

EU Policies Updates – February 2026

1. Security and Defence

European Security Strategy

At the launch of Cyprus's EU Council Presidency earlier this month, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced plans for a new **European Security Strategy** in 2026. In [her speech](#) at the Munich Security Conference, she reaffirmed her commitment and emphasised that “We in Europe should be ready and willing to use our strength assertively and proactively to protect our security interests. We need a new doctrine for this – with a simple goal: to ensure that Europe can defend its own territory, economy, democracy and way of life at all times”. The new ESS is not included in the Commission programme for 2026 and is likely a response to growing global threats, being announced just days after Trump's statements on Greenland.

There is no information on who will lead the strategy development or how it will affect the EU's overall external action. It is also not clear to what extent this will differ from the [Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#) (2022) or how it will relate hierarchically to the [EU Global Strategy](#) (2016).

While EU leaders are increasingly vocal about European security and defence, EU institutions have no meaningful competence in this domain, and Member States remain reluctant to transfer sovereignty to the supranational level. Recent initiatives have mostly focused on boosting investment in the defence industry and simplifying procurement rules, with little implications on actual policy or political integration.

EPLO will keep you updated on relevant developments. If you have any information about it, please do not hesitate to share.

Security for Action Europe (SAFE) programme

The EC has endorsed the first [national defence investment plans](#) in the framework of the SAFE programme. On the basis of these plans, individual Member States will receive loans for investment in defence capabilities. SAFE is one of the three pillars of the [ReArm Europe Plan / Readiness 2030](#) endorsed by the EU with the objective of boosting defence spending. (For more information, please check previous WG updates).

The largest beneficiary of the SAFE programme will be Poland (43.7 billion), followed by Romania (16.6 billion), France and Hungary (16.2 billion), and Italy (14.9 billion).

The European Parliament has contested the legality of this instrument, due to the fact that the EC used an emergency procedure to bypass parliamentary discussions and have it approved more quickly. However, the ongoing legal dispute does not put into question the programme itself (which enjoys a large majority in EP) but only the adoption process.

European Peace Facility

A series of assistance measures (non-lethal equipment) under the European Peace Facility were announced in the last few months:

- Jordanian Armed Forces (35 Mln): Short-Range Air Defence Radar and Command and Control systems + training
- DRC army (10 Mln): medical equipment, radios, engineering equipment, light boats
- Chadian army (14.5 Mln): renovation and training design of training school in Koundoul
- Ivorian army (20 Mln): ISR equipment (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance); parachutes
- Armenian army (20 Mln): logistical and medical equipment in support of tent camps, technical medical equipment + training

Last year, the EPF underwent a mid-term review, which led to minor changes in its Council Decision, mostly in technical nature (for more information, please check WG update from February 2025). An **impact evaluation** of the Instrument will take place in 2026, and it will be carried out by the Division for Integrated Approach for Peace and Security (PCM.1) in the EEAS.

EPLO will discuss this evaluation with EU interlocutors to identify potential entry points and opportunities. If you have any information about this, please do not hesitate to share.

2. EP ongoing attacks against civil society

In November 2025, the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee (CONT) set up a scrutiny working group (SWG) on NGO financing, after months of unfounded attacks on NGOs, mostly driven by the European People's Party (EPP) and far-right political groups. The SWG has been boycotted by groups from Liberals to the Left, leaving only right-wing MEPs participating.

After the launch in November, a [second meeting](#) of the SWG took place in January. A deputy director general of the EC Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG), and the author of a European Court of Auditors' report on EU funding to NGOs participated in hearings. Both the ECA and EC officials pushed back against accusations of irregularities in the procedures and methods through which NGOs are receiving EU funding.

A [third meeting](#) took place last week, and discussions in the group were again inconclusive. MEPs are struggling to find evidence of any wrongdoing and have now explicitly [conceded](#) that there are political motives behind the initiative. While this attack has luckily lost some traction and visibility in EU-focused media and discussions, it has nevertheless caused damage. The LIFE programme, the initial target of the smear campaign, now faces proposed cuts under the next MFF, with the EC suggesting merging parts of the programme into a broader competitiveness fund.

(For more background information, please check the minutes from the WG calls in May and July 2025).

3. Transparency

In 2025, the EP took steps towards the approval of a [Regulation on information security](#), initially proposed by the EC in 2022. The Commission insists new rules are needed to protect the EU from hybrid threats, while keeping information flowing between the EU institutions and its agencies. In a nutshell, the proposal aims to align the Commission's classification system to the Council's, which is much stricter. Additionally, it would also reverse the burden of proof, with those seeking access needing to justify their request. The procedure is still at early stages. So far, it has only been discussed in the Parliament and it needs to be voted by both Parliament and Council to become law.

EPLO will keep members updated on the developments.

4. European Court of Auditors' reports expected in 2026

One of the priority areas for the European Court of Auditors in 2026 will be the Union's security, defence, democratic values and external action, including enlargement and migration.

Among the different reports in 2026 we can expect:

- Assessment of the Commission's methodology in tackling significant financial risks in the implementation of the EU's development aid through international organisations.

- Overall analysis of the instruments used within or outside of the EU budget to finance defence with specific focus on legal, institutional, and financial framework in the area of defence.
- Assessment on whether the Commission effectively programmes, funds, and implements humanitarian actions addressing forgotten crises to meet the beneficiaries needs.

You can find all expected ECA reports for 2026 [here](#).