

Enable the EU to function under all circumstances

Safer Together

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

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Building block #2

What is the challenge?

- In the event of a major crisis, for example, a new pandemic, a devastating large-scale cyberattack or act of sabotage, let alone an armed aggression against a Member State, there is an immediate risk of **serious disruption to the continuity of critical functions for society and the economy**.
- Climate change continually degrades the EU's ability to function in the long term, for instance by exacerbating increasing shortages and irregularities in the supply of critical resources, such as food and clean water, increasing the risk of new pandemics, and fuelling increasingly intense and frequent disasters and extreme weather events.
- **The EU currently lacks an agreed, comprehensive list of vital societal and governmental functions** defined at EU level, however. These would include:
 - citizens' basic needs e.g. food, water, housing and shelter, protection, health and sanitation
 - essential services and functions, such as the Single Market, public order and security, energy, transport, telecommunications and digital services, border management, economic and financial management, and satellite-based services

These ensure the smooth running of our societies and economies. They are also critical enablers that allow civilian and military crisis responders to operate effectively in crisis situations.

- The EU has a wide array of sectoral frameworks, legislation, and mechanisms that all contribute to different dimensions of preparedness. But we face an urgent imperative to connect all individual efforts and strengthen EU's preparedness comprehensively. A crisis typically does not affect only one sector, but has knock-on effects on others.
- The possibility of a major military crisis triggered by external armed aggression against one or more of the Union's Member States has not been fully developed and mapped out within the EU framework as such. This requires an active coordination with NATO, which remains the primary forum for the collective defence of its members.

What is the objective?

- 'Comprehensive preparedness': The EU and its Member States must be able to effectively anticipate, prevent, withstand or respond to any type of major shock or crisis with cross-sectoral and cross-border impacts, and which can even threaten the EU as a whole. They must be able to ensure the continuity of vital societal and governmental functions under all circumstances.

Even in a best-case scenario where we limit global warming to **1.5 degrees** above pre-industrial levels, Europe – which is heating at twice the global rate – **will have to learn to live with the consequences of a climate that is 3 degrees warmer or even more.**

“Ensuring the EU’s ability to function under all circumstances means taking worst-case scenarios seriously as the benchmark for our preparedness efforts.”

What actions does the Report recommend?

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.
- ✓ Embed a ‘Preparedness by Design’ principle horizontally and consistently across EU institutions, bodies, and agencies

- ✓ Develop a mandatory ‘Security and Preparedness Check’ for future impact assessments and ‘stress tests’ of existing legislation.
- ✓ 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.

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.