

# Build mutual resilience with partners through assertive EU external action

## Safer Together

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

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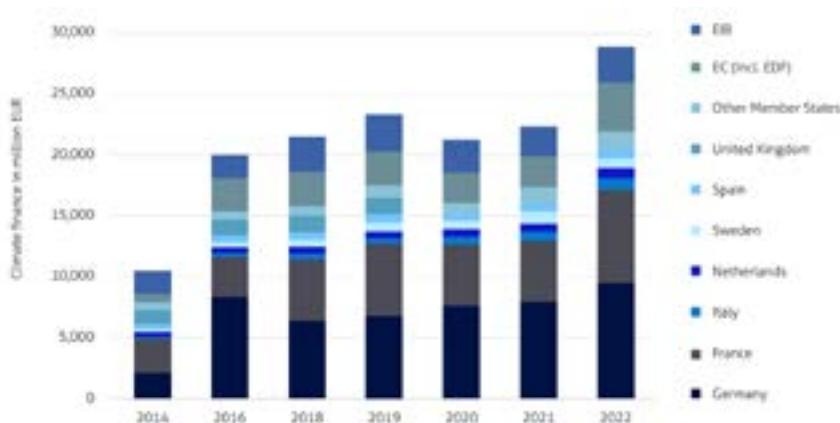
Building block #8

## What is the challenge?

- The overall objective of strengthening resilience and preparedness in a volatile and increasingly contested world is **shared with many if not all our bilateral and multilateral partners**. More than that, many partner countries not only face the same challenges as we do – they are often at the forefront of facing them.
- Many of the threats, risks and challenges set out in the report either **originate abroad, have a strong cross-border dimension, or are global and overarching in nature**, for example:
  - The widening arc of instability, fragility, and insecurity in Europe's vicinity and beyond
  - The broad societal and security impact of climate change
  - The growing threat posed by organised cross-border crime and drug trafficking
  - External economic over-dependencies and exposure to supply chain shocks

- Collectively maintaining secure and open access to key global commons and strategic domains, such as the high seas, outer space, global communication infrastructure, and cyberspace
- Strengthening partners' capacity to prevent, withstand or effectively respond to extreme weather events, health crises, hybrid campaigns, cyberattacks or the flaring up of armed conflict, also lowers the risk of cascading or spill-over effects for Europe.

“By helping to strengthen our partners' resilience we are also consolidating our own.”



International climate finance contributions of Team Europe + UK (2014-2022)

- The EU needs to navigate its international partnerships in the context of all-pervasive strategic competition and contestation. From development to conflict resolution, from trade negotiations to connectivity, and from our neighbourhood to partners in the so-called 'Global South', this geopolitical reality is creating complex and often contradictory challenges the EU will need to reconcile as part of its external action
- The EU remains a crucial defender of the rules-based global order against those who seek to overturn that order through the use or threat of force.
- Working together with like-minded partners helps to draw up coordinated responses, to share lessons and seek opportunities to collaborate. However, given the global nature of the threats and challenges we face, the Union must also further strengthen its ties and build mutual resilience with new and emerging partners across the globe.
- 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. The aim is not just to 'listen', but to better integrate partners' needs, expectations and sensitivities in the design of the partnership package.

- While the EU faces multiple interlocking challenges for its preparedness across different sectors and geographies, we need to become more strategic in our engagement with partners and to avoid the risk of being stretched too thinly. The EU should focus its offer on where it can bring the greatest added value, rather than competing where we cannot effectively do so.

## What is the objective?

- The EU should turn its focus on further strengthening mutual resilience with its partners – based on shared interests and in line with our principles and values. The notion of mutual resilience builds further on the ongoing paradigm shift in the way the EU conducts diplomatic outreach and approaches international partnerships.

## What actions does the Report recommend?

### **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 MFF:**

- ✓ 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 geopolitical 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. This is very often our 'first line of defence' to avoid external situations from deteriorating, escalating or spiralling further, with potentially worse impacts for the local population and related spill-over effects on Europe.
- ✓ 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. To this end, the EU should provide 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.