



Moving towards comprehensive preparedness

Safer Together

Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness **by Sauli Niinistö**

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Building block #10

The **report by Special Adviser Sauli Niinistö** assesses the complex challenges the EU and its Member States are facing in a complex and volatile threat environment, presenting **around 80 recommendations** to enhance the EU's civilian and military preparedness and readiness.

In doing so it covers a wide range of issues, including notably Europe's threat environment, its crisis management architecture, the importance of EU's citizens for preparedness, public-private cooperation, hybrid threats, the future of European defence, the role of the EU's international partnerships and the economics of preparedness.

“We must be better prepared, not only to survive, but also to thrive in this new reality. This calls for an overhaul of the way we Europeans see the Union's role in keeping us all secure.”

Building on extensive research and stakeholder consultations , the report identified a number of **key, overarching findings** that cut across the different chapters of the report:

1. **Europe is facing a new reality, marked by increased risk-levels and deep uncertainty.** 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 major crises of past years are neither transitory nor isolated events. Instead, they reflect deeper fault lines and 'tectonic' geopolitical, climatic, and technological shifts. Moreover, the lines between internal and external security are increasingly blurred.
2. **The Union does not start from scratch, but we need to prepare better and faster for worst-case scenarios.** EU level action has stood at the forefront of addressing recent shocks to our security, ecosystems, economy, and health. In this context, we have significantly upgraded our toolbox across different sectors. Given the deteriorating external environment, the EU and its Member States are not yet fully prepared for the most severe, cross-sectoral crisis-scenarios.

“We need to make sure our legislation, working methods and tools match the challenges we face. However, at its heart, preparedness is a mindset .”

3. **Moving towards a fully prepared Union means adapting to a robust all-hazards, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach** to its civilian and military preparedness and readiness. To this end, the Report sets out the overarching objective of ‘**comprehensive preparedness**’. This means:
 - Looking at the full spectrum of threats, hazards, and risks in an integrated manner. Climate action should not come at the expense of our security and vice versa.
 - Mobilising relevant actors across all levels of government – from the local level to the EU level and from civilian authorities to the armed forces.
 - Engaging all parts of society in a combined effort, including the private sector, civil society, and especially individual citizens.
4. **Comprehensive preparedness can only be achieved in the EU framework.** At a time when the magnitude and complexity of the threats we face risks overwhelming individual Member States, the EU provides a vital contribution to ensuring the security, safety, and wellbeing of our citizens. Respecting the allocation of competences at EU and national level, it provides a platform to structure and scale-up preparedness efforts and ensures the necessary surge capacity to protect vital governmental, economic, and societal functions in case of a major crisis.
5. **Enhancing EU preparedness requires boosting speed of action.** When major cross-border crises erupt, rapid decision-making and action are vital to mitigate the impact and limit potential knock-on effects across sectors. To enable the necessary speed during multidimensional crises, however, we need to strengthen our ability to cooperate across silos, reinforce cooperation between different operational authorities, accelerate information sharing and streamline unnecessarily complex coordination structures.
6. **Comprehensive preparedness builds on a strong EU-NATO partnership.** While recognising the different mandates and competences of each organisation, we need to map out the implications of a major military contingencies for the EU – both in terms of the impact on economy and society and the full range of regulatory and financial powers that would need to be mobilised. Moreover, EU and NATO should consider ways to reinforce effective coordination and exchange of information between relevant staffs when it matters the most.
7. **Preparedness has a cost, but nothing compared to the cost of non-preparedness when a crisis hits.** The COVID-19 pandemic, together with the fall-out of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, had an enormous economic impact on Europe. A higher preparedness baseline enables 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 longer-term budgetary resources, against the backdrop of decades of relative under-investment.

These key findings further translate into **nine concrete building blocks (see dedicated fact sheets)** of a fully prepared Union, including targeted recommendations:

- #1 Decode the crises of today and anticipate the threats of tomorrow
- #2 Enable the EU to function under all circumstances
- #3 Ensure speed of action with structures and procedures that are fit for purpose
- #4 Empower citizens as the backbone of societal resilience and preparedness
- #5 Leverage the full potential of public-private cooperation
- #6 Outsmart malicious actors to deter hybrid attacks
- #7 Scale up Europe's defence efforts and unlock its dual-use potential
- #8 Build mutual resilience with partners through assertive EU diplomacy
- #10 Harness the economics of preparedness by investing together upfront

