

4-0 Overview of Recent European Commission Proposals on Defence and Resilience by Ismo Ulvila

Date : 2026 June 13 13:00

Speaker : *Ismo Ulvila, Head of Media and Spokesperson for Finland, European Commission Representation in Finland*

Introduction

Ismo Ulvila presented on behalf of the European Commission, outlining the EU's defence and security initiatives under the current von der Leyen Commission's mandate. He discussed key priorities including closing defence industry gaps, creating a European defence market, and preparing for potential military contingencies by 2030. Ismo highlighted various funding mechanisms including the National Escape Clause, SAFE instrument, and European Defence Fund, with the goal of achieving a 78% increase in defence spending compared to 2021. He also mentioned upcoming initiatives on dual-use products, space technology, and climate resilience, while emphasizing that these efforts complement rather than replace NATO's role in European security.

Summary of the Speech on EU Defence and Security

Context & Introduction

- The speaker, currently in North-East Finland, represents the **European Commission** and discusses the EU's role in defence and security, noting that national defence remains a **member state competence**.
- The Commission's mandate (since December 2024) was shaped by **four key reports** (2023–2024) on the single market, competitiveness, preparedness, and agriculture, all linking to defence, dependencies, and security.

Key Themes & Priorities

1. Managing Dependencies

- Europe must reduce reliance on third countries for **fossil fuels, medicines, fertilizers, and military procurement** (e.g., 2/3 of medicines come from India).
- **Domestic production** (renewable energy, fertilizers, computer chips, defence) is a strategic priority.

2. Citizen Support for EU Action

- **Eurobarometer surveys** show:
 - 89% of Europeans want **greater EU unity** to face global challenges.
 - 86% want a **stronger EU voice internationally**.
 - 2/3 want the EU to **protect citizens** from global threats.
- Trust in the EU is high (e.g., 67% in Finland).

3. European Defence Union

- **Not a replacement for NATO** (which remains the cornerstone of collective defence).
- **Goals:**
 - Close gaps in EU defence (e.g., air defence, stockpiling).
 - Create a **European defence market**.
 - Improve **military mobility** (e.g., “Military Schengen” for faster troop movement).
- **Funding:**

- **National Escape Clause:** Allows member states to **increase defence spending** (potential €650B investment).
 - **SAFE (Security Action for Europe):** €150B loan instrument for defence (19 member states already applied).
 - **EU Budget (MFF):** Redirect cohesion funds to defence.
 - **European Defence Fund:** €6B for R&D.
 - **ASAP:** €500M to boost ammunition production.
4. **Eastern Flank Initiative**
 - Supports **border regions** (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine) with financing for drones, SMEs, and economic resilience.
 - Aligns with the “right to stay” principle, enabling citizens to remain in their regions with EU support.
 5. **Dual-Use Technologies**
 - Focus on **AI, drones, space technologies** (e.g., new EU Space Initiative).
 - Upcoming proposals: **simplification of defence rules, stronger Frontex (border agency), Europol, and critical communications.**
 6. **Climate & Security**
 - Europe is the **fastest-warming continent** (e.g., Lapland +3–4°C).
 - **EU Climate Resilience Plan** (Q4 2026) to address climate threats to security.
 7. **Support for Ukraine**
 - **€90B loan package** approved.
 - **21st sanctions package** against Russia adopted.

Conclusion

- The EU is taking a **holistic approach**: strengthening defence, economic resilience, unity, and global influence.
- Emphasis on **preparedness, simplification, and investment** to address gaps and future threats.