

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Key findings

- × **Facing a new reality** – Since the start of this decade, the EU has experienced the most severe pandemic in a century; the bloodiest war on European soil since the Second World War; and the hottest year in recorded history. The COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis of a nature and magnitude for which all Member States and the EU as a whole were insufficiently prepared. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine showed that it takes two to maintain peace, but only one to start a war. Russia's invasion also underlined Putin's long-held perception that the West and Western people are weak. Moreover, the increasing damage caused by extreme weather events is forcing Europeans to ask not only how climate change will affect future generations, but also what we need to prepare for today. These deeply disruptive events are neither transitory nor isolated. They are driven and connected by underlying fault lines, long-term shifts and root causes that point to a prolonged period of high risk and deep uncertainty for the Union. We need to awaken to a new, unstable reality and there is no reason to expect that the underlying driving forces will dissipate in the foreseeable future.
- × **Security as the foundation** – Stronger preparedness of the EU requires a new mindset. The return of war to Europe as well as the recent experience of the pandemic and the increasing damage connected to climate change have been stark reminders that security is the foundation of everything. Security is a public good – the essential precondition for maintaining our values and democratic political system, as well as our economic success and competitiveness. The territorial integrity and political independence of every Member State are inextricably linked. If the security of one Member State is breached or its sovereignty violated, this directly concerns the other 26 and the Union as a whole. We share a single security. EU Member States have a legal and moral obligation for solidarity and mutual assistance in accordance with the EU Treaties. Preparedness for the increasing threats we face requires a high level of trust – between the Member States and EU institutions, and between public authorities, the private sector and civil society. The starting point of preparedness is that EU citizens trust that the political community they live in is worth protecting and defending.
- × **Preparing for worst-case scenarios** – Despite the steps taken to improve the EU's crisis preparedness in recent years with new legislation, mechanisms and tools in different policy areas, the EU and its Member States are not yet fully prepared for the most severe cross-sectoral or multidimensional crisis scenarios – especially given the further deteriorating external environment. The multifaceted changes in our security environment have outpaced the speed of our action. On the horizon, we can see not only the pervasive effects of climate change and increasingly brazen hybrid campaigns (including elevated risks of major cyberattacks and acts of sabotage), but also the increased threat of armed aggression against an EU Member State directly. Moreover, any future shock, disruption or crisis will take place in the context of a globally connected European economy and society that faces a fragmenting global order, more intensive strategic competition and rivalry, and an accelerating pace of disruptive technological innovation. This in turn creates an imperative to better join up different sectors so as to be able to swiftly mount a comprehensive, coherent, and decisive response when a crisis erupts. It is not only about a sense of urgency, but also a sense of agency. Raising our preparedness and readiness to a new level will shape, adapt and lower the driving factors that have led to these crises and disasters in the first place. It will help to deter aggressors and contribute to lowering the scale and impact of climate change.
- × **Shifting to comprehensive preparedness** – The EU needs to adopt a robust all-hazards, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to its civilian and military preparedness and readiness. The report is structured around the overarching objective of building 'comprehensive preparedness' to ensure that the EU and its Member States can continue to function under all circumstances. This requires a collective capacity to effectively anticipate, prevent, withstand or respond to any type of

major shock or crisis with cross-sectoral and cross-border implications and the potential to threaten the Union as a whole. To this end, this report identifies the necessary overarching building blocks – set out below – to frame and operationalise comprehensive preparedness, in line with the Treaties and fully respecting the key roles and responsibilities of the EU and its Member States.

- × **Putting citizens at the core of preparedness** – Preparedness can only be successful with the active participation of citizens. Raising public awareness of the risk landscape without fostering anxiety and empowering citizens to be able to take more responsibility for their individual preparedness is of paramount importance. Participation of citizens in different roles and capacities to supporting preparedness on societal level through voluntary and mandatory means is crucial also for social cohesion in crises. Similarly, private companies have a crucial role as producers and suppliers of critical goods, as operators of critical infrastructure and services, and developers of new innovations, solutions and capabilities needed to tackle different threats.
- × **Safertogether** – Despite the distinct nature and origin of different shocks, emergencies, and crises, they also have many things in common and underline the need for a stronger role of the EU as a political, economic and security actor. Threats don't stop at our borders, they cascade between the interconnected sectors of our economy, they undermine the well-being and safety of our citizens. This requires enhanced cooperation in the EU framework when the scale of the threat or crisis is beyond the capacity of individual Member States.
- × **Identifying the boldest common denominator** – Member States prioritise different threats and hazards based on their geography, historical experience, resources, and other factors. These differing threat perceptions should not be a hindrance to better preparing together. All Member States need similar core institutional and societal functions, goods and capabilities to protect our citizens, regardless of the nature and origin of a specific threat. Looking at the magnitude of the threats we face, we cannot limit our level of preparedness to what is politically convenient or corresponds to the lowest common denominator between Member States.
- × **Taking more strategic responsibility** – Stepping up the EU's civilian and military preparedness and readiness needs to enable the Union to take more strategic responsibility for security in Europe. This is an important signal to the US and other key partners. If we are not doing everything we can for our own security, we cannot expect others to do it for us. This includes that the Member States should strengthen their cooperation on European defence, jointly investing more to close long-standing gaps in our military and defence industrial readiness. This is also necessary to be able to support Ukraine in the long-term in a way that creates the conditions for a lasting peace on Ukraine's terms.
- × **Speed is of the essence** – When major cross-border crises erupt, rapid decision-making and action are vital to mitigate the impact and to limit potential cascading effects. Over the years, the EU has developed a large number of sectoral crisis management mechanisms. Enabling the necessary speed during multidimensional crises, however, requires greater clarity of organisation, more effective decision-making and a coherent set of tried-and-tested coordination mechanisms. Moreover, it will rely on full access to the necessary data and information that enable effective decision-making. To meet the demands of the most severe threats, we need to strengthen our ability to cooperate across silos, to reinforce cooperation between different operational authorities, and streamline unnecessarily complex structures.
- × **Reinforcing civilian-military cooperation** – A key dimension of comprehensive preparedness is to ensure that civilian and military crisis response actors enable each other and can operate seamlessly, including to prepare for the most severe military contingencies. For such scenarios, the EU and its Member States will need the capacity to effectively mobilise a whole-of-government response, both in support of military efforts and to protect our citizens, and shield our economy. The military also contributes to civilian-led disaster response. The EU's potential for enhanced civil-

military cooperation and dual-use infrastructures and technologies should be further unlocked, while respecting the different nature, needs and priorities of civilian and military actors. This involves optimising the use of scarce resources and strengthening coordination mechanisms for the most severe crisis situations.

- × **Enhancing EU-NATO cooperation** – A strong EU-NATO partnership is essential in this context. The two organisations already address common challenges drawing on their respective toolboxes in line with their respective mandates. While recognising the different tasks and mandates of each organisation, as well as their autonomy of decision-making and respective competences, this report identifies the need to map out within the EU what the implications of major military contingencies would be, in coherence and complementarity with NATO. Moreover, the EU and NATO should consider ways to reinforce effective coordination and to exchange of information between staff when it matters the most.
- × **Working with our partners** – Partner countries in our neighbourhood and globally often share and even stand at the forefront of the threats and challenges we face in Europe. Notably, this refers to Ukraine fighting Russian aggression and defending Europe's security more broadly, and numerous countries across the Sahel region, the Pacific Ocean and other regions at the front line of the global struggle against climate change. The EU should emphasise mutual resilience as a key element of its diplomacy and external action, with a view to elevating the Union as a trusted and reliable partner in a world marked by growing strategic competition.
- × **The economics of preparedness** – The COVID-19 pandemic, together with the fallout of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, had an enormous economic impact on Europe. A higher preparedness baseline across all spheres of the EU's activities enables the economy and society to bounce back faster when a new pandemic, a major disruption, disaster or crisis hits the EU, including by protecting those most vulnerable. The drastic deterioration of Europe's security situation will need to be reflected in the allocation of budgetary resources, against the backdrop of decades of relative underinvestment in areas such as defence. Preparedness for shocks, disruptions and crises of a Union-wide scale and impact require a higher level of long-term investment in the EU framework. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have shown, moreover, that we need to closely coordinate the procurement of crisis-relevant goods, making sure that all Member States have access to limited industrial capacity without driving up prices too much. Preparedness investment can boost European competitiveness at the same time, in line with the report of Special Adviser Mario Draghi.
- × **Embracing preparedness by design** – The new comprehensive preparedness framework finally needs to be reflected in a 'preparedness-by-design' principle to be applied across the board when designing new legislation, reviewing regulatory frameworks or setting up new funding instruments. This new preparedness-by-design principle should also be reflected in the way we organise our economies. The 'just-in-time' principle that has been at the heart of supply chain management to maximise cost-effectiveness in an increasingly globalised economy is now being balanced with the need for greater shock absorption.

## The building blocks of a fully prepared Union

Each building block is accompanied in this report by a set of concrete recommendations. They are offered as a basis for further work by the incoming European Commission, the High Representative, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and Member States, acting within their respective competences. They tie in with the guidance and new initiatives set out in the Political Guidelines of President von der Leyen for the next mandate (2024-2029) and the Mission Letters to the incoming Members of the College of Commissioners and the High Representative.

## 1. DECODE THE CRISES OF TODAY AND ANTICIPATE THE THREATS OF TOMORROW

Comprehensive preparedness requires us to be clear-eyed in objectively assessing our own vulnerabilities and shortcomings. We need to be willing to anticipate and think through worst-case scenarios. The EU should continue to forge a shared view of the deeper shifts in the geopolitical, ecological, economic, societal, and technological domains – how they will increasingly affect our stability, prosperity and security in the years ahead. The different risk multipliers – intensifying strategic competition, the destabilising effects of climate change, and disruptive new technologies – are increasingly intertwined and cumulative in nature. Without ranking or prioritising risks or threats, or trying to cover them exhaustively in this report, the confluence of different risks leads to an increased probability of major cross-sectoral crises, shocks and disruptions occurring simultaneously in the years ahead:

- × The rules-based global order is fragmenting, narrowing the basis for effective multilateral cooperation to address transnational challenges through global institutions.
- × Extreme weather events will become more frequent and intense, in Europe and around the world, destabilising in particular communities in fragile contexts.
- × Since Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the security threat posed by Russia is at its highest since the end of the Cold War, even more so when considering the multi-front implications of growing tensions in East Asia and the Middle East.
- × Our open and connected societies and economies are increasingly subject to brazen hybrid campaigns including cyberattacks, Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), sabotage and the instrumentalisation of migration.
- × Strategic competition over raw materials, disruptive technologies and global influence is intensifying, linking economic and security interests more closely together.
- × An arc covering major areas marked by fragility, instability, conflict and war stretches from our south to our east, with spill-over effects on the European Union that blur the lines between internal and external security.
- × It remains critical to strengthen work on all strands of action in the comprehensive approach to migration and ensure effective control of the Union's external borders through all available means, including with the support of the European Union, in line with EU and international law.
- × Another pandemic remains a distinct possibility to be prepared for, given the possibility of transmutations of animal viruses, as well as accelerating biotechnological innovation facilitating the development of synthetic pathogens.

## 2. ENABLE THE EU TO FUNCTION UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

The EU as a whole must be able to function under all circumstances to take and implement decisions and actions that protect and ensure citizens' well-being in times of crisis. The EU currently lacks an agreed, comprehensive list of vital societal and governmental functions defined at EU level. These functions not only ensure the smooth running of our societies and economies, but are also critical enablers that allow civilian and military crisis responders to operate effectively in crisis situations. Their continuity must be ensured against the full range of threats and hazards, from extreme weather events to State-sponsored interference and, in the most extreme instance, armed aggression against one or more of our Member States.

→ **Develop a comprehensive EU Risk Assessment.**

- × To better manage risk, prepare for crises, and enhance the safety and security of our citizens, the EU needs a thorough and comprehensive all-hazards and all-threats risk assessment, covering all sectors of the EU's activities.

→ **Use the upcoming Preparedness Union Strategy to put the EU on track for comprehensive preparedness.**

- × The strategy should define at EU level vital societal and governmental functions for which continuity needs to be ensured, including the necessary measures to safeguard the EU's own decision-making and implementation capacity.
- × For each of the identified vital functions, EU-level Preparedness Baseline Requirements should be developed to guide future preparedness work. In relevant sectors, alignment with NATO's resilience baselines should be promoted, while noting that the EU's baseline requirements are defined against a more comprehensive mandate and a broader set of risks than in NATO, involving a wider set of sectors and stakeholders.
- × Embed a 'Preparedness by Design' principle horizontally and consistently across EU institutions, bodies, and agencies and develop a mandatory 'Security and Preparedness Check' for future impact assessments and 'stress tests' of existing legislation. Rather than treating security or climate considerations as competing or mutually exclusive priorities, this principle should address both man-made and natural threats holistically.
- × Coherence between and the alignment of sectoral crisis plans and blueprints at the EU level should be ensured, further clarifying 'who does what' especially in cross-sectoral scenarios.
- × Set up and regularly conduct an EU Comprehensive Preparedness Exercise to test high-level decision-making, operational coordination and to build strong links between actors and across sectors. Where appropriate, this should also include the private sector, civil society, and international partners.

→ **Explore the feasibility of an EU Preparedness Law to set joint standards and long-term targets, aligning EU and national efforts wherever possible.**

- × The law could set uniform preparedness standards and measurable targets, with the European Parliament and the Council agreeing together on principles, standards, and targets that will guide crucial EU preparedness efforts. It should streamline decision-making, coordination, and information sharing processes, and further clarify roles and responsibilities at the EU, national, and local levels.

→ **Articulate a coherent vision for the EU's role in preparing for and responding to external armed aggression.**

- × To make sure the EU is ready to act in support of a Member State in the event of an attack, we need to assess the possible societal, economic, security and other implications and identify needs for additional measures, in complementarity with NATO. In this type of scenario, the EU will need to be able to mobilise its full spectrum of policies and tools, and related regulatory and financial powers.

→ **Strengthen the EU-NATO interface in view of grave crisis situations, including through an emergency protocol that can be activated to streamline information exchange.**

- × In full respect of the agreed EU principles that govern the EU-NATO partnership, further joined-up work with NATO should be encouraged to identify civil-military and EU-NATO intersections and potential bottlenecks in major crisis situations.

- × Both organisations could agree on an emergency protocol that could be activated in or ahead of a crisis situation, defining terms for enhanced information exchange and dialogue when it matters the most.

### **3. ENSURE SPEED OF ACTION WITH STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES THAT ARE FIT FOR PURPOSE.**

Rapid decision-making and action can already be a challenge in a national setting. At the EU level, there are additional interinstitutional complexities, including regarding the availability of data, large number of actors and the challenge of cross-sectoral coordination. While respecting all relevant competences, the EU should strengthen the EU's capacity for timely and well-informed decision-making – both at the political and the technical-operational level – as well as for agile follow-through and implementation. This requires organisational clarity and the further streamlining of procedures wherever possible. To this end, the EU and its Member States need to further develop an effective and efficient division of roles and responsibilities, a coherent and resilient coordination set-up, and reflexive information sharing for major crisis situations.

#### **→ Reinforce cross-sectoral operational coordination:**

- × Develop a central operational crisis 'hub' within the Commission to facilitate cross-sectoral coordination and situational awareness. The hub should firmly build on the existing Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), acting as a platform to connect to relevant sectoral arrangements. The ERCC should continue to serve routine civil protection, disaster relief, and humanitarian coordination functions, but could be redesigned as a body that provides a single cross-sectoral entry point for major cross-border and cascading crises to ensure the optimal use of resources and infrastructure.
- × Further optimise the use of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements to enhance EU-level coordination and reinforce links between political leadership and the technical level.
- × Strengthen civil-military coordination frameworks and joint planning to ensure an effective civil-military response to a range of intentional threats – both within and beyond the EU. This could include potentially moving towards a European Civil Defence Mechanism, as envisaged in the Political Guidelines, reflecting relevant developments in Member States. The ERCC and its further evolution into a central crisis hub should further strengthen its links with the civilian and military crisis management structures in the EEAS.
- × Further operationalise Articles 42.7 TEU and 222 TFEU to strengthen their credibility and operational value as expressions of a European spirit of mutual assistance and solidarity. To this end, the EU and Member States should better define potential cases for the use of the Solidarity Clause (e.g. hybrid attacks or pandemics), adjust the activation thresholds of the Solidarity Clause to cover earlier stages of a crisis, and consider coordination needs in the event of parallel activation.

#### **→ Boost and better coordinate situational awareness, anticipation, and foresight:**

- × Link situational analysis and intelligence assessments more closely with EU-level preparedness and decision-making processes. In particular, this would require strengthening the pooling of information gathered by different sectoral situational awareness capabilities.
- × Set up an EU Earth-Observation governmental service for enhanced situational awareness in support of preparedness, decision-making and the action of the EU and Member States in the fields of security and defence. This would complement and build on existing capabilities provided through the EU Satellite Centre.

- × Develop tools and frameworks to make EU strategic foresight more actionable and solution oriented. Building on existing work strands of the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), foresight products should be made more actionable and the connection between our foresight toolbox and preparedness work should be strengthened.

#### → **Strengthen information sharing and communication.**

- × Accelerate the roll-out of secure, autonomous, and interoperable information exchange and communication systems (both terrestrial and space-based) to connect EU institutions, bodies and agencies, Member States authorities, and key partners, ensuring the rapid, continuous, and trust-based exchange of critical information.
- × The EU should complete the European Critical Communication System (EUCCS) as soon as possible to securely connect all EU civil security and public safety authorities across borders. To enhance civil-military cooperation and facilitate a genuinely 'whole-of-government' response, the EU and Member States should also allow for its interoperability with systems used in the defence domain.
- × Enhance the trust-based sharing of sensitive information between willing Member States for specific purposes, for example in the cyber domain.
- × Embed communication more closely in horizontal and vertical crisis management, including through the development of EU frameworks and modules, as well as training for local, regional, and national contact points.

#### → **Enhance the EU's exercise and training culture.**

- × The EU should further develop a comprehensive exercise culture to make sure coordination and information sharing frameworks and relevant instruments, work in practice – even in the most disruptive crisis conditions. To this end, the EU could adopt an EU-wide Exercise Policy to promote shared approaches across different sectors and institutions, and bring together resources and expertise in a centrally accessible Exercise Knowledge Hub.
- × Set up regular cross-sectoral EU training courses on security, defence, and crisis management to further reinforce mutual trust and promote a common European security, safety and preparedness culture.

## **4. EMPOWER CITIZENS AS THE BACKBONE OF SOCIETAL RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS.**

The EU and Member States can best protect citizens by enhancing their resilience and agency. This means enabling citizens – in different capacities – to play an active role in ensuring crisis preparedness and first response. They are an integral part of a 'whole of society' approach that brings together not only public authorities at all levels, but also private entities, employers and trade unions, civil society organisations, and individual citizens. Actively engaging citizens in crisis preparedness starts with raising their risk and threat awareness. This needs to be accompanied by attention to citizens' psychological resilience, mental well-being, and long-term capacity to cope with an environment characterised by heightened risk and volatility. Building on this, citizens' ability to act in the face of disaster or adversity needs to be bolstered by reinforcing individual and household preparedness and readiness across the board.

#### → **Enhance individual and household preparedness:**

- × Jointly invest in citizens' risk education, incorporating different dimensions, such as cybersecurity, disaster risks, and disinformation. The gradual integration of crisis preparedness and risk

awareness, as well as media and digital literacy, into education programmes and curricula across the EU could be an additional option to ensure structural investment in societal resilience

- × Promote a target of 72-hour self-sufficiency through coordinated information campaigns. Building upon ongoing work in the context of 'PreparEU', the EU should aim to ensure households throughout the EU are prepared for minimum 72-hour basic self-sufficiency in different types of emergencies and taking into account national differences, (e.g. by providing guidelines on stockpiling, evacuations, CBRN situations, access to medical services or schooling in emergencies, etc.).
- × Involve civil society organisations, trade unions and employers to enhance preparedness in different walks of life. These actors should be encouraged to use their networks to help people to receive verified and trusted information on preparedness, and to learn necessary skills to improve their own level of preparedness in different contexts, including in workplaces.

**→ Improve crisis and emergency communication to reach citizens under all conditions.**

- × Member States' crisis communication or alert apps and other back-up early warning systems should be regularly tested and surveyed for gaps and for interoperability. Lessons learned on the use of these systems during the COVID-19 pandemic in Member States and during other major recent disasters, notably sudden onset extreme weather events, should be analysed to guide further efforts.

**→ Prepare to better tackle vulnerability to crises and disasters:**

- × Further invest in disaster risk management for people disproportionately affected by disasters and other crisis situations, ensuring inclusive disaster preparedness at the community level. The EU and public authorities at all levels need to pay extra attention to reducing the vulnerability to disasters of certain groups, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, people with chronic diseases, and pregnant women.
- × Prepare in advance to minimise the disruption of protracted crises on social cohesion and the socio-economic fabric of our societies. Concrete proposals to bolster the crisis preparedness of vulnerable groups and regions at risk of being left behind could be further developed as part of the upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy announced in the new Political Guidelines (2024-2029).

**→ Address the skills gap and risk of labour shortages during crises and promote active citizenship:**

- × Implement forward-looking measures, such as mapping workforce needs, training new labour force segments, facilitating skilled worker inflow, or putting in place labour mobility mechanisms. With its Internal Market Emergency and Resilience Act (IMERA), the EU already has a concrete tool to facilitate the free movement of workers and service providers in crisis situations. Further steps may be needed to address skills gaps and the risk of shortages in sectors critical to crisis preparedness.
- × Develop targeted incentives to increase the appeal of careers in defence, security and emergency response among younger generations, working together with trade unions and employers' organisations. Possible actions could be introduced as part of the Quality Jobs Roadmap announced in the Political Guidelines (2024-2029). Structured exchanges among Member States could help to identify best practices in relation to national service and conscription models, education programmes, the build-up of functioning reserve systems, etc. that can serve as inspiration to others, are potentially transferable, and can be further facilitated at the EU level.
- × Reinforce channels and opportunities enabling the active participation of young people in preparedness action by stepping up support for the voluntary sector. The EU should explore



additional opportunities to volunteer for crisis preparedness through existing EU programmes, such as the European Solidarity Corps, and step up dedicated engagement with established youth movements on crisis preparedness – for instance, in the context of the upcoming Youth Advisory Board announced in the Political Guidelines (2024-2029).

## **5. LEVERAGE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.**

Past crises have clearly demonstrated that the private sector's preparedness and resilience is vital to ensuring critical functions for societies and the EU as a whole. Private and public businesses (for example, State-owned companies) provide essential goods and services, such as energy, transport, food, water supply and wastewater disposal, and medical supplies that are critical in times of crisis. Interdependencies between different sectors and across borders create the potential for severe knock-on effects in crisis situations, as we have seen in recent years. The recent succession of crises and disruptions have exposed different vulnerabilities in the EU's supply chains. This has led to delays, price fluctuations, disruptions, shortages and other problems for consumers that affect the EU's ability to prepare for and withstand the next crisis. Moreover, the private sector has become increasingly aware of security and geopolitical risks that might affect their businesses.

### **→ Enhance public-private cooperation to facilitate resilience-building, as well as swift and coordinated responses to future crises:**

- × Develop stronger public-private information sharing and coordination mechanisms to strengthen mutual and reciprocal exchanges on existing and emerging risks. This is crucial to enable businesses, Member States' competent authorities and the relevant EU institutions, bodies and agencies to be alerted and take the necessary precautions.
- × Consider targeted and temporary flexibility measures and emergency provisions in legislation to better enable the private sector as a preparedness and crisis response actor. The EU could comprehensively screen existing legislative and institutional frameworks to identify bottlenecks and specific issues. The EU could also build on pandemic-era ad hoc derogations from State aid rules to develop a more structured and anticipatory approach to derogations in times of crisis.
- × Extend and formalise public-private crisis cooperation arrangements with the Commission that successfully enabled the acceleration of the development and authorisation of treatments and vaccines, as well as the management of the energy crisis.
- × Systematically integrate private sector expertise in the development of preparedness policies and emergency planning. This would enable policy-makers to better tailor policies to the needs and capabilities of critical private sector actors, and enable them to cooperate more effectively with public authorities in crisis response.
- × Integrate the 'preparedness-by-design' principle in the revision of the public procurement Directive. The review should make the public procurement process not only simpler and faster, but fit for purpose in light of new challenges and risks linked to preparedness, economic security, critical infrastructure resilience, and defence, while respecting the EU's international obligations.

### **→ Reinforce private sector crisis preparedness and resilience:**

- × Raise business' awareness of the need for better preparedness and ensure a consistent level of crisis preparedness through joint public-private training and simulation exercises.
- × Extend the critical infrastructure resilience framework established under the CER and NIS2 directives to other crisis-relevant sectors, including notably Europe's defence industrial base. To complement the implementation of these Directives, which provide a basis for protecting critical

infrastructure against a wide range of threats, it could be explored to broaden their scope to other critical sectors and industries vital to the maintenance of core governmental, societal, and economic functions.

- × Establish a targeted physical resilience framework for key manufacturing to enhance crisis preparedness and shock resistance. The production of highly specialised goods, such as semiconductors, aircraft and spacecraft, communications and security equipment, and specialised machines and vehicles needs to be ensured in times of crisis. The EU and its Member States should extend on a targeted (company level) basis existing resilience-enhancing frameworks to manufacturing, in doing so supporting key players that help to ensure the EU's vital functions.
- × Engage with businesses in institutionalising de-risking efforts, cross-sector stress tests and proactive security measures. This could build on successful examples, such as the energy sector stress tests. Critical projects for the Union, e.g. submarine cable and pipeline infrastructure, need to be meticulously screened to avoid new vulnerabilities,
- × Establish industry-specific preparedness frameworks and sector-agnostic standards to mainstream resilience, preparedness and readiness planning in the private sector. This could be systematically promoted when new EU legislation is proposed, or existing legislation is revised.

**→ Develop a comprehensive EU Stockpiling Strategy to incentivise coordinated public and private reserves of critical inputs, and ensure their availability under all circumstances.**

- × While fully acknowledging Member States' role in the domain of stockpiling and strategic reserves, joint action at the EU level could help to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy and contribute to the de-risking of excessive external dependencies in terms of raw materials and other crisis-relevant goods.
- × Map ongoing efforts, best practices and needs; jointly identify a comprehensive set of essential inputs (e.g. foodstuffs, energy, critical raw materials, emergency response equipment, medical countermeasures); and define targets to ensure minimum levels of preparedness in different crisis scenarios, including in the event of an armed aggression or the large-scale disruption of global supply chains.
- × Ensure coherence and coordination between future initiatives and ongoing or proposed EU-level stockpiling efforts, for instance in the field of health preparedness, disaster and emergency response, energy, critical raw materials, and defence readiness.
- × Strengthen the EU's ability to monitor in real time critical supply chains, production capacities and public and private stocks of select items and resources to ensure a sufficiently agile approach to stockpiling, including through an enhanced public-private partnership based on trust and mutual information sharing.
- × Develop a set of operational criteria to guide the coordinated release of emergency reserves and stocks during emergencies or supply disruptions, and explore options to replenish strategic reserves through joint procurement or innovative financing options.

## 6. OUTSMART MALICIOUS ACTORS TO DETER HYBRID ATTACKS.

The significant increase in the number of malicious activities on the EU's territory points to an increasingly brazen and aggressive nature of hybrid activities by Russia and other external threat actors. The EU has already taken steps to build preparedness and resilience against hybrid threats, including most recently with the adoption of a sanctions framework for destabilising activities against the EU and its Member States. Yet, more work needs to be done to credibly deter malicious actors. Enhanced EU preparedness against hybrid threats needs to create a higher threshold for malicious actors to engage in hostile activities targeting us by strengthening our deterrence: a) through 'deterrence by denial', increasing the EU's resilience by tackling vulnerabilities and strengthening its capacity for damage mitigation; b) through 'deterrence by punishment', dissuading potential perpetrators through a decisive response that imposes costs outweighing any potential benefits of continued hybrid operations. While keeping fully in line with our democratic principles and values and respecting EU, national and international law, strengthening our preparedness is crucial in anticipation of the possible further escalation of hybrid campaigns.

### → Strengthen EU intelligence structures step-by-step towards a fully fledged EU service for intelligence cooperation.

- × Implement the steps agreed by the Council as part of the implementation of the Strategic Compass to reinforce and improve Single Intelligence Assessment Capacity (SIAC), including the Hybrid Fusion Cell.
- × Ensure a structured and coordinated process to timely address information requirements and requests for SIAC products, including from relevant Commission services and the EU agencies under their oversight.
- × Strengthen and formalise information and data sharing arrangements between SIAC and other relevant EU level actors with a view to better aggregating information.
- × Enhance cooperation between SIAC and relevant security departments/units of the Commission, the EEAS, the General Secretariat of the Council and other EU institutions and Member States to coordinate specific counter-espionage tasks.
- × Develop a proposal together with Member States on the modalities of a fully-fledged intelligence cooperation service at the EU level that can serve both the strategic and operational needs of policy planning decision-making without emulating the tasks of Member States' national intelligence organisations, including in respect of their role in intelligence gathering.

### → Reinforce the EU's capacity for 'deterrence by denial':

- × Take joint action to make it as difficult as possible for hostile intelligence services to operate in the EU. Discrepancies in Member States' counter-intelligence practices, legislation and insufficient cross-border information sharing can be exploited by malicious actors.
- × Encourage Member States to proactively share information about vulnerabilities that pose a broader threat within the Union and should be tackled together at the EU level.
- × Establish an anti-sabotage network to support Member States in preventing and responding to sabotage incidents. The network would build upon existing EU-level cooperation, notably the Critical Entities Resilience Group, the Protective Security Advisory Programme, the work of the INTCEN Hybrid Fusion Cell, and the cooperation between Member States' intelligence/security services, law enforcement, border and coast guards (including Frontex), customs and other competent authorities.

- × Strengthen the links between the work on countering hybrid threats and economic security. Supply chain dependencies, future digital infrastructure, foreign direct investment, research security, and new clean technologies are leveraged by competing and malicious global powers to create the potential for weaponisation as part of coercive strategies.
- × Ensure effective support to Member States facing instrumentalised migration at the Union's external borders.

**→ Reinforce the EU's capacity for 'deterrence by punishment':**

- × Conduct a comprehensive assessment of key hybrid threat actors' strategic and operational specificities to identify aims, methods, key vulnerabilities and exposures to EU countermeasures. This will help to identify, organise and grade all tools at our disposal in an actor-specific way, with the aim of altering the cost-benefit analysis of the targeted actors over time.
- × Reinforce political attribution as the basis for response to hybrid threats and consider on a case-by-case basis the public use of (declassified) intelligence assessments. In line with a 'naming and shaming' logic, rapid attribution or the public use of intelligence can be an effective way to seize the initiative and place hybrid actors on the backfoot, preventing or disrupting their malicious plans.
- × Ensure the creation of a robust framework for lawful access to encrypted data to support the fight of Member States' authorities against espionage, sabotage and terrorism, as well as organised crime. There are signs that in several recent cases of sabotage, perpetrators were recruited and instructed via digital communication applications. Therefore, the ability of lawfully accessing encrypted data is important to counter such threats, while fully respecting fundamental rights and without undermining cybersecurity.

## **7. SCALE UP EUROPE'S DEFENCE EFFORTS AND UNLOCK ITS DUAL-USE POTENTIAL.**

Stronger European defence – based on a competitive and resilient European defence technological and industrial base, and strengthened defence capabilities and readiness – is of crucial importance for the EU's comprehensive preparedness. Currently, the collective inventory of the capabilities of Member States (who are often also NATO allies) continues to show serious gaps and shortfalls. This leads to critical questions of how Europe can shore up its defences – at a much faster pace and in a joined-up way – to urgently prepare for the full spectrum of military and civilian-military contingencies. This requires both delivering high-tech capabilities, which plays into our comparative technological advantage and building up sufficient mass in case any military confrontation turns to longer term attrition. Moreover, Europe's defensive capacity hinges on a whole-of-government approach, as Member States' armed forces can benefit from enhanced civil-military cooperation and dual-use technologies and infrastructures organised through the EU framework. Increasing the available funding for defence cooperation is vital to overcome endemic fragmentation and decades of underinvestment.

**→ Develop an EU defence capability package for the next decade:**

- × Use the forthcoming White Paper on the future of European Defence to frame an ambitious long-term ambition and policy, with a view to concrete steps forward:
  - identify and map the urgent defence needs of Member States;
  - revise the existing EU politico-military Headline Goal to reflect large-scale, multi-domain and protracted external aggression;

- develop concrete options to enhance EU-level funding;
- promote mutual reinforcement with NATO activities and standards;
- strengthen where possible the governance of European defence.
- × Fully implement the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the related Programme. This will bolster the aggregation of demand and create new possibilities to incentivise joint development and procurement and, for example, ensure the security of supply in crisis situations.
- × Identify and develop, as a matter of urgency, a set of major Defence Projects of Common Interest, underpinned by the necessary ad hoc, long-term budgetary provisions. Air defence and cyber defence have already been highlighted in the Political Guidelines (2024-2029) as concrete examples. The selected flagships should be future-facing capabilities that can make a strategic difference – both within the EU and NATO and together with Ukraine – and offer industrial benefits within Europe.
- × Make available the necessary EU-level funding to incentivise and strengthen joint capability investment to prepare Europe for major military contingencies. The EU's defence-related programmes are generally designed to support and facilitate joint and collaborative projects by Member States and/or the defence industry, acting as a 'flywheel' for the rationalisation of Europe's defence sector. The overall volume of EU funds compared to national budgets is insufficient to really impact the market.

**→ Strengthen Europe's capacity to provide mid-to-long-term military assistance to Ukraine.**

- × The EU should maintain and further strengthen its capacity to deliver military support to Ukraine for as long as it takes. This is critical to keep Ukraine in a position to defend itself against the Russian invasion. This leads to the urgent need to further ramp up defence production capacity. The EU must also be ready to fill any possible gaps in the event of a diminished level of support for Ukraine from the US.
- × The European Peace Facility, as a flexible, swift off-budget instrument operating under CFSP, should be endowed with sufficient resources.
- × With Ukraine on its path to EU accession, the EU should better accompany this process and structure the progressive integration of Ukraine into the European defence ecosystem, as envisaged under EDIS and EDIP. Increasingly, this means that EU defence planning needs to systematically be based on the needs of the EU-27 and Ukraine.

**→ Develop the proposed Single Market for Defence products and services with tangible measures to enhance cross-border cooperation and defence industrial competitiveness.**

- × Rationalising the defence equipment market in the EU will benefit our competitiveness, our security and preparedness. Currently, there are various ingrained practices, regulatory hurdles and political divergences hampering a more integrated Single Market for defence products and services.
- × Lowering the barriers to cross-border cooperation on both the demand and supply side would be key to reducing the structural cost inflation of defence products, which has a detrimental impact on the purchasing power of national governments.

→ **Strengthen dual-use and civil-military cooperation at the EU level, based on a whole-of-government approach:**

- × Conduct a review of the EU's dual use potential across all relevant domains to identify new synergies, for example through further work on priority (dual-use) transport corridors for military movements, the extension of fuel supply chains for the armed forces along these corridors; stockpiling and strategic reserves of energy, minerals and other critical goods, hospitals and medical services, maritime surveillance and monitoring systems, governmental space-based navigation, communication and observation services, etc.
- × Further examine and harmonise dual-use definitions in various relevant EU funding instruments and policies. Within each area, the legal and regulatory margins should be fully explored, taking into account the specificities of the sector and defence-related actors respectively.
- × Strengthen dual-use research and defence innovation in the EU framework to avoid Europe from lagging further behind the leading powers to the detriment of its long-term strategic position. Enhancing synergies between defence and civil security applications would optimise the use of scarce resources. We can build further on proposals in the report by Special Adviser Mario Draghi on the future of European competitiveness.
- × Defence and dual-use-related considerations should be fully embedded in the EU's work on critical (foundational) technologies, such as AI and quantum, especially in terms of promoting the EU's advances in this field to reduce dependencies and protect against technology leakage.
- × Strengthen links between the defence industry and other strategic industrial sectors that form part of the same ecosystem, such as naval/shipbuilding, space, aerospace, etc. The defence sector forms part of a broader strategic industrial ecosystem that relies on similar or interchangeable raw materials, technologies, skills, machines, and other industrial infrastructure.
- × Develop a structured civilian security capability development programme to better coordinate investments in the distinct but parallel areas of civil security and defence. Such a process should be supported by consistent EU funding schemes. This would, however, require structurally reforming planning in the highly fragmented civil security sector, moving towards greater agility, standardisation and collaboration.

## **8. BUILD MUTUAL RESILIENCE WITH PARTNERS THROUGH ASSERTIVE EU DIPLOMACY.**

Many of the threats, risks and challenges set out in this report either originate abroad, have a strong cross-border dimension, or are global and overarching in nature. The EU should therefore use its diplomacy and partnerships in a concerted fashion to strengthen mutual resilience with its partners – based on shared interests and in line with our principles and values. The EU needs to navigate its international partnerships in the context of all-pervasive strategic competition and contestation. To engage new and emerging partners in a long-term effort to build mutual resilience, the EU should further invest in its convening power and diplomatic outreach at all levels; become more strategic in its engagement with partners, and set clear priorities to avoid the risk of being stretched too thin; focus its offer on where it can offer the greatest added value, rather than competing where we cannot do so effectively; and become more agile, while delivering faster. By helping to strengthen our partners' resilience, we are also consolidating our own. The widening and deepening belt of instability and fragility needs to be treated as a key issue of concern for the EU's preparedness.

→ **Embed the mutual resilience principle in upcoming EU policy initiatives – taking into account sectoral or regional specificities.**

- × This should be based on horizontal parameters to extrapolate the EU's interests and priorities and identify partners' resilience needs through an iterative outreach process.
- × While acknowledging the very different settings of individual sectoral policies, applying these key parameters would allow mutual resilience to be integrated by design into new sectoral and cross-cutting strategies, plans and initiatives.

→ **Use scenario-based risk assessments to prepare EU crisis response options and guide wider policy development on possible external shocks and crises:**

- × In a volatile world, our preparedness is served by more pro-actively anticipating possible external crisis scenarios. This work can feed into prudent planning for concrete crisis response options, as well as into wider EU policy development.

→ **Strengthen outreach and diplomacy to involve and engage with partners at all levels:**

- × The EU should reach out more proactively and systematically at all levels to communicate a clear commitment to developing mutual resilience partnerships, and to rebuild long-term trust.
- × Promote mutual resilience by working through multilateral fora and supporting the UN's agenda for the future. EU diplomacy should remain geared towards strengthening the capacity of relevant international institutions, in particular the UN system, to support and coordinate global efforts on mutual resilience.
- × Expand the availability of EU-level early warning and threat detection tools and instruments to partners as part of partnership agreements.
- × Strengthen the structural exchange of expertise, best practices and training on mutual resilience. Different sectoral dialogues, platforms or networks should be further strengthened, rolled out and equipped to deliver concrete projects. To facilitate cross-sectoral and comprehensive exchanges, the EU should consider setting up a network of regional 'Mutual Resilience Centres' with partners.

→ **Conduct horizontal stock-taking and mapping of the overlapping mutual resilience interests and collaborative opportunities with partner countries as part of the planning for the next Multiannual Financial Framework:**

- × In the course of 2025, ahead of the next MFF, the EEAS and Commission services, together with Member States, should take stock of ongoing actions and envisioned needs in the context of mutual resilience, in different policy and geographical clusters. This gap analysis should pave the way for a greater strategic focus and enable a number of practical, regulatory and funding improvements.

→ **Plan better, deliver faster:**

- × Review and reform processes, tools and instruments to ensure faster delivery. Speed is increasingly a determining factor for the EU's impact and leverage in a fast-paced and crisis-prone world.
- × As part of an upgraded Team Europe approach, promote joint strategic planning between the EU and Member States in relation to mutual resilience and the external dimension of preparedness. This would help to maximise the impact of Team Europe initiatives and strengthen our message coherence, overall partnership offer, and leverage vis-à-vis partners.

- × Embed resilience-building and preparedness into the strategic planning for the EU's flagship Global Gateway strategy. Across all five key thematic areas of the Global Gateway (digital, climate and energy, education and research, health and transport), the EU should ensure that relevant projects and initiatives contribute to building resilience and crisis preparedness.

**→ Strengthen the EU's responsiveness to rapidly evolving crisis situations, including in fragile settings.**

- × As part of its own preparedness and ability to support partners, the EU needs to be ready to respond to unfolding external crises, using its full-spectrum toolbox, including the Common Security and Defence Policy.
- × Further reinforce the role of EU CSDP missions and operations and coordinated maritime presence to enhance mutual resilience, including to safeguard international shipping routes and critical infrastructure. Innovative approaches could also be developed to facilitate the use of CSDP instruments in complementarity with internal security tools in the immediate vicinity of the EU's territory and territorial waters.
- × Develop an integrated EU approach to address the arc of instability and fragility in the EU's wider neighbourhood and tackle knock-on effects on European security and stability. The EU should develop dedicated financing instruments and a framework for pragmatic engagement in complex political environments, working closely with Member States, International Financial Institutions, Multilateral Development Banks, and regional organisations. The aim should be to strike a balance between the need to stay engaged pragmatically, supporting local populations and avoiding providing support to unlawful or abusive ruling authorities.
- × Ensure that international climate finance mechanisms are designed to reach the countries and communities most vulnerable to climate change; and reinforce EU assistance to help address the growing consequences of conflict and disasters.

## **9. HARNESS THE ECONOMICS OF PREPAREDNESS BY INVESTING TOGETHER UPFRONT.**

Investing together in our own security and safety is one of the primary responsibilities the Union faces in an era of high risk and deep uncertainty. Preparedness for the high-risk context of the coming years and decades requires scaling up our joint investment across the board to a new level. Smart and sufficient upfront investment in our preparedness is essential to minimise the impact of crises. Robustly investing in preparedness at the EU level means ensuring that our efforts are effective, coherent, cost-efficient, and mutually reinforcing. There is an opportunity to connect the EU's competitiveness and preparedness investment. The daunting scale of the overall investment needs means that Europe should harness the economic and strategic potential of these investments primarily to the benefit of the Union's economy and citizens – including their comprehensive preparedness. While preparing for the next multi-year EU budget cycle starting in 2028, it also needs to be taken into account that our preparedness has urgent needs that should be addressed already before that.

**→ Mainstream preparedness across the next EU budget:**

- × With a view to the preparation of and negotiations of the next MFF and taking into account the increasing risks in the EU's security environment, preparedness should be integrated by design in the EU budget.
- × Ensure more built-in flexibility in the next MFF to allow for a faster and scalable response to unforeseen needs that arise in the wake of emergencies and crises.



- × Reinforce the long-term 'preparedness impact' of EU investment and crisis recovery spending. All major structural and regional investment supported by the EU budget – in particular the EU's Cohesion Funds – should have security risk and disaster-proofing, climate-resilience and crisis-preparedness components further mainstreamed by design.
- × Adapt the EU's budgetary framework to better support multi-year funding and investment and secure the long-term financing of key preparedness investment. The EU and Member States need to make sure to offer our public and private partners the necessary investment horizon and secure a long-term commitment to preparedness initiatives.
- × Ring-fence funding for preparedness action. To ensure that answering the needs of an immediate crisis does not hamper our long-term efforts, response and recovery costs must not be detrimental to further prevention and preparedness action.
- × Strengthen the dual-use potential of our spending, fully exploiting regulatory margins to make sure we maximise funding benefits and added value for our civilian and military readiness.

**→ Develop a European Preparedness and Readiness Investment Framework to support the EU's transition to a fully prepared Union:**

- × As part of this investment framework to be envisioned in the next budgetary cycle, the EU should bring together relevant instruments in a coherent package with funding levels commensurate to the scale and complexity of the evolving challenges we face.
- × In line with the notion of mainstreaming preparedness, all relevant instruments across sectors should earmark a certain amount for preparedness action in their respective fields – so that, for example, at least 20% of the overall EU budget contributes to the EU's security and crisis preparedness.
- × The EU and Member States should consider setting up two dedicated facilities: a Defending Europe Facility (DEF) and a Securing Europe Facility (SEF), combining relevant funding streams and avoiding fragmented, siloed instruments.
  - The Defending Europe Facility should encompass relevant defence industrial and other defence-related or dual-use instruments.
  - The Securing Europe Facility should combine all instruments and programmes linked to civil security (e.g. law enforcement and border management), civil protection, and other emergency response services, and related critical infrastructures.

The creation of two large-scale facilities with relevant windows for different activities should facilitate the pooling of resources, enabling the EU to better leverage its funds at scale for common and overarching priorities, simplifying public and private partners' access to EU-funded programmes, and contributing to the EU's competitiveness by boosting market consolidation.

- × As part of this comprehensive European Preparedness and Readiness Investment Framework, the EU and Member States should also explore further innovative ways to mobilise the necessary funding for preparedness:
  - Establish an Investment Guarantee Programme, e.g. on the model of InvestEU, to trigger private sector investment in Europe's defence technological and industrial base, or disaster and crisis-resilient infrastructure through public seed money.
  - Work with the European Investment Bank to expand funding possibilities for the defence sector beyond dual-use.

- Leverage private capital for preparedness action by providing investment opportunities for EU citizens and institutional investors.
- Leverage the synergies between the EU's work on competitiveness and preparedness. For instance, the future EU Competitiveness Fund announced in the Political Guidelines (2024-2029) could provide incentives for EU companies and economic operators to address vulnerabilities in their infrastructure or supply chains.

## The building blocks of a fully prepared Union

