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## EU DEFENCE GETS €20 BILLION BUDGET BOOST

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The EU on Wednesday (2 May) announced plans to spend nearly 100 billion on defence over its next long-term budget, as the bloc seeks to boost its resilience to the perceived threat from Russia.

After decades of failed attempts, EU members signed a defence cooperation agreement in December, spurred to action by Russias annexation of Crimea in 2014 and claims of state-sponsored cyberattacks.

The European Commission, the blocs executive arm, launched plans to give the pact financial clout out of its 1050 trillion budget for 2021-2027, allocating 100 billion to defence over the seven-year period.

### **Military mobility**

The sum includes 100 billion for military mobility, an ambitious project to make it easier to move troops and equipment around the continent that NATO commanders say is essential to present a credible deterrent to would-be aggressors.

But the bulk of the money 100 billion will go to the European Defence Fund, unveiled last June as part of French-German efforts to give the bloc fresh impetus in the wake of Brexit.

### **Robotics and drones**

The fund will get 100 billion for defence research, focusing on emerging and future security threats – for example work on robotics and drones.

A further 100 billion will be to help EU countries cooperating to produce big-ticket hardware items such as tanks and helicopters.

Only three EU members refused to sign up for the defence cooperation agreement 1000000 and Malta, plus Britain, which is leaving the bloc next year.

Brussels has been at pains to insist first that greater defence cooperation will not lead to an EU army and second that the project will complement NATO, rather than competing with it.

There have also been fears since the election of President Donald Trump that the US would not

honour its longstanding commitment to come to Europes aid in a military crisis, and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker has said the bloc cannot and should not outsource our security and defence.

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Kaynak/Source: