Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (S113/08 of 14 March 2008).

Demands

CESI's Expert Commission 'Defence' supports the following measures of the EU and the Member States to integrate climate concerns into EU defence policies and to maintain the capabilities of the European armed forces during missions also in crisis situations under extreme weather conditions:

1. **More investments to enhance the EU's crucial role to meet security challenges collectively.** It is evident that climate change is no longer an environmental concern and that its effects -which include rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, migration, conflict, food and water scarcity - have implications which can create violence and political instability around the globe, ultimately impacting Europe's security. Investments to manage such crises are investments in Europe's own future. Overall the spending in security and defence must rise compared to other policy fields. The EU should strengthen its program towards common procurement of security equipment with all EU Member States.
2. **An improved recognition and prioritisation of defence funding for green research, innovation, planning and operations.** There is a continuous competition for public budget allocation across policy fields. Socioeconomic impacts of the post-Covid fall-out, the current cost-of-living crisis, and other challenges all need to be met. Against the background of Russian military aggressions in Ukraine, and the threat that spreads towards European Union funding in geopolitics - from military research and innovation to the planning of military resources and operations - military efforts must be adequately financed.
3. In line with their national plans to meet climate neutrality targets under the European Green Deal, **a reduction of the carbon footprint of the Member States in security and defence through more environmentally sustainable resource management and conservation efforts.** Greening military fleets, optimising logistics and investing in energy-efficient infrastructure are essential steps to reduce the environmental impact of the defence sector.
4. **A set-up of climate-resilient infrastructures for the armed forces that is consistent across the Member States.** The countries must help design and build structures to support the military resilience in extreme weather conditions and protect local communities and critical facilities. Access to adequate 'green' equipment for military and civilian forces is necessary within the framework of the new climate targets.
5. **The possible deployment of armed forces to help repair the climate-related damages caused by environmental disasters** such as hurricanes, floods and forest fires. In Europe, disaster relief and assistance has not yet been primary responsibility of armies. If armed forces are to be deployed here in the future, sufficient provisions must be made available for these tasks. This applies to additional material equipment as well as training and practicing cooperation between military and civilian personnel. Only in this way will armed forces be able to make an effective contribution.

In further detail

The EU's climate change and defence roadmap refers to global warming as a "threat multiplier" for many geopolitical conflicts.² It proposes a large number of measures for climate neutrality in EU defence and security by 2050.

This year's European Commission's Joint Communication on 'A new outlook on the climate and security nexus'³ builds on the roadmap and describes a variety of profound impacts that climate change and environmental degradation can have on societies and security in the EU - and beyond. It underlines the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability, security and socio-economic stability and stresses the importance of a multidimensional approach involving different sectors, including governments, the private sector, civil society and the defence forces. In the Communication the European Commission commits to present a plan which provides for a quantitative analysis of energy consumption for military activities as well as an annual data analysis on climate and safety.

The CESI Commission of Experts 'Defence' welcomes this approach but there cannot be just talking and adopting documents, we want to see actions and changes in the mindset towards security and climate.

It also appreciates the initiatives of the European Defence Agency (EDA) to create fora such as the [Energy Consultation Forum](#) and the [Circular Economy in Defence Forum](#) and looks forward to contributing to them.

In July 2023, NATO published three major documents outlining the basic elements to help Member States in their transition to more climate-neutral military facilities for their armies and forces.

- The [Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment](#): It lays out how extreme weather conditions create operational stress and impact the life cycle of military assets and the operating environment of military activities.
- The [Compendium of Best Practice](#): It provides examples of relevant policies and procedures that could be used by armed forces to reduce their environmental footprint.
- The [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mapping and Analytical Methodology](#) provides guidelines and tools to calculate emissions from the civilian and military NATO facilities (installations and assets).

The CESI Commission of Experts 'Defence' welcomes these three initiatives. They will generate additional knowledge and know-how and create closer cooperation with the NATO forums.

² <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2022-03-28-ClimateDefence-new-Layout.pdf>

³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/JOIN_2023_19_1_EN_ACT_part1_v7.pdf