Blog #3

George Robakidze

Europe at a Crossroads: Key Takeaways from the Latest European Council Meeting

The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU Awareness Centre

March 2025

© [2025] EU Awareness Centre. All rights reserved.

Europe at a Crossroads: Key Takeaways from the Latest European Council Meeting

The recent European Council meeting took place under extraordinary geopolitical and economic circumstances, with pressing discussions on Ukraine, European defence, and budgetary constraints. While the meeting was a regular summit, the challenges facing Europe today are anything but ordinary.

European Defence and Financial Dilemmas

One of the core discussions revolved around Europe's growing defence ambitions. The Commission presented a set of proposals centred on a plan known as the "Rearm Europe" that comes with a substantial 150-billion-euro loan to jumpstart defence capabilities. Some might find this move rather bold, though many worry about how it'll be paid, especially since the EU is staring down a budget shortfall with past debts scheduled for repayment starting in 2028. There's even a split of opinion, with some politicians thinking that new funds should be drawn in while others suggest cutting back elsewhere.

Defence funding just isn't an isolated issue; it ties into broader economic worries. Some member states are for ramping up military spending, yet others fear that pouring money into defence could leave strategic areas like addressing climate change or enhancing cybersecurity on the backburner. Plus, there's an underlying concern that richer nations might end up dominating the whole defence production scene - Germany's growing economic influence only adds fuel to that fire. From my perspective, that kind of imbalance could complicate things further within the EU's internal market.

In the coming months, we will likely see continued negotiations on how best to ensure European security without undermining fiscal stability.

What This Means for Ukraine

Despite the EU's vocal support for Ukraine, some observers met the Council's conclusions with disappointment. While financial commitments were made, the scale of immediate military assistance remains below expectations. The initially proposed 40-billion-euro aid package was reduced to just 5 billion euros for ammunition, reflecting deeper hesitations among some European capitals.

This hesitancy raises questions about Europe's long-term strategic commitment. If current trends persist, there is a risk that Ukraine could be left in a vulnerable position, particularly as political divisions within the EU - exemplified by Hungary's refusal to support unified statements on Ukraine - become more pronounced. In this context, informal coalitions of willing and able states may play a greater role in shaping Europe's military support strategy for Ukraine in the coming months, potentially altering the geopolitical landscape.

At the same time, the Council discussions suggest a broader reassessment of Europe's approach to security. While NATO remains the cornerstone of European defence, there is growing recognition that the EU must take greater responsibility for its own security interests. The question remains: will this newfound resolve translate into tangible support for Ukraine in its struggle against Russian aggression, or will bureaucratic inertia and political caution dilute its impact?

EU-Georgia Relations: Challenges and Scenarios

In addition to the immediate concerns with regard to defence and Ukraine, the Council's discussions also addressed the EU's wider neighbourhood policy, including Georgia's ambitions for deeper EU integration. The absence of Georgia from key security discussions highlights a persistent challenge: despite strong civil society support for European integration, political obstacles remain a barrier.

Georgia finds itself at a crossroads, with domestic political tensions and external pressures shaping its European trajectory. While the EU has expressed interest in deepening ties with countries aligned with its security and foreign policy framework, there are clear concerns about democratic backsliding in certain states. Moving forward, the EU will probably have to revise its involvement strategy and pay more direct attention to civil society instead of relying on government-level activities.

One potential scenario is an extended period of uncertainty, during which political instability and inconsistent EU policies will leave Georgia in a state of geopolitical limbo. The involvement of civil society and grassroots movements in advocating for European integration will likely play a vital role in shaping the country's future.

The Road Ahead

The European Council meeting has underscored the complexity of Europe's strategic challenges. Whether on defence, budgetary policy, or support for Ukraine and its partners, the EU must navigate a difficult path ahead. While the Council's discussions reflect a growing awareness of these challenges, the real test will be in translating commitments into decisive actions.

The coming months will be pivotal. Key questions remain about whether the EU can overcome internal divisions to build a more coherent security and foreign policy framework. Can Europe strike the right balance between fiscal responsibility and security imperatives? Will informal coalitions emerge as a more effective means of responding to geopolitical crises? Most importantly, will Europe rise to the occasion, or will internal divisions and financial constraints slow down its ambitions? The choices made in the near future will shape the continent's trajectory for years to come.

George Robakidze

George is a diplomat and expert in international politics, security and European integration. During his career in the Georgian public service (2004–2023), he held senior positions focused on political affairs, European and Euro-Atlantic integration and regional security. Beyond diplomacy, he has contributed extensively as an author and researcher, specialising in the rise of radical and populist movements in Eastern Europe. He currently serves as the executive director of the EU Awareness Centre, a Brussels-based NGO promoting democratic reforms, good governance, and EU values. He continues his work as an independent researcher on political and international issues.

George Robakidze
George is a diplomat and expert in international politics, security and European integration. During his career in the Georgian public service (2004–2023), he held senior positions focused on political affairs, European and Euro-Atlantic integration and regional security. Beyond diplomacy, he has contributed extensively as an author and researcher, specialising in the rise of radical and populist movements in Eastern Europe. He currently serves as the executive director of the EU Awareness Centre, a Brussels-based NGO promoting democratic reforms, good governance, and EU values. He continues his work as an independent researcher on political and international issues.