



EU Battlegroups

EU Battlegroups are multinational, military units, usually composed of 1500 personnel each and form an integral part of the European Union's military rapid reaction capacity to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world. Like any decision relating to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) their deployment is subject to a unanimous decision by the Council. Although Battlegroups have been fully operational since 2007 and have proven their value as a tool for defence cooperation and transformation, issues relating to political will, usability, and financial solidarity have prevented them from being deployed. However, in recent months much progress has been made to overcome these hurdles – giving the Battlegroups renewed impetus and relevance.

A changing global geopolitical climate

At a time when terrorism, hybrid threats, climate change, economic volatility and energy insecurity lead to violent conflicts around the globe, closer European cooperation on defence and security is more important than ever.



The European Union has always prided itself on its soft power – and it will keep doing so, because we are the best in this field. However, the idea that Europe is an exclusively “civilian power” does not do justice to an evolving reality. For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand.



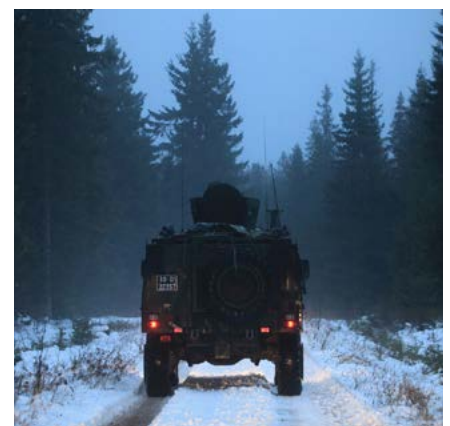
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The European Way

The complexity of contemporary conflicts and crises requires a comprehensive approach which addresses the multiple levels and dimensions on which they evolve. The EU has a unique mix of instruments to tackle such complex challenges more effectively.

There is a genuine European way to resolving external conflicts and crises. It is made of civilian and military means, hard and soft power, strategic autonomy and cooperation with our partners, and includes promoting human rights and good governance, entails investing in strong societies, in education and development, and ensuring security and stability.



Battlegroups: one element of a wide variety of EU instruments and capabilities to ensure the safety of European citizens and contribute to maintaining international peace and security

Just as today's security challenges cannot be faced with military means alone, there are situations which cannot be resolved by only relying on humanitarian and development aid or diplomacy. There are situations in which a quick and decisive military reaction is necessary to save lives and prevent protracted conflicts and violence. This is where the EU Battlegroups come in.

They permit the EU and its Member states to respond early and rapidly to evolving conflicts. Preventing conflicts and engaging at an early stage is more efficient and effective



than engaging at a later stage in fully fledged violent conflicts. In conjunction with a reliable early warning system, EU Battlegroups permit a targeted and rapid response to minimise human suffering and insecurity. In a world of predictable unpredictability, reacting fast is at times the only way to react effectively.

While Member States remain in the driving seat and are responsible for deploying security and armed forces when needed, the EU can facilitate and reinforce this cooperation and make the collective effort more effective. Ensuring a joined-up and comprehensive approach which makes full use of all the EU's available instruments and acts on all stages and levels of the conflict is essential to achieve a lasting resolution of violent conflicts and crises.



Specific tasks and objectives

Battlegroups are employable across the full range of tasks listed in Article 43(1) of the Treaty on European Union and those identified in the context of the implementation of the [EU Global Strategy](#).

These include:

- conflict prevention
- initial stabilisation
- humanitarian interventions and rescue tasks
- crisis management
- peacekeeping

Deployment of EU BGs always requires a unanimous decision of the Council and would generally require an authorising UN Security Council Resolution.

Renewed impetus, not new competences

In recent months there has been substantial progress to overcome the obstacles which have so far prevented the deployment of EU Battlegroups, despite their effective operation since 2007.

The most significant obstacle had long been the financing of EU Battlegroup operations. However, at the European Council in June 2017 Member States took further steps to make full use of the Lisbon Treaty's potential in the area of security and defence, by calling for a broadening of the costs that would be borne in common by Member States, notably as regards the deployment of EU Battlegroups. Decisions in this regards are currently under discussion in the context of the review of the mechanism for the financing of EU military missions and operations ([Athena mechanism](#)).

Features of EU Battlegroups

CHARACTERISTICS

On a rotational basis, two Battlegroups are always on standby for a period of 6 months.

EU Battlegroups are able to initially sustain missions for 30 days, extendable to 120 days if resupplied appropriately.

Battlegroups are usually made-up of a combined arms, battalion-sized (about 1500 personnel strong) force, reinforced with combat and combat service support. Their exact composition depends on the specificities of the mission and the participating countries.

EU Battlegroups are based on the principle of multi-nationality. This may also include non-EU countries, as is the case in the Nordic Battlegroup where six EU Member States are joined by Norway which is not a member of the EU.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Allows the EU and its Member States to independently and rapidly respond to emerging conflicts and crises.

EU Battlegroups are intended for small-scale rapid response missions as opposed to fully fledged long-term operations.

Battlegroups are the minimum size force capable of a stand-alone operation or as a spearhead preparing the ground for more comprehensive operations.

Cooperation is essential. No individual actor can effectively and pre-emptively face the multitude and complexities of today's threats alone. Instead Member states can benefit from each other's competences and complement each other's strengths.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Strengthens the EU's strategic autonomy in military terms, thus also strengthening NATO.

The development of Battlegroups has contributed to the transformation of the Member States armed forces in response to a changing security environment. In particular it has developed their capacity in the field of rapid response missions.

This not only increases the EU's military independence, but also crucially ensures an effective and targeted response.

This has led to enhanced cooperation between Member States, promotes the interoperability of military forces, and thus avoids duplication and makes the collective effort more effective. It entails a deepening mutual knowledge of each other's military capabilities and related political processes.

