How much does Europe spend on defence?

EU countries spent €418 billion on defence in 2025, 2.2 % of GDP – a fifth more than the year before. It is the highest figure in the twenty years the European Defence Agency has kept count.

That is the headline. The bill beneath it has three lines: what it is made of, where it came from and what it cannot tell you.

The bill for 2025

The combined defence expenditure of the 27 member states of the European Union reached €418 billion in 2025, according to the European Defence Agency (EDA). Per inhabitant that is just under €1,000 a year, more than double the 2014 level. The 2 % of GDP line that NATO set in 2014 was reached by 23 of the 27 EU countries; a year earlier it was thirteen.

Of the total, €134 billion went into investment – equipment procurement plus research and development. Equipment procurement alone reached €115 billion, 26 % more than in 2024. Research and development received €17 billion, four per cent of the total, which EDA itself flags as the weak point: Europe is buying finished weapons far faster than it develops new ones.

The rest of the bill reads like this: personnel including pensions 31 %, operations and maintenance 23 %, infrastructure 2 %, undeclared 11 %. Investment now carries roughly the same weight as salaries – in 2023 it was 26 % of spending, in 2025 it is 32 %.

Twenty years in one line

In 2005 today's member states spent €226 billion on defence, restated in 2025 prices so the years can be compared. Then came the financial crisis and the cuts: by 2014 the sum was €195 billion, 14 % less than nine years earlier. That same year Russia annexed Crimea, and the line has climbed since, by 6 % a year on average after inflation; it reached €349 billion in 2024 and €418 billion in 2025. For 2026 EDA projects €454 billion and 2.4 % of GDP. Part of that rise, the agency says, may be linked to the EU's SAFE defence loans and to the exemption of defence spending from the bloc's fiscal rules that applies from 2026.

The full series, with page references to the EDA report, is in European defence in numbers.

What the number measures – and what it does not

The figure comes from defence ministries: each of the 27 reports its expenditure to the agency under a common definition, EDA adds it up and publishes the total. It is stated in constant 2025 prices, so the growth in the series is real, not inflation. It has limits. For seven countries the 2025 figures are still estimates, for some large contributors EDA filled investment gaps from published national budgets, and every 2026 value is a projection.

The bigger limit is different: spending is an input, not an outcome. €418 billion does not tell you how many brigades are combat-ready, how many weeks the ammunition would last or how quickly European armies could deploy side by side. Nor does it tell you whether the money is spent wisely. EDA tracks that as a separate indicator, European collaborative equipment procurement, and for 2025 it finds 11 %. We take that apart in Does Europe buy weapons together?

And beware of adding it to other statistics. NATO keeps its own series for 32 Allies, including the United States and Britain, under its own definition; Eurostat counts government spending by a different classification again. Three sources, three different numbers for the same country – and none of them is the wrong one.

The money is there. The defence is not yet.

€418 billion is more than Russia spends on any conversion: EDA puts Russian expenditure at around €132 billion, or about €282 billion once purchasing power is taken into account. In money, Europe has led for years. But those €418 billion are the sum of 27 budgets, 27 plans and 27 procurement offices that coordinate voluntarily – and, as that 11 % shows, mostly not at all. A continent that decided on its defence as one would get more for the same money. For now it is only a large sum.

All questions →

FREQUENTLY ASKED

How much did the EU spend on defence in 2025?

€418 billion, or 2.2 % of GDP – the combined defence expenditure of all 27 member states under the European Defence Agency's definition. That is a fifth more than in 2024 and the highest figure in the twenty years the agency has collected data. For 2026 EDA projects €454 billion, 2.4 % of GDP.

How much of it buys weapons?

€134 billion went into investment in 2025: €115 billion on equipment procurement and €17 billion on research and development. Personnel remains the largest line at 31 %; operations and maintenance take 23 %. EDA notes that some 2025 investment inputs are estimated or incomplete.

Is that a lot compared with the US and Russia?

The United States spent roughly €920 billion in 2025, more than double. Russia spent about €132 billion by the Janes estimate EDA uses, or around €282 billion adjusted for purchasing power. Europe outspends Russia on any conversion – but through 27 separate budgets.

Why do EDA and NATO figures differ?

They count different countries under different definitions. EDA adds up the 27 EU states; NATO covers 32 Allies including the United States, Britain and Türkiye, and decides for itself what counts as defence. Eurostat uses a third classification. Three sources, three numbers for the same country, none of them wrong.

Does the number say whether Europe is ready?

No. Spending is an input, not an outcome. €418 billion tells you nothing about ammunition stocks, the number of combat-ready brigades or how fast European armies could deploy together. Nor does it say whether the money is spent jointly – EDA tracks that separately and finds 11 %.

SOURCES

- EDA, Defence Data 2025–2026, pp. 4–6, 9–18 (total expenditure, 2005–2026 series, spending composition, investment, comparison with the US and Russia) – https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/2026-eda_defencedata_webpublic.pdf (2026)
- EDA, Defence Data 2025 workbook, EU27 sheet (exact values: €417,623m, 2.223 % of GDP, €134,294m investment, €114,792m equipment) – https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/defence-data/final-defence-data-2025-1.xlsx (2026)
- Our Continent Research, European Defence Ledger v0.1.0 – values checked against the cited EDA report pages – /defence (2026)
- NATO, Defence Investment of NATO Countries (2014–2026), press release of 7 July 2026, definitions note and Table 3 – https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/finance/def-exp-2026-en.pdf (2026)