

The contribution of the European Peace Facility to the security and resilience of the EU and its Member States



Panagiotis (Panos) Blanos

Μέλος ΑΛΛΗΛΟΝ

Commander (Hellenic Navy), EU Military Finance Expert, ESDC trainer

MSc 'Law of the Economy and of the Enterprises'

[Panagiotis \(Panos\) Blanos | LinkedIn](#)

Περίληψη

The European Peace Facility, an off-EU budget CFSP instrument, proves to be an important element of the EU's effort to increase the security and resilience of itself and of its Member States. The recognition of this role of the EPF is proven through taking into consideration the different elements of the CFSP, as described in the EU's Strategic Compass, whose costs are partly or fully eligible for common funding under the EPF, namely the EU military operations, the assistance measures to partners, the Rapid Deployment Capacity, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability and the EU military exercises.

Introduction

After the deterioration of the security environment in February 2022, resilience has become a priority for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The present article is an effort to approach the contribution of the European Peace Facility (EPF), an off-EU budget financial instrument of the CFSP, to the security and resilience of the European Union and its Member States.



Picture 1: Facts regarding the EPF
Source: [Security Compass \(europa.eu\)](#)

The European Peace Facility

The EPF was established in 2021, repealing pre-existing CFSP instruments, for the financing of the common costs of the EU military operations and of assistance measures to third countries, including Ukraine. It is an intergovernmental instrument of the CFSP, managed by a *Facility Committee* of Member States' representatives, chaired by the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. As an integral element of the CFSP, it is explicitly referred to in the EU's Strategic Compass (established 2022) under the 'ACT' work strand, and in its first implementation report (2023) it is referred to by the High Representative as a *'game changer'*.

The EPF is currently used for the financing of:

1. Nine (9) on-going military operations of the Union, including:

- a. The unprecedented in magnitude and mandate *'EUMAM Ukraine'*, launched in November 2022 for the training of tenths of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers on European soil, and
- b. The naval operation *'ASPIDES'*, launched in February 2024 for the protection of navigation in the Red Sea against Houthi attacks to merchant vessels.

2. Numerous assistance measures to third countries in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, including:

- a. In support of the *Ukrainian Armed Forces* with lethal and non-lethal military equipment of a value over 4,5 billion euros.
- b. In support of *African countries* (such as Somalia and Mozambique), inter alia with training equipment complementing the mandate of EU military training missions in those countries, in implementation of the so-called *'train and equip'* model.

Resilience in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

Resilience is a significant element and target of the EU's CFSP and it is understood as a capability against factors that could jeopardise the integrity and the interests of the Union and its Member States. Those factors are conventional threats, including territorial sovereignty and infrastructure security, but also hybrid threats, including cyber-attacks, foreign information manipulation, and instrumentalization of immigration. Resilience is also tightly linked to the idea of strategic autonomy, in the vein of security and defence, but also economically and world-trade wise, namely in the sense of critical raw materials.

The EU's Strategic Compass is clear regarding resilience:

"The more hostile security environment requires us to make a quantum leap forward and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience and ensure solidarity and mutual assistance. [...] We aim to become a more assertive security and defence actor by enabling more robust, rapid and decisive action, including for the resilience of the Union and our mutual assistance and solidarity [...] Our strategic competitors are targeting us with a broad set of tools and testing our resilience with the aim to diminish our security and actively undermine our secure access to the maritime, air, cyber and space domains".

EPF as a security & resilience tool

One could ask: How specifically has the EPF contributed to the security

and resilience of the EU and its Member States in these last 3.5 years of its existence?



Picture 2: The 4 pillars of the EU Strategic Compass
Source: [Security Compass \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europa.eu)

This contribution is mainly provided through the following dimensions:

1. EU military operations and missions:

The EPF is the CFSP instrument for the financing of the common costs of the EU military operations and missions. As highlighted in the first pillar (ACT) of the Strategic Compass:

"More robust, flexible and modular CSDP civilian and military missions and operations should allow us to adapt swiftly to new threats and challenges and increase their effectiveness, also in view of the new security context and the growing presence of our strategic competitors in operational theatres".

Therefore, the EPF proves to be an integral supportive element of a swifter adaptation of the EU to new threats. This remains extremely important, in light of the presence of the EU's strategic competitors (Russia, China) in critical areas of the world in the Eastern and Southern Neighborhood.

2. Support to partners:

Once again, the Strategic Compass provides that:

"[...] Through an increased use of the European Peace Facility, the EU can rapidly provide important assistance to partners for example providing military equipment often supplementing training by CSDP missions. This can also be done by supporting partners' defence capabilities in moment of crisis, as in the case of the assistance package to support the Ukrainian armed forces to defend their territorial integrity and sovereignty and protect the civilian population from an unprovoked and unjustified aggression".

The increased resilience of the EU's partners, through either the military training missions or the assistance measures under the EPF, is therefore supported by the financing of the instrument. In the 2024 progress report of the Strategic Compass, the European External Action Service (EEAS) refers to the reinforcement by the EU "of its support in the Western Balkans through the EPF as well as on counterterrorism and resilience".

3. Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC): The Strategic Compass describes a need to:

"[...] gradually further strengthen our civilian and military command and control structures. We will ensure that the MPCC is fully able to plan, control and command non-executive and executive tasks and operations, as well as live exercises. In this context, we will ramp up personnel contributions and ensure that we have the necessary communication and information systems, as well as required facilities. Once the MPCC reaches its full operational capability, it should be seen as the preferred command and control structure".

The EPF funds the incremental costs of the MPCC. In this sense, it could be seen as an instrument to reinforce the EU's Command and Control (C2) structure, therefore strengthening the EU's resilience.

4. Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC): The Strategic Compass commits to the development of an RDC, a modular force of up to 5,000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, as well as the required strategic enablers, in order for the Union to be able to "[...] respond to imminent threats or quickly react to a crisis situation outside the Union at all stages of the conflict cycle". Part of the incremental costs of the RDC are eligible for common funding under the EPF and in this sense the Facility can be deemed as a contributor to the EU resilience stemming from the increased ability to counter crises and threats.

5. Expansion of the EPF common costs: One of the commitments undertaken by the EU leaders that agreed on the text of the Strategic Compass in March 2022 was the expansion of the width and of the scope of common costs under the EPF. Currently, the EPF finances mainly costs other than those that in any case would have been borne by an EU Member State ('incremental costs', stemming from the nature of the EU's effort as a common one). These discussions may be arisen in the vein of the mid-term review of the Council Decision establishing the EPF, a discussion expected in 2024. If these discussions prove to be fruitful and in the direction implied by the Strategic Compass, then it could be claimed that the EPF will be reinforced as a contributor to the EU's resilience, through the stronger financing of EU military operations and missions.

6. Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) exercises: The Strategic Compass embraces the approach that:

"[...] Readiness and interoperability are crucial elements of our response to threats and strategic competition. Frequent civilian and military live exercises in all domains, as well as reinforced advance planning, will help us to substantially boost our readiness, foster interoperability and support a common strategic culture. Live exercises in an EU framework, with the progressive involvement of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability will shape the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity in particular, and more generally will reinforce our posture, add to our strategic communication and strengthen interoperability, including with partners".

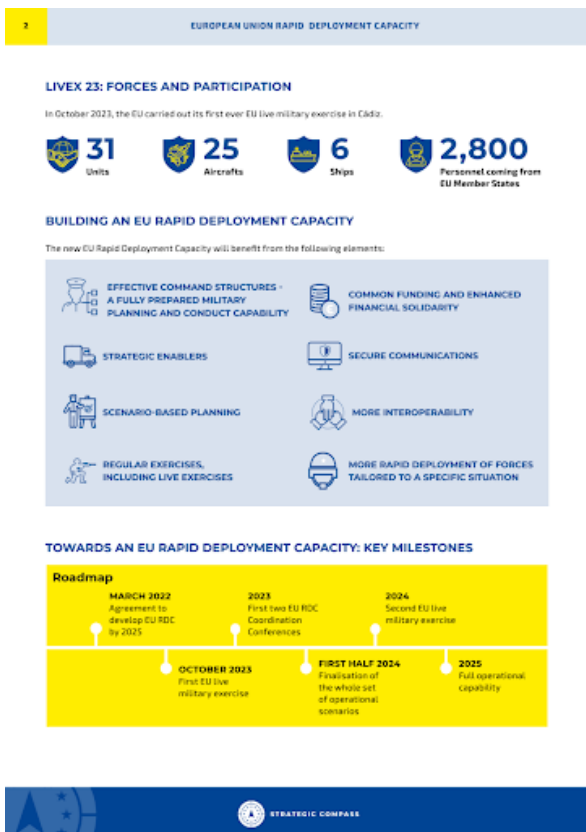
Having in mind that the EPF can also finance military exercises, especially live ones, it appears that the instrument contributes substantially to activities that establish more robustly the EU as a sovereign and resilient global security provider. Special reference is needed to the MILEX 2023, the first ever live military exercise of the EU, in Cadiz (Spain), exceptionally financed by the EPF with common costs broader than the ones provided in principle, in transitional provisions of one of the amendments of the Council Decision establishing the EPF.

Conclusion

Through specific elements of the CFSP that –according to the legal framework of the EPF– are eligible for common funding under this CFSP instrument, the article revealed the role of this tool in enhancing and strengthening the Union's and its Member States' security and resilience. What remains to be seen is the extent of the political will of the Member States to really make the full use of the instrument implied in the Strategic Compass, having in mind the budgetary restrictions and priorities to be set, under the political framework of the new 5-year EU cycle.

References

- Council of the EU, European Peace Facility [European Peace Facility - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/en/european-peace-facility)
- European External Action Service [The European Peace Facility Factsheet | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/eas/infocentre/factsheet-the-european-peace-facility-2022-03-10_en)
- European Publications Office [EUR-Lex - 02021D0509-20240318 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/lexUri.do?uri=CELEX:02021D0509-20240318-EN-1)
- Strategic Compass [A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-a-strategic-compass-for-security-and-defence-2022-03-10_en)



Picture 3: Facts regarding the EU RDC

Source: [2024-03-EU-Rapid-Deployment-Capacity_EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/eeas/2024-03-eu-rapid-deployment-capacity_en)

- P. Blanos, G. Papagiannis, I. Foukas, 'The Role of the European Peace Facility in Enhancing EU Security and Defence cooperation', European Journal for Security Research
- P. Blanos, 'The European Peace Facility, a game changer in the CFSP of the EU', NRDC-GR Herald (2024), 49-53. <https://nrdc.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/NRDC-GR-Herald-Magazine-Issue-21-LQ.pdf>

