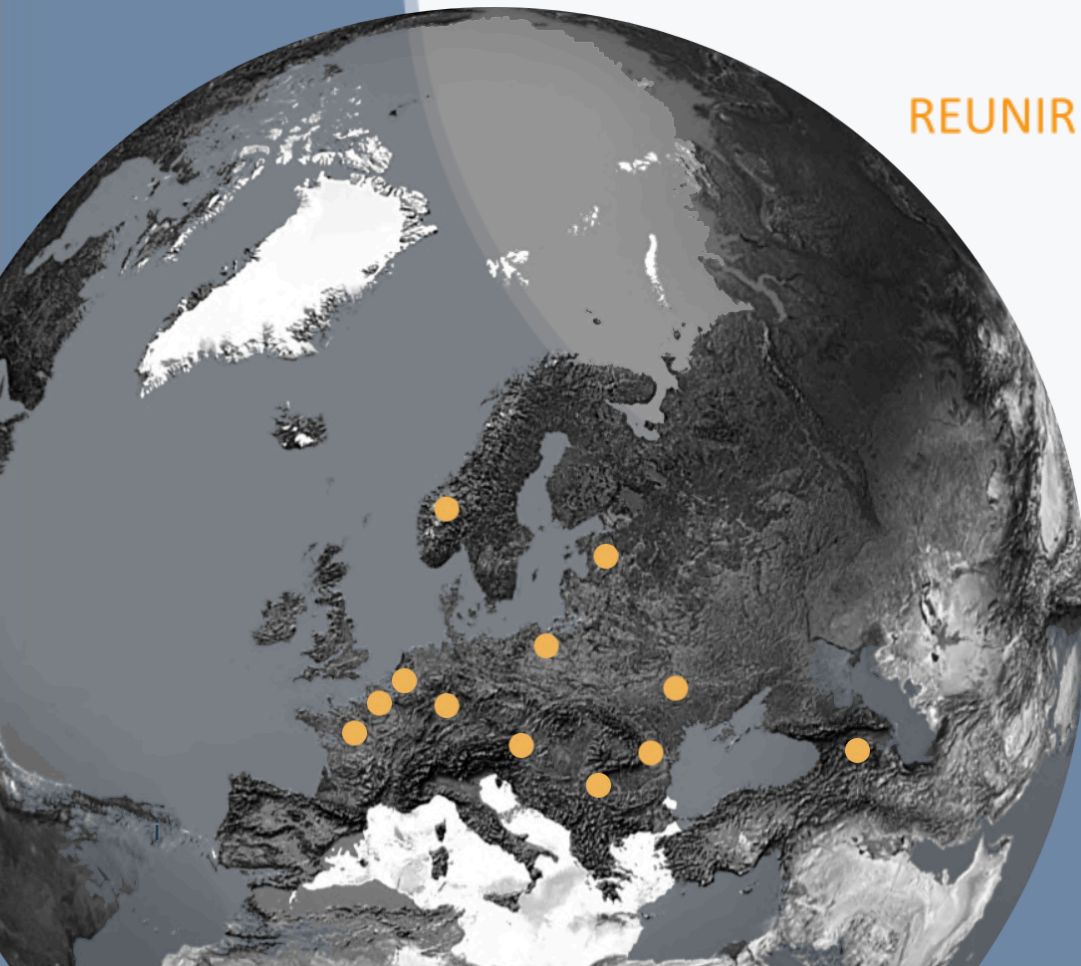




**EUMAM UA AT A CROSSROADS: HOW  
THE CSDP MILITARY MISSION SHOULD  
EVOLVE FOR THE EU TO MAINTAIN  
STRATEGIC RELEVANCE AND HELP  
UKRAINE PREVAIL**

REUNIR – GUEST POLICY PAPER



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Launched in November 2022, the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) is the largest non-executive Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military mission ever undertaken by the European Union. It has also been one of the most strategically significant, demonstrating the EU's capacity to play a decisive role in supporting Ukraine's defence against Russian aggression. Through EUMAM UA, the Union has emerged as a critical security enabler in its neighbourhood, reshaping its role within Europe's security architecture amid unprecedented geopolitical challenges.

As the war enters its fifth year, however, EUMAM UA — like the EU itself — stands at a crossroads. To remain relevant, the mission must reinvent itself, both to meet Ukraine's evolving needs and to support longer-term, strategic capacity-development objectives. Such a transformation could position the mission as a cornerstone of a future package of security guarantees for Ukraine, thereby reinforcing the Union's credibility as a geopolitical player.

### **Key policy recommendations:**

1. Rapidly revise EUMAM UA's mandate to expand the scope of activities, to include reform assistance and capacity-development support, with a view to addressing current needs and strengthening the capabilities and effectiveness of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.
2. Swiftly establish a limited EU military presence in Ukraine by enabling EUMAM UA to operate on Ukrainian territory through the deployment of unarmed military advisers and defence reform experts.
3. Prepare plans to enable the rapid relocation of EUMAM UA's training activities to Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire, as part of a broader package of security guarantees.

## 1. AN EU SUCCESS STORY WITH DECISIVE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

EUMAM UA was initially designed with a twofold objective: first, to help Ukraine overcome its insufficient domestic training capacities amid the rapid expansion of its armed forces in the first months of the full-scale invasion; and second, to ensure that its personnel received specialised instruction on Western-made military equipment supplied by EU Member States and partly financed through the European Peace Facility (EPF)<sup>1</sup>.

Remarkably, EUMAM UA was neither established in response to a direct request from Ukrainian authorities nor initiated by a group of proactive EU Member States, as has generally been the case with prior CSDP missions and operations<sup>2</sup>. Instead, EUMAM UA originated directly within the EU's institutions and owes much to the personal agency of the former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, who identified the need for better coordination and coherence among early national training initiatives as an opportunity for the EU to step in and assume a leading role<sup>3</sup>.

An EU initiative in essence, the first CSDP military mission to be hosted exclusively on the territory of the Union has achieved unprecedented success. Although EUMAM UA has faced criticism for the perceived lack of realism and relevance in certain training modules – particularly those focusing on infantry tactics – and for its limited integration of drone warfare, the 24 participating nations have provided both basic and advanced training to over 90,000 Ukrainian military personnel on their territory since November 2022<sup>4</sup>. As such, EUMAM UA has made a substantial contribution to bolstering Ukraine's fighting capabilities, enabling Kyiv to field the equivalent of fifteen combat brigades and strengthening the Ukrainian Armed Forces' capacity to regenerate and sustain the heavy cost of a war that has become increasingly attritional since the winter of 2022–2023<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> European External Action Service (2022, December 8). *About EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine)*.

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eumam-ukraine/about-eu-military-assistance-mission-support-ukraine-eumam-ukraine\\_en?s=410260](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eumam-ukraine/about-eu-military-assistance-mission-support-ukraine-eumam-ukraine_en?s=410260)

<sup>2</sup> Romanyshyn, I., & Bergmann, J., *Preference convergence, functional pressure and supranational entrepreneurship: explaining the launch and design of the EU's military assistance mission to Ukraine*, European Security (2025).

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09662839.2025.2506515?src=#d1e414>

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union (2026, March 15). *EU military support for Ukraine*.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/military-support-ukraine/>;

European External Action Service (2026, April 21). *Foreign Affairs Council: Press remarks by High Representative Kaja Kallas at the press conference*.

[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press%C2%A0remarks%C2%A0-high-representative-kaja-kallas%C2%A0-press-conference\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press%C2%A0remarks%C2%A0-high-representative-kaja-kallas%C2%A0-press-conference_en)

<sup>5</sup> Jozwiak R. (2025, October 19), *EU May Train Troops Inside Ukraine As Part Of Expanded Mission*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Through its numerous specialized modules, the mission has significantly enhanced Ukraine's armed forces by training personnel to master and operate complex western weapon systems, such as the Patriot air defence system, various 155mm heavy artillery platforms, and Leopard tanks<sup>6</sup>. It has also developed the skills of thousands of specialists, non-commissioned officers, and staff officers, thereby strengthening the overall lethality and effectiveness of the Ukrainian military<sup>7</sup>.

The combined success of EUMAM UA and the EPF carries major political and strategic weight for the EU<sup>8</sup>. By arming and training tens of thousands of foreign troops with the explicit purpose of helping a partner country fight off a full-scale military aggression, the bloc has de facto positioned itself as a key security enabler in its immediate neighbourhood. This marks a profound paradigm shift and arguably constitutes the most momentous development in the CSDP since its inception, bringing the EU significantly closer to becoming a credible geopolitical player in the broader region.

More fundamentally, through both EUMAM UA and the EPF, the EU is endorsing and directly supporting the legitimate use of armed force against a state actor — most notably a nuclear-armed one — in defence of canons of international law and what it perceives as its core strategic interests in Europe.

This marks a significant departure from previous CSDP military missions and operations, which have largely focused on peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and countering non-state actors — such as irregular armed groups, pirates, and smugglers — often outside Europe<sup>9</sup>.

The success of EUMAM UA also contributes to reshaping the EU's role within Europe's security architecture, particularly vis-à-vis NATO. By delivering substantial military assistance to Ukraine

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<https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-ukraine-training-mission-expansion-support-cybersecurity-border-veterans/33561935.html>

<sup>6</sup> Bundeswehr (2023, December 27). *Trainings EUMAM 2023*.

<https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/mission-and-tasks/germany-eumam-ua/trainings-eumam-2023--5722708>

<sup>7</sup> Skove S. (2024, December 10), *Pace of war shortens EU-based training for Ukrainian troops*. Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

<https://us.boell.org/en/2024/12/10/pace-war-shortens-eu-based-training-ukrainian-troops>

<sup>8</sup> Although Hungary has blocked allocations under the EPF to finance military assistance to Ukraine since May 2023, the instrument has provided crucial financial support to Ukraine's military effort, particularly in the early months of the war, with €6.1 billion worth of military equipment financed through the mechanism. The EPF has also continued to cover the common operational costs of EUMAM UA.

Brehon N., *European Union Military Operations Part 2*, Schuman Paper No. 827 (03/2026), pp. 9-12.

<https://server.www.robert-schuman.eu/storage/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-827-en.pdf>;

Karjalainen T. & Mustasilta K. (2023), *European Peace Facility: From a Conflict Prevention Tool to a Defender of Security and Geopolitical Interests*. TEPSA Briefs, 05/2023.

<https://tepsa.eu/analysis/european-peace-facility-from-a-conflict-prevention-tool-to-a-defender-of-security-and-geopolitical-interests/>

<sup>9</sup> Zajączkowski. K., *EU Military Operations as a Tool in the EU's Foreign Policy Toolbox – The Main Trends and Limitations*. Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs (2021/), pp. 14-17.

<https://repozytorium.uw.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/e51ab705-c17f-4f55-ba7e-f8b1ed28e4d2/content>

through an EU-led framework, the Union has demonstrated its capacity to act decisively where NATO could not.

Although NATO's primacy in defence matters is unequivocally affirmed in Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union and has long been the core assumption shaping EU–NATO relations, concerns over risks of escalation have effectively precluded the Alliance from providing significant direct military assistance to Ukraine under its own name<sup>10</sup>. As a result, since February 24, 2022, the EU has been at the forefront of support to Ukraine, whereas NATO has taken on a more limited, largely coordinating role<sup>11</sup>.

Amid a rapidly deteriorating strategic environment and a deepening crisis within NATO — compounded by doubts about the current U.S. administration's commitment to Article 5 and signs of broader U.S. disengagement from Europe — the EU's role in the continent's security architecture could further expand in the coming years. As a result, both the CSDP and the mutual defence clause under Article 42(7) TEU may gain renewed significance<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. ADDRESSING UKRAINE'S EVOLVING NEEDS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite its achievements, EUMAM UA faces a range of challenges and stands at a critical crossroads.

First, ensuring that training remains up to date and reflects the rapidly evolving realities of the battlefield, though highly challenging, is essential to sustaining the mission's impact and relevance. Significant progress has been made since 2023 and the overall quality of instruction has improved, yet there remains room for further enhancement, particularly in the area of drone warfare. New avenues can and should be explored to ensure that the mission reaches its full potential<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> European Union EUR-Lex (2016). *Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Article 42*.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu\\_2016/art\\_42/oj/fra](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2016/art_42/oj/fra)

<sup>11</sup> NATO (2025, December 12). *NATO's support for Ukraine*.

<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/natos-support-for-ukraine>

<sup>12</sup> Kambas. M & Melander I. (2026, April 24), *EU to prepare blueprint for mutual assistance pact, amid NATO doubts*.

Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/eu-prepare-blueprint-mutual-assistance-pact-amid-nato-doubts-2026-04-24/>; Vinocur N. & Barigazzi J. (2026, April 17), *EU to game out bloc's mutual assistance clause in case of attack*.

Politico. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-defense-exercise-mutual-assistance-clause>

<sup>13</sup> Chinchilla A., Matissek J. & Reno W (2024), *The Polish Experiment in Military Advising: Improving the European Union Training Mission to Ukraine*. Modern War Institute.

<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-polish-experiment-in-military-advising-improving-the-european-union-training-mission-to-ukraine/>

Second, beyond training for its soldiers, what the Ukrainian army critically needs at this stage of the war is to consolidate its capabilities and undertake reforms to transform into a more effective and lethal fighting force – one capable of delivering the operational successes Ukraine needs in order to secure a just and lasting peace<sup>14</sup>.

As evidenced by multiple reports, the Ukrainian Armed Forces continue to face a range of systemic challenges that undermine their operational effectiveness and, ultimately, their ability to prevail on the battlefield<sup>15</sup>. Although reform efforts supported by NATO and several Western partners between 2014 and 2022 enabled significant progress in areas such as artillery and special operations forces, chronic deficiencies remain in key domains, including professional military education, operational planning, and command and control<sup>16</sup>. Structural issues persist, with a deeply entrenched Soviet-style leadership and management culture continuing to generate inefficiencies in the management and employment of Ukraine's military resources, imposing significant costs on force readiness and manpower sustainability<sup>17</sup>.

Addressing these persistent and deep-rooted issues is essential if Ukraine is to maximise the effective use of its resources, including human capital, and offset the quantitative military advantage that Russia continues to hold<sup>18</sup>.

Pursuing transformational reforms during wartime, however, remains a formidable challenge.

Given Ukraine's currently limited domestic capacity to design and implement an ambitious reform agenda, achieving meaningful progress will require substantial external assistance and expertise and is likely to necessitate a degree of Western presence on the ground.

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<sup>14</sup> The New Voice of Ukraine (2024, May 17), *Ukrainian forces lack operational capabilities: Pentagon report*. The New Voice of Ukraine.

<https://english.nv.ua/nation/ukrainian-forces-lack-operational-capabilities-pentagon-report-50419134.html>

<sup>15</sup> Wilk A. & Zochowski P. (2025, March 14), *Army at a crossroads: the mobilisation and organisational crisis of the Defence Forces of Ukraine*. Osrodek Studiow Wschodnich.

<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2025-03-14/army-a-crossroads-mobilisation-and-organisational-crisis>

<sup>16</sup> Grant G. (2021, July 16), *Seven Years of Deadlock: Why Ukraine's Military Reforms Have Gone Nowhere, and How the US Should Respond*.

Jamestown. <https://jamestown.org/why-the-ukrainian-defense-system-fails-to-reform-why-us-support-is-less-than-optimal-and-what-can-we-do-better/>; Sanders, D. (2023). *Ukraine's third wave of military reform 2016–2022 – building a military able to defend Ukraine against the Russian invasion*. Defense & Security Analysis, vol. 39(3).

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14751798.2023.2201017#abstract>

<sup>17</sup> Farrel F. & Yermak. N. (2025, March 27), *As Ukraine's fate hangs in the balance, 'Soviet' command culture damages war effort*. The Kyiv Independent.

<https://kyivindependent.com/as-ukraines-fate-hangs-in-the-balance-soviet-command-culture-damages-war-effort/>

<sup>18</sup> Farrel F. (2026, January 6), *Analysis: Why effective use of manpower will define who is winning the war in Ukraine in 2026*. The Kyiv Independent.

<https://kyivindependent.com/analysis-effective-use-of-manpower-will-define-whether-ukraine-loses-the-war-in-2026/>

NATO is the most natural partner to support this effort, having engaged with Ukraine on defence sector reform since the late 1990s, providing the Alliance with unparalleled institutional knowledge. The decision at the Vilnius Summit in 2023 to expand the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) into a multi-year programme aimed at rebuilding the Ukrainian security and defence sector, together with the establishment in 2024 of the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) and the Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC), demonstrates NATO’s growing emphasis on long-term capacity development<sup>19</sup>.

However, NATO member countries’ reluctance to significantly expand the Alliance’s limited footprint and involvement in Ukraine constrains its ability to provide Kyiv with the scale of assistance needed to address urgent reform requirements.

In this context, the European Union — particularly given EUMAM UA’s achievements — is well positioned to assume a more prominent role in bridging what has become a critical capability gap in Western assistance to Ukraine.

Although the *Joint Security Commitments between the EU and Ukraine*, signed in June 2024, affirm the EU’s commitment to supporting long-term reform of Ukraine’s military and defence institutions — particularly in the areas of governance and professional military education — the EU currently lacks a dedicated instrument to deliver such assistance<sup>20</sup>. EUMAM UA’s current mandate is limited to delivering training to the Ukrainian Armed Forces and does not extend to defence sector reforms. Consequently, unlike the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM UA) in the civilian security sector, EUMAM UA is not in a position to support defence sector reforms effectively<sup>21</sup>.

Involving the EU in reforming Ukraine’s military and defence institutions would be fully consistent with the ‘Porcupine Strategy’ outlined in the *White Paper on European Defence: Readiness 2030*. Released by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in March 2025, the document stresses the need for the EU and its Member States to strengthen Ukraine’s defence and security capacity in order to prevent further Russian attacks once hostilities cease<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> NATO (2025, December 12), *NATO’s support for Ukraine*.

<https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/natos-support-for-ukraine>

<sup>20</sup> Council of the European Union (2024, June 24), *Joint security commitments between the European Union and Ukraine*.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/oredhmis/eu-ukraine-security-commitments-en.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> European Union EUR-Lex (2022, October 18). *Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1968 of 17 October 2022 on a European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine)*.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1968/oj/eng#ntc2-L\\_2022270EN.01008501-E0002](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1968/oj/eng#ntc2-L_2022270EN.01008501-E0002); European Union EUR-Lex

(2024, November 11). *Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2876 of 8 November 2024 amending Decision (CFSP) 2022/1968*.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/2876/oj/eng>.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission (2025, March 19), *White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030*, pp. 10-12.

[https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019\\_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6d5db69-e0ab-4bec-9dc0-3867b4373019_en?filename=White%20paper%20for%20European%20defence%20%E2%80%93%20Readiness%202030.pdf)

Addressing structural weaknesses that undermine Ukraine’s military effectiveness is essential for Ukraine to deter and, if necessary, counter future Russian aggression. If the EU and its Member States want Ukraine to become a ‘steel porcupine’ and fulfil their security commitments to Kyiv, they should therefore adopt a proactive approach and align military assistance with current priorities<sup>23</sup>.

Notably, the need for a dedicated military CSDP mission focused on reform assistance in Ukraine was acknowledged by several Member States as early as summer 2021, with Lithuania in particular advocating for the EU to support the reform and modernisation of Ukraine’s professional military education system<sup>24</sup>.

### 3. CONCEPT FOR A REVISED MISSION’S MANDATE FOCUSED ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM ASSISTANCE

Rather than launching a new stand-alone CSDP mission, the EU could address the critical capability gap in military support to Ukraine by expanding EUMAM UA’s mandate. Revising its mandate could transform the mission from a training-focused operation into a comprehensive military assistance effort, capable of effectively supporting long-term capacity development and defence sector reform.

Remarkably, EUMAM UA’s mandate explicitly states that the mission is designed to be “scalable, modular and flexible, so that its activities are able to swiftly adapt to the situation in Ukraine and to evolving and longer-term [Ukraine’s Armed Forces] needs<sup>25</sup>.” This provision makes clear that EUMAM UA’s purpose is not confined to provide training, but rather that the scope of its operations can and should be expanded to match Ukraine’s evolving needs. Nevertheless, a formal revision of the mission’s mandate, subject to unanimous approval by all 27 Member States, remains necessary to amend the scope of its activities.

An expanded mandate focused on reform and long-term capacity development could allow EUMAM

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<sup>23</sup> Liboreiro J. (2025, March 2), *EU must 'urgently' rearm and turn Ukraine into 'steel porcupine,' says von der Leyen*. Euronews.

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/03/02/eu-must-urgently-rearm-and-turn-ukraine-into-steel-porcupine-says-von-der-leyen>

<sup>24</sup> Romanyshyn, I., & Bergmann, J., *Preference convergence, functional pressure and supranational entrepreneurship: explaining the launch and design of the EU’s military assistance mission to Ukraine*. European Security (2025), pp. 7–9.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09662839.2025.2506515?src=#d1e414https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09662839.2025.2506515?src=#d1e414>

<sup>25</sup> European Union EUR-Lex (2022, October 18), *Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1968 of 17 October 2022 on a European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine)*.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1968/oj/eng#ntc2-L\\_2022270EN.01008501-E0002](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1968/oj/eng#ntc2-L_2022270EN.01008501-E0002)

UA to operate directly in Ukraine with a team of EU military advisers and experts, similar to EUAM UA in the civilian sector. EUMAM staff on the ground would be tasked with accurately assessing needs, assisting Ukrainian authorities in designing reform plans, and supporting their implementation to ensure sustainable military capacity development aligned with Ukraine's resources and objectives.

By working closely with key institutions in Kyiv, such as the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, and the National Defence University, as well as military academies located in western and southwestern Ukraine, including those in Lviv and Odesa, EU personnel would maximize the mission's impact while maintaining a minimal footprint and significantly reducing exposure to potential Russian attacks.

#### **4. THE URGENT CASE FOR A PERMANENT IN-COUNTRY EUMAM PRESENCE: STRENGTHENING EU–UKRAINE STRATEGIC POSTURE AND DEFENCE COOPERATION**

The establishment of a Western military presence in Ukraine has become increasingly necessary as the war enters its fifth year and Ukraine faces significant operational challenges. In a period of uncertainty and amid US disengagement, such a presence would yield substantial strategic dividends, clearly signalling to both Kyiv and Moscow that Ukraine's partners stand firmly behind it and remain undeterred in furthering their military assistance despite Russia's attempts at intimidation. In addition, even a limited Western military presence would strengthen Ukraine's position in any future negotiations and would create a useful precedent, paving the way for the post-war deployment of a larger force dedicated to deterrence and reassurance, as advocated by the nations involved in the Coalition of the willing<sup>26</sup>.

With any NATO military presence effectively off the table as long as hostilities continue, the EU has an opportunity to assume a leading role and consolidate its position as one of Kyiv's key defence and security partners by establishing a permanent EUMAM presence in Ukraine.

The relocation of EUMAM UA's training activities to Ukraine has gained traction in Brussels in recent months, following repeated requests from Kyiv. Nevertheless, the redeployment of several hundred instructors to training sites inside Ukraine appears unlikely in the near term, as multiple EU Member States continue to condition such a move on a cessation of hostilities that remains elusive<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Jozwiak R. (2026, January 6), *Allies To Pledge 'Binding Commitments' On Ukraine's Security, Draft Of Paris Peace Summit Shows*. Radio Free Europe. <https://www.rferl.org/a/coalition-zelenskyy-paris-ukraine-peace-proposal/33640623.html>

<sup>27</sup> Jozwiak R. (2025, October 19), *EU May Train Troops Inside Ukraine As Part Of Expanded Mission*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Revising EUMAM UA's mandate to include a new track focused on reform assistance and long-term capacity development could offer the bloc a pathway to overcome the current political deadlock. This expanded mandate would justify establishing a limited, discreet, yet permanent and official EU military presence in Ukraine. Given such a presence's low exposure to potential Russian attacks and the limited risks of escalation it would carry, the proposal has the potential to gain consensus among Member States.

Having such a presence on the ground would not only enable the EU to provide more effective reform support, but would also allow EUMAM UA and contributing nations to gain a better understanding of Ukraine's training needs. This, in turn, could improve the tailoring and impact of the training activities that will continue to be conducted within the EU as long as hostilities persist.

Beyond this, with an expanded mandate focused on long-term capacity development and a sustained presence in Ukraine, EUMAM UA could strengthen the country's domestic training capabilities by supporting the development and modernisation of relevant in-country infrastructure and by launching a comprehensive train-the-trainers programme, with the aim of reducing Ukraine's dependence on foreign partners in this domain<sup>28</sup>.

Although a ceasefire remains a distant prospect, should one occur, an EU Military Assistance Mission with a reinforced mandate would be well positioned to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces' transition from a predominantly conscript army to a highly professional force with strong reserves. This transformation is essential to enhance Ukraine's ability to deter further Russian aggression and to ensure full interoperability with Western forces, which could potentially be deployed in Ukraine to provide both deterrence and reassurance as part of broader security guarantees.

For all these reasons, a revised mandate focused on reform support and capacity development, and authorizing the mission to establish a presence in Ukraine, would ensure the long-term relevance of EUMAM UA and could position it as a cornerstone of any future comprehensive security guarantees package.

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<https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-ukraine-training-mission-expansion-support-cybersecurity-border-veterans/33561935.html>

<sup>28</sup> Terajima A. (2025, April 4), *Inside Ukraine's desperate race to train more soldiers*. The Kyiv Independent.

<https://kyivindependent.com/inside-ukraines-desperate-race-to-train-more-soldiers/>

## 5. THE EU AT A CROSSROADS: MEETING THE CHALLENGES OR RISKING IRRELEVANCE

The main challenge to a substantive revision of EUMAM UA's mandate is the unanimity requirement governing decision-making under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)<sup>29</sup>.

Although the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, has highlighted broad support among Member States for relocating certain training activities to Ukraine once hostilities have ceased, reservations persist regarding the establishment of any EU military presence on Ukrainian territory as long as the war continues<sup>30</sup>.

Among EU Member States, Hungary has long obstructed efforts to strengthen military support for Ukraine. Under Viktor Orbán's premiership, the country has opposed new EPF allocations for military assistance since May 2023 and blocked, in February 2026, a major financial package aimed at sustaining Kyiv's war effort<sup>31</sup>.

However, the landslide victory of the Hungarian opposition, led by Péter Magyar, in the 12 April 2026 parliamentary elections could open a decisive window of opportunity to step up military assistance to Ukraine. The imminent departure of Viktor Orbán from the European political stage has already resulted in tangible developments within the Council, with Budapest lifting its veto on the €90 billion EU loan for Ukraine on 23 April 2026<sup>32</sup>. Further relaxation may be in the offing, given Péter Magyar's intention, as incoming Prime Minister, to reposition Hungary as a more constructive partner within the Union and to abandon the policy of systematic opposition to EU initiatives supporting Kyiv's defence<sup>33</sup>. Should this reorientation be confirmed through voting behaviour at the Council level, it

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<sup>29</sup> Genini D., *How the war in Ukraine has transformed the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy*. Yearbook of European Law (2025), pp. 23-30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/yel/yeaf003>

<sup>30</sup> Tidey A. (2025, August 29), 'Broad support' to send European military instructors to Ukraine after a ceasefire, says Kallas. Euronews.

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/08/29/broad-support-to-send-european-military-instructors-to-ukraine-after-a-ceasefire-says-kall>

<sup>31</sup> Gavin G., Barigazzi J. & Sheftalovich Z. (2026, March 19), *EU braced for no deal on €90B Ukraine loan as Orbán refuses to budge*. Politico. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-no-deal-90-billion-ukraine-loan-viktor-orban-european-council/>;

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<sup>32</sup> Lund Nielsen M. (2026, April 23) EU's €90 billion loan to Ukraine is approved. Euractiv.

<https://www.euractiv.com/news/eus-e90-billion-loan-to-ukraine-is-approved/>

<sup>33</sup> Lynch S., Nardelli A. and Valero J. (2026, April 23), *Orban's Exit Gives the EU a Chance to Change – If It Wants To*. Bloomberg.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-04-23/orban-s-exit-gives-the-eu-a-chance-to-change-if-it-wants-to?embedded-checkout=true>; Cohen C. (2026, April 13), *Magyar faces balancing act over EU military aid to Ukraine*. Euractiv.

<https://www.euractiv.com/news/magyar-faces-balancing-act-over-eu-military-aid-to-ukraine/>

would remove a major political obstacle to an ambitious revision of EUMAM UA's mandate.

Yet, at this stage, the future of EUMAM UA remains uncertain<sup>34</sup>. Should EU Member States fail to reach consensus on establishing a limited EU military presence in Ukraine or on broadening its mandate, the CSDP mission risks losing relevance. Ukraine's worsening manpower crisis may further limit the Armed Forces' capacity to send troops abroad, and recent statements by the Ukrainian General Staff indicate that phasing out non-specialized training in partner countries is under consideration<sup>35</sup>. If confirmed, such a development would inevitably lead to a substantial downsizing of EUMAM UA's operations<sup>36</sup>.

If reform assistance and long-term capacity development remain gaps in EU military support to Ukraine, the Union will fall short of addressing some of Ukraine's most critical needs. This could have far-reaching implications for the EU's recently acquired credibility as a key regional security enabler. A failure to deliver may ultimately undermine Ukraine's ability to sustain a war of attrition that has already exacted a heavy toll on both sides and to achieve the battlefield successes necessary to secure a just and lasting peace<sup>37</sup>.

Should the EU fail to act, given NATO's inability to provide adequate support for capacity development and reform, a strategic vacuum may emerge. This could eventually enable a Franco-British-led coalition of willing and capable states to take the lead, effectively leaving the Union sidelined and irrelevant<sup>38</sup>.

The EU therefore stands at a crossroads: it can rise to the challenge and decisively consolidate its status as an emerging geopolitical player by deepening military and defence cooperation with Ukraine, or risk missing its rendezvous with history<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Jozwiak R. (2025, October 19), *EU May Train Troops Inside Ukraine As Part Of Expanded Mission*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-ukraine-training-mission-expansion-support-cybersecurity-border-veterans/33561935.html>

<sup>35</sup> Lehalau Y. (2025, August 10), *With Desertions, Low Recruitment, Ukraine's Infantry Crisis Deepens*. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-infantry-crisis-military-army-war/33497989.html>

<sup>36</sup> Safronov T. (2026, March 20), *Ukraine To Stop Sending Troops Abroad for Training*. *Militarnyi*.

<https://militarnyi.com/en/news/ukraine-stop-sending-troops-abroad-training/>

<sup>37</sup> Farrel F. (2026, January 6), *Analysis: Why effective use of manpower will define who is winning the war in Ukraine in 2026*. *The Kyiv Independent*.

<https://kyivindependent.com/analysis-effective-use-of-manpower-will-define-whether-ukraine-loses-the-war-in-2026/>

<sup>38</sup> Karlsrud J., *Coalition of the Willing for Ukraine Tracker*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2025.

<https://www.nupi.no/en/projects-centres/coalition-of-the-willing-for-ukraine-tracker>;

Council of the European Union (2026, March 10). *Paris Declaration - Robust Security Guarantees for a Solid and Lasting Peace in Ukraine*. <https://tinyurl.com/379pvn3>

<sup>39</sup> Genini D., *How the war in Ukraine has transformed the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy*. *Yearbook of European Law* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1093/yel/yeaf003>

## ABOUT REUNIR

REUNIR, a Horizon-funded project with 12 partners from across Europe, examines how the EU can strengthen its foreign and security toolboxes to bolster the resilience and transformation of (potential) candidate countries in a new age of international relations. REUNIR’s foresight approach takes the fundamental uncertainty and openness of alternative futures seriously. Adding the effects of ‘protean power’ unleashed in unforeseen circumstances to a multi-disciplinary approach to the research of the EU’s ‘control power’ in relations with strategic rivals, REUNIR empirically assesses foreign threats to the military, socio-economic and democratic resilience of nine neighbouring countries, determines capability shortfalls, maps local perceptions of the EU’s support and political perspectives inside the EU on neighbourhood relations. Outlining scenarios up to 2035, REUNIR offers evidence-based policy recommendations to mitigate malign foreign interference and contribute to strengthening the EU’s external action.



