



EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR STRATEGIC POLICY

POLICY PAPER · PP 01 / 2026

European Defence Readiness 2030: From Spending Pledges to Deployable Capability

A delivery framework for converting higher expenditure into forces,
industrial depth and civil resilience.

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A delivery framework for converting higher expenditure into forces, industrial depth and civil resilience.

EXECUTIVE JUDGEMENT

Europe's defence credibility will be determined less by announced expenditure than by whether governments can field interoperable formations, replenish stocks, protect enabling infrastructure and sustain readiness through a prolonged crisis.

KEY FINDINGS

- Budget growth is strategically meaningful only when tied to deployable operational effects and dated delivery milestones.
- Fragmented requirements, production bottlenecks and weak maintenance capacity are now greater constraints than political recognition of the threat.
- Civil resilience - ports, rail, energy, health, communications and continuity of government - is part of defence readiness, not a separate agenda.
- European and transatlantic procurement should be judged by speed, interoperability, sustainment and assured access rather than by origin alone.

The implementation gap

NATO's 2035 investment commitment and the European Union's Readiness 2030 agenda create a historic opportunity to repair capability shortfalls. They also create a risk of mistaking financial inputs for military output. A credible national plan must state which operational effect is required, which authority owns delivery, which industrial constraint is binding and when a formation or system will be usable under realistic conditions. Without that discipline, higher budgets can be absorbed by inflation, duplicated programmes and procurement schedules that mature after the strategic window has closed.

A readiness architecture

CERAX proposes a common delivery architecture built around five linked tests: operational availability, interoperability, industrial surge, civil resilience and democratic accountability. Every major programme should include ammunition, training, maintenance, software support, secure communications and infrastructure as one readiness package. Readiness reviews should examine the ability to mobilise and sustain forces across borders, not merely the possession of platforms on national inventories.

Industrial depth and trusted supply

Europe cannot produce every input domestically, and it should not attempt to. The relevant objective is assured access during sustained crisis. Governments should map second-tier suppliers, critical minerals, machine capacity, workforce shortages and repair facilities before signing headline contracts. Joint purchasing can secure production slots and common standards, while trusted external partnerships remain essential where they offer speed, scale or technical advantage.

Political durability

Defence transformation will outlast electoral cycles. Public legitimacy therefore depends on transparent milestones, independent delivery reviews and an honest account of trade-offs. Sensitive operational information must remain protected, but governments can still publish whether agreed capabilities are on schedule, whether joint programmes are interoperable and whether civil infrastructure can support collective defence.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 01 Publish rolling national capability-delivery plans with three-, five- and ten-year milestones.
- 02 Create an annual European Readiness Delivery Review aligned with NATO capability planning.
- 03 Bundle equipment, munitions, training, maintenance, software and infrastructure in a single readiness package.
- 04 Aggregate demand early enough to support multi-year industrial investment and common standards.
- 05 Stress-test ports, rail, energy, medical and digital systems against sustained mobilisation scenarios.

DECISION AND MONITORING MATRIX

Priority	Decision horizon	Evidence of progress
Publish rolling national capability-delivery plans with three-, five- and ten-year milestones.	0-90 days	Delivery delays in air defence and ammunition
Create an annual European Readiness Delivery Review aligned with NATO capability planning.	3-12 months	Divergent national technical standards
Bundle equipment, munitions, training, maintenance, software and infrastructure in a single readiness package.	12-36 months	Shortfalls in maintenance and skilled labour
Aggregate demand early enough to support multi-year industrial investment and common standards.	Continuous	Civil-infrastructure readiness
Stress-test ports, rail, energy, medical and digital systems against sustained mobilisation scenarios.	Annual review	Delivery delays in air defence and ammunition

INDICATORS TO WATCH

- Delivery delays in air defence and ammunition
- Divergent national technical standards
- Shortfalls in maintenance and skilled labour
- Civil-infrastructure readiness

SOURCES AND METHOD

This publication distinguishes verified institutional evidence from CERAX interpretation and forward-looking judgement. Principal public sources are listed below; all recommendations are the institutional judgement of CERAX.

- NATO, The Hague Summit Declaration
- European Commission, White Paper for European Defence - Readiness 2030



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Independent analysis. Diplomatic judgement. European perspective.