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Security Action for Europe Task Force

**Minimum standards and Guiding principles for a Special Group
on the implementation of Security Action for Europe
running from 2025 to 2030**

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1. Context

On 27 May 2025 Council adopted the Council Regulation (EU) 2025/1106 establishing the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) through the Reinforcement of the European Defence Industry Instrument. The Regulation then entered into force on 29 May 2025. The aim of SAFE is to boost production capacity, improve timely availability of defence equipment and address existing capability gaps - ultimately strengthening the EU's overall defence readiness. Through SAFE the EU will provide up to €150 billion in loans that will be disbursed to interested Member States upon demand, based on European defence industry investment plans. The disbursements will take the form of competitively priced long-maturity loans, to be repaid by beneficiary Member States.

To implement SAFE, special group representatives operating in the relevant National Authorities are needed. They will have a key role in assisting on the delivery of SAFE's objectives and impacts ensuring that it becomes known and readily accessible.

The members of the special group will be representatives of the National Authorities of the Member States, allowing close collaboration and interaction with themselves, with the Commission, with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA) in a manner that would otherwise be impossible for the Commission acting alone.

The functions undertaken by the special group representative are in the mutual interest of the Commission, Member States, EEA and EFTA States, Ukraine, acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates, and other third countries with whom the Union has entered a Security and Defence Partnership (Non-Binding Instrument, NBI).

2. Mission

As it is the first time that the Commission is issuing loans for defence equipment and the process must be coordinated carefully, with already many clarifications requested by Member States.

This special group's mandate and main tasks will be to:

- Share an overview of the progress that Member States make in drawing up their investment plans
- Clarify the Commission's assessments of these plans and the request for financial assistance, the Commission's proposal for Council Implementing Decisions
- Discuss any issues related to the loan agreement and operational arrangements
- Coordinate matters related to the Commission's pre-financing and payments of instalments.

The special group will also present any necessary updates and issues that Member States might have and inform their relevant and responsible National Authorities in an appropriate and timely manner.

The role of the Secretariat of the Special Group would be to provide procedural updates, explain templates and supporting documents, coordinate the loan amount and agreement process, provide the necessary updates and clarifications. Particular emphasis will be given to the principles of equal treatment, solidarity, proportionality and transparency with regards to the explanations and documentation shared.

3. Key principles and minimum standards

To enhance implementation of SAFE, it is essential to establish a special group that has a reach across all relevant national ministries and agencies, to ensure that all relevant information regarding SAFE reaches all national actors in an expedient manner. It is also important that the two-way communication structures between the Commission and the special group representatives is efficient. The initial approach is to implement a flexible structure that is adaptable and scalable in the coming years.

For the special group representatives:

- a) The special group will be established, operated and financed under the responsibility and control of Member States. While acknowledging different national circumstances, the relevant national authorities will ensure compliance with these minimum standards and guiding principles, including sufficient administrative capacity and performance

monitoring. It is recommended that at the outset Member States **designate four individuals as special group representatives to act as interlocutors with the Commission.**

b) Member States may adapt and extend the special group to other relevant ministries depending on national internal circumstances over time, in close coordination with the Commission.

c) Robust rules for ensuring confidentiality should be established, in accordance with national law. Also, in accordance with national law, systems should be in place to ensure that information that comes into the possession of the special group representatives is treated accordingly, relative to its classification.

d) The Commission will facilitate the organisation and operation of the special group representatives, provide coordination and help ensure an understanding of and compliance with the minimum standards and guiding principles.

For each special group representative:

a) The work of the special group representative will be guided by the principles of transparency and proportionality under SAFE

b) Special group representatives should be supported by their national authorities in terms of staff and equipment (e.g. IT) to a level commensurate with the scope of the mandate

c) In line with common procurement under SAFE, special group representatives should participate actively in transnational cooperation and contribute to partnership and exchange of best practices between Member States

d) Further possible elements: provide clear information on national authority positions and other relevant issues and questions; guarantee the timely circulation of relevant information to national authorities, guarantee satisfactory approach to the information on SAFE and the Commission's activities to national authorities

e) Special group representatives and host organisation must comply with "absence of conflicts of interest". Should a Representative or a host organisation be in conflict of interest it will be requested they withdraw from the proposal/action."

4. Functions of a Special Group Representative

4.1. Core Functions: Informing and awareness raising

a) Regularly inform and provide updates to national authorities on the implementation of SAFE

- b) Circulate to national authorities generic and specific documentation on SAFE
- c) Advise the Commission on the national investment plans, administrative procedures, rules at national level
- d) Provide information to the Commission on national administrative procedures and conditions in the implementation of SAFE
- e) Communicate to the Commission any national issues or requests for clarifications on SAFE
- f) Ensure sharing of best practices and exchange information with other special representatives
- g) Liaise with other special group representatives or observers¹ to facilitate the coordination of common procurement.

5. Cooperation

5.1. Main interactions

The Commission will:

- a) Establish an efficient, up-to-date information channel (including a CIRCABC platform) between the Commission, and the special group representatives.
- b) Invite special group representatives to:
 - 1) Regular special group meetings at least twice a year² (mixture of physical and on-line meetings to provide information and specific clarifications if needed),
 - 2) Information events related to SAFE that are organised by the Commission services and its Agencies,
- c) Provide guidance material, templates, FAQs and other relevant information for further distribution by special group representatives.

5.2. Practical modalities

The Commission will:

- a) Nominate contact persons (representatives) for the special group in the Commission services
- b) Establish and operate a CIRCABC platform to supply information and as a discussion forum.

6. Nomination and recognition process

The Commission will seek nominations of the special group representatives from Member States' Permanent Representations in Brussels. Confirmation in writing that the representatives have read and accepted these minimum standards, and in particular the sections on handling sensitive information and conflict of interest, must be included in their appointment letter and transmitted to the Commission by electronic means.

Member States may also nominate alternates/substitutes to act on behalf of the special group representative as necessary.

7. Confidentiality

Member States's representatives and the Commission shall ensure the protection of sensitive information acquired, generated and exchanged in the framework of the activities of this Special Group, in accordance with Union law and the respective national law.

The Commission shall handle sensitive in a way not less stringent than the handling of Sensitive non-Classified Information³, including the application of the "need to know principle" and the handling and sharing in appropriate encrypted environments.

8. PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Within the scope of this provisions:

- Classified information exchanged or generated in the framework of the activities of this Special Group, shall be protected in accordance with existing relevant Union law and respective national law national laws.
- The Commission shall protect classified information received in accordance with the security rules set out in Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 and Decision 2013/488/EU. Should activities of the Group require the possession of a valid security clearance by the participants, the Commission will request the personnel Security Clearance through the established channels.
- The Commission shall make available approved and accredited existing systems to facilitate the exchange of sensitive and classified information between the Commission, the Member States and, where appropriate invited experts and Observers.

Annex A - Terminology

National authority/ies: The relevant government department/s responsible for the national implementation of SAFE. Special representative nominations are made officially on behalf of the national authority.

Observer: Ukraine, EEA-EFTA countries, acceding country, candidate country, potential candidate, or other third country with which the Union has entered a Security and Defence Partnership.

Alternate/substitute special representative: Person nominated by Member State/Associated Country to act on behalf of the special representative as necessary.

[1](#) Observers can include representatives appointed by their National Authority from Ukraine, EEA-EFTA countries, acceding country, candidate country, potential candidate, or other third country with which the Union has entered a Security and Defence Partnership.

[2](#) Depending on needs.

[3](#) Commission Decision(2019) 1904 of 05/02/2019.