

Closing the Security Gap – Integrating the Western Balkans into the EU Defence Architecture

The Council of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party, convening in Helsinki, Finland on June 27–28, 2025:

Welcomes:

- The signing of the EU–UK Security and Defence Partnership on 19 May 2025, following similar agreements concluded with Albania and North Macedonia in 2024, demonstrating the EU’s growing recognition of the need for structured, strategic cooperation with trusted democratic partners to safeguard Europe’s collective security;
- The Council adoption of the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) Instrument on 27 May 2025, as proposed in the ReArm Europe Plan / Readiness 2030, which aims to accelerate joint procurement, defence industrial development, and strategic readiness across the EU;

Notes with concern:

- That the Western Balkans remain strategically located at the heart of the European continent, yet continue to face exclusion from the EU’s core defence integration mechanisms, including the European Defence Fund (EDF), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS);
- That several Western Balkan countries—such as Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro—are fully aligned with the EU’s CFSP and actively contribute to EU peacekeeping and crisis management missions, yet remain outside key financial and industrial structures;
- That persistent vulnerabilities in the region create a **geopolitical vacuum**, exploited by authoritarian regimes and malign foreign actors, undermining Europe’s collective security and democratic stability;

Believes that:

- the credibility of the EU’s enlargement and security policy depends on integrating committed Western Balkan partners into its institutional, industrial, and strategic frameworks;
- Europe cannot afford to leave a security black hole in its centre;

Therefore, the ALDE Party:

- Urges the European Commission and European Defence Agency to open EDF association talks with willing Western Balkan countries;
- Calls on the Council to invite strategic PESCO participation;
- Calls on the European Parliament and EU Member States to support full integration into the EU’s €150 billion defence architecture.

Europe’s defence is indivisible — and the Western Balkans must be part of it.