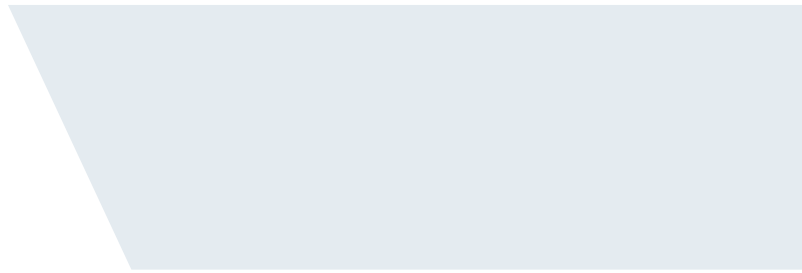



# Austrian Security Strategy





# **Austrian Security Strategy**

2024

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Republic of Austria

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Republic of Austria  
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Civil Service and Sport

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Karl Nehammer  
Federal Chancellor

Dear Readers,

As Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, I am delighted to present the new Austrian Security Strategy. Ensuring our national security and the stability of our society is crucial in a constantly changing world.

This security strategy results from intensive cooperation between government agencies and experts nominated by the parliamentary parties. It is a comprehensive guide that addresses the current and future challenges and coordinates our joint efforts to ensure the security of our nation.

The strategy emphasises the importance of international cooperation and underlines our commitment to contribute to a safer and more stable world. At the same time, it considers the need to protect our national interests and safeguard the freedoms and rights of our citizens.

Strengthening our democracy's resilience must play a special role in the future to ensure that our institutions and the rule of law remain protected in times of crisis. In the face of threats such as extremism, terrorism, or hybrid attacks, it is crucial to not only defend our democracy but also actively strengthen it. This requires decisive action against anyone who challenges our fundamental democratic values and freedoms.

I firmly believe that this security strategy is an important step on our path to a more secure, more stable and future-oriented Republic of Austria. It is a document guiding us through the years to come and I would like to thank everyone involved in this process. Together, we will protect the security of our nation while preserving our values and our commitment to a peaceful world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Karl Nehammer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karl Nehammer  
Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria

Dear Readers,

By adopting the Austrian Security Strategy, the Federal Government has established a substantial common ground for our country's crisis resilience.

The dream of a long-lasting period of peace has been shattered by crises and new, sometimes armed, power conflicts in an increasingly interconnected world. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in violation of international law, has brought interstate war back to Europe. Rapidly changing developments are increasing uncertainty and fears. In times of a growing risk of crisis and war, resilience, independence, and European cooperation in foreign and security policy have become increasingly important for Austria.

The security strategy is based on a comprehensive concept of security that goes beyond conventional internal and external security issues. In recent years, we have learned, not least due to the Russian war of aggression, that issues such as energy supply, as well as economic and technological dependencies, must be more firmly centered in security policy assessments. We must also learn from previous misjudgements.

The joint inter-ministerial measures and strategies are elaborated on the following basis:

- Active foreign policy
- Comprehensive security provision
- Military national defence
- Protection of livelihoods
- Social peace and cohesion

The debate on the security strategy was based on the broad involvement of independent experts from all concerned ministries and all parliamentary groups. The Austrian Security Strategy will be submitted to the National Council for debate in order to achieve the greatest possible consensus on future security policy.



Werner Kogler  
Vice-Chancellor of the Republic of Austria



Werner Kogler  
Vice-Chancellor

# 1 Foundations of Austrian security policy

## 1.1 Objective and purpose of the Security Strategy

In recent years, the national, European, and international security environment and the geopolitical conditions have changed fundamentally, particularly since the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law, as well as due to internal and external challenges to European values.

There have also been a number of critical developments in recent years, such as the migration crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and global food crisis. These crises – as well as new challenges such as the consequences of human-caused climate change, the misuse of new technologies, and hybrid threats – require appropriate whole-of-government and whole-of-society responses. These must pursue a comprehensive and coherent objective: to ensure the security and freedom of all people living in Austria.

Several steps have already been taken. At the European level, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the European Union's (EU) level of ambition in the area of security and defence have been further developed, not least through the Strategic Compass. To ensure state resilience and crisis coordination, Austria has adopted legal measures and initiatives in areas such as national crisis management, national defence, climate action, development cooperation, and humanitarian aid, which contribute to a Comprehensive Security Provision.

Given the fundamentally changed global security environment, it is the goal of this updated Austrian Security Strategy (ATSS) to provide the necessary strategic foundations for Comprehensive National Defence, Comprehensive Security Provision, the protection of the population, and the resilience of Austria.

Against this backdrop, it is the purpose of the Austrian Security Strategy to protect the population of Austria in the best possible way against the upcoming decade's unfolding and foreseeable risks and threats, to promote a safe life and respectful coexistence, and to set out Austria's role in international security policy. Austria will continue to be a reliable, credible, and capable security actor both nationally and internationally.



Security policy is a cross-sectional matter affecting almost all areas of life and policy and thus represents a whole-of-society challenge. Against this background, the Austrian security policy is to be designed in a comprehensive, integrated, and preventive manner to enable solidarity and actively shape participation in it.

At the centre of security policy considerations are the people, including their fundamental rights and basic needs. The Austrian population is to be comprehensively involved and to participate actively in the implementation of Austria's security policy.

Austria's security policy encompasses all measures at the national, European, and international level

- to actively shape a safe and peaceful environment for Austria and its people;
- to prevent the emergence or materialisation of threats and risks;
- to protect against, contain, and manage threats; and
- to foster a sustainable and inclusive understanding of security, democracy, and values in all citizens.

## 1.2 Principles and values

The Republic of Austria is founded on solid values. These fundamental values constitute the basis of its political actions and therefore the foundation of its security policy.

They include respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression, the press, assembly, and religion, as well as a commitment to the principles of a pluralistic democracy, the rule of law, and the separation of powers.

Austria is an integral part of the EU's community of law and values. We are committed to the inviolability of human dignity and to compliance with the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. We stand together for the protection of minorities and against all forms of discrimination.

The identification of citizens with democracy, the rule of law, and our fundamental values is an important prerequisite for a stable state and a functioning liberal democracy.

Austria protects the freedom and rights of all people who live here and safeguards the security of the country, based on the principles of a formative, preventive, comprehensive, and integrated security policy. We promote prosperity through economic freedom and social justice as well as cultural diversity. Austria ensures equal opportunities for its citizens and is committed to the long-term protection of the natural livelihoods.

We stand up for our values and are prepared to preserve and defend them with all the means at our disposal. Building on the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter and the provisions of international law, Austria is committed to preserving and strengthening the rules-based international order. International relations must be characterised by the primacy of law, not by force. Especially for states the size of Austria, compliance with international law is essential for national security. Compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law is a prerequisite for human security.

### **1.3 Active neutrality policy and European solidarity**

Austria's security policy is defined by its military neutrality and its membership of the EU. Against this background, Austria will continue to endeavour to use all opportunities arising from this specific position to be a mediator at the international level. In addition, we will continue to contribute to international peace and security.

Being militarily neutral does not, however, mean being indifferent when international law is violated and the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or independence of a state is attacked. In such a situation, Austria, as a member of the EU, is called upon to support joint measures of the EU in solidarity and in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter, to which the Treaty on European Union (TEU) is also committed.<sup>1</sup>

Austria created the necessary constitutional basis for its participation in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1995; neutrality is not an obstacle in this regard. Austria's national security and sovereignty are inextricably linked to those of the EU. Austria will therefore continue to participate actively and in solidarity in the CFSP, including the CSDP, and in its dynamic development in accordance with the Austrian constitution.

### **1.4 Comprehensive National Defence and Comprehensive Security Provision**

Especially the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated that Austria's defence capability and resilience must be increased in all security areas at the national level in accordance with the EU. Against this backdrop, Comprehensive National Defence as a constitutional basis of Austrian security policy has become significantly more important. As a core state task, the changed environment makes it necessary to strengthen and further develop the Comprehensive National Defence as a core state

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Article 23j Federal Constitution Act or Article 42(7) TEU

task in the dimensions of military, intellectual, civil, and economic national defence and to increase consideration of other important dimensions such as ecology and health.

Given the changed security environment, there is consensus that Austria's security policy not only has to deal with traditional areas of internal and external security but must also pursue a comprehensive understanding of security. A secure and sovereign state requires the cooperation of all societal actors, policy areas and political levels. The concept of Comprehensive Security Provision, established in the Austrian Security Strategy of 2013, aims at the systematic interaction of policy areas crucial to security on the basis of an overall strategy which builds on security policy fields of action. Relevant sub-strategies should then, where necessary, be used to operationalise further concrete measures. This basic idea of a Comprehensive Security Provision must be further developed, taking particular account of the constitutional status of Comprehensive National Defence as well as whole-of-nation crisis prevention and management.

In addition, it must be ensured that the whole-of-society tasks of Comprehensive National Defence and Comprehensive Security Provision are also accepted and supported by the population on the basis of a broad political consensus. The necessary awareness should be created and maintained through communication, information, and knowledge transfer, in particular among the young.

## 2 Security environment analysis – Austria’s strategic position

Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law, has brought war back to Europe and shaken the global security structure to its core. This conflict, with its regional and global repercussions, and the multiple global crises which are playing out at the same time, will determine the security environment for the next years. Austria’s security situation will, overall and for the foreseeable future, remain challenged by multiple risks.

### 2.1 Global trends and developments in Europe and Austria

The systemic competition between major and regional powers is increasing significantly, also in the light of different value systems and lifestyles. Resulting conflicts are still being fought predominantly through hybrid measures, although conventional military means are also increasingly used. Hybrid threats have destabilising effects by combining different methods of exerting illegitimate influence and usually remain below the threshold of armed conflict. Global tensions limit the ability to act and the credibility of international and regional organisations as well as of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control regimes. The resulting weakening of the rules-based international order represents the most serious change to the global security order.

The relationship between the EU and Russia has fundamentally changed since Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law.

In order to achieve its goals, Russia increased its aggression against Ukraine to the point of an open, conventional military attack on 24 February 2022. Implicit but unmistakable nuclear threats were also made against Europe. As part of its hybrid warfare, Russia will continue to threaten Europe militarily, challenge it by various means, and attempt to destabilise the EU and its neighbourhood. In this context, Russia has weaponised energy and food exports. This has become particularly clear in connection with natural gas supplies to Europe. Overall, this has significantly increased the risk of military escalation, up to and including the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The EU has reaffirmed its strategic approach towards China, according to which China is simultaneously a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival. The relationship with China is subject to constant dynamic and critical reassessment. A targeted reduction of dependencies in critical areas (“de-risking”) without decoupling will have to be further developed with the aim of strengthening European and national economic and technological resilience. In light of increasing tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and especially in the South China Sea, close coordination with our European partners is crucial.

In addition to open Russian aggression, further destabilisation processes can be expected in Europe. Regional powers are questioning established orders and are positioning themselves as providers of alternative models of order. Globally, this also contributes to competition between governance systems, the so-called battle of narratives, and the deliberate exertion of influence through hybrid tactics, including disinformation campaigns. The narratives of conflict between the global South and the West hinder opportunities for constructive cooperation. Increasingly complex multipolarity weakens international and regional structures of order and thus has a negative impact on regional crisis management.

Regional conflicts have the potential to spill over, as the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel in October 2023 and the associated escalation of violence in the Middle East and beyond have proven. Even geographically distant conflicts can have a profound impact on social cohesion and security in Austria and Europe. These can very quickly exacerbate the terrorist threat level and aggravate challenges relating to migration, the economy, as well as international supply chains and hence security of supply.

In the context of global economic interdependence, dependencies can also give rise to security risks, for example in the areas of critical raw materials, energy carriers, medical products, and cutting-edge technology. This applies in particular to energy carriers such as natural gas, which are difficult to substitute in the short term, and can lead, among other things, to increased vulnerability due to unilateral cutbacks in supply. Such dependencies could be actively exploited as part of hybrid campaigns with detrimental consequences to our security.

Human-caused climate change and associated global warming is one of the greatest global risk factors. It also acts as a driver of conflict and a threat multiplier. Due to, inter alia, the increase in the frequency and intensity of weather and climate extremes or natural disasters, climate change has acutely negative effects, for example on access to vital and limited natural resources, on the availability of intact habitats, and on biodiversity fundamental to life. This in turn promotes the disintegration and destabilisation of states and thus creates breeding grounds for crises, conflicts, and geopolitical tensions. This has a negative impact on national economies and results in humanitarian crises as well as refugee and migration movements. Austria is particularly affected by these developments due to its geographical location.

Such developments suggest that migration and refugee movements will remain key challenges for Austria. Political, economic, ecological, and climate-related crises in the EU's near and wider neighbourhood can become causes of flight. Differing legal, economic, and social conditions within the EU lead to secondary migration and unequal burden sharing. At the same time, given the demographic trends in Austria and parts of Europe, there is a risk of a long-term decline in the labour force, which could also pose a threat to economic prosperity.

For several years, Austria has been particularly affected by irregular migration and its associated organised crime, which specialises in human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In the area of serious and organised crime, links to extremists and terrorists can also be increasingly observed. Perpetrators operate across borders and utilise the full range of digital possibilities. Serious and organised crime exploits geopolitical tensions and conflicts or fragile statehood to enrich itself, such as through arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, and drug trafficking.

In the field of technologies, global players strive for digital and technological supremacy. New technologies and increasing digitalisation offer great opportunities but also harbour high security risks, not least due to the high dependence of industry and society on digital systems. Critical infrastructures, such as energy grids or water supplies are also increasingly being controlled digitally, which deepens their vulnerability to cyberattacks. In addition, the cyber and information space is increasingly developing into an area of conflict. Malicious cyber activities and attacks in cyber space by state and non-state actors pose a growing threat to the security of the EU. The digital transformation in society is also changing the nature of crime. The rise in cybercrime increasingly threatens Austria's security. Due to increasing digitalisation, but also due to the risk of terrorist attacks, which could entail systemic risks, technological and digital sovereignty and redundancies in key areas will be required at the national and European level.

Alongside cyberspace, the importance of outer space is also growing. Modern societies rely on the unrestricted and secure use of space-based technologies in almost all areas of life. This applies, for example, to the control of transport systems, financial transactions, global navigation systems, mobile phone networks, and the power grid. The outage of centralised infrastructure installed in space, possibly through targeted attacks, can have a massive impact on the functioning of modern societies and may in the worst case endanger national sovereignty. Against this background, outer space is also increasingly evolving into a space for global, including military, conflict.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law have exposed existing weaknesses in international supply chains and economic systems. This has also led to more unequal economic development with serious differences in prosperity. In many countries of the global South, the impact of

the Russian war of aggression has led to increasing poverty, growing food shortages, and emigration, which further aggravates the economic situation in the crisis regions. This fuels processes of state disintegration and a tendency towards anti-Western sentiment, exploited by illiberal actors. In addition, there are demographic and climate change-related challenges as well as the rising cost of living in Europe, caused by the increase in prices, especially of energy sources in connection with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and disruptions in supply by Russia. Europe's dependence on global supply chains also became particularly clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. These economic factors contribute to social polarisation and provide a breeding ground for at times violent extremism.

Islamism, right-wing and left-wing extremism, and other forms of extremism, as well as anti-semitism fundamentally question European values and the European way of life just as much as anti-democratic ideologies. In the area of politically or religiously motivated extremism, there is an overlap between the goals and interests of actors with different ideological orientations. This can lead to the formation of temporary action alliances, as has already been observed at demonstrations, for example, where extremists from different groups acted together. Extremist milieus are becoming increasingly radicalized via the internet. In addition, extremist actors use crises to spread conspiracy theories, particularly in the digital sphere. This results in radicalisation tendencies endangering democracy and, in their most extreme form, terrorism.

The protection of democratic processes and institutions is a whole-of-government responsibility to maintain internal security, social peace, and Austria's ability to act. Cyberattacks and hybrid threats, such as interference in the preparation and holding of elections, as well as actions against democratic and constitutional institutions and their supreme bodies are particularly challenging.

Intelligence activities directed against national interests also pose major challenges. Behind industrial and scientific espionage lies the enormous interest of foreign states in research and technology sectors. Accompanying scientific espionage can also be observed, for example, in the field of quantum technologies. Increased espionage activities on the part of, but not limited to, certain sanctioned countries can be observed.

The public's trust in independent law enforcement and the rule of law can be permanently shaken by corruption. The credibility, objectivity, integrity, and independence of organisations and institutions, which are important for democracy, regardless of whether they are public or private, must be safeguarded. In this context, the prevention of corruption plays an important role.

## 2.2 Challenges, risks, and threats

The developments described above shape Austria's national security risk assessment, which is determined by

- the return of war and conventional military conflict as a means of power,
- the increase in hybrid threats,
- the increasing questioning of European values and the European way of life,
- a sharp rise in the significance of ecological and economic security risks to the state and society,
- the existing dependencies on energy, raw materials, and key technologies,
- the intensification of conflicts in the southern and eastern neighbourhood,
- the ongoing migration crisis, and
- the significant intensification of military risks across the entire threat spectrum.

The risks and threats to the EU's ability to act are among the most important factors influencing the security environment. Key challenges are currently posed by conventional and hybrid threats to Europe, primarily from Russia, but also from other actors. It can be assumed that these actors will increasingly attempt to destabilise European democracies and negatively influence the European integration process. Their aim is to divide Europe and prevent joint action, including with our transatlantic partners. Europe is heavily affected by the competition between the US and China as well as by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the resulting confrontation with Russia. Furthermore, a military attack on the EU or one of its member states has become more likely. It is therefore necessary to take such a scenario into account in security policy planning and precautions.

The most pertinent risks for Austria are currently hybrid threats, technological risks, such as a blackout, the collapse of critical infrastructure, and major catastrophic events. Recently, however, social, ecological, and economic risks have become increasingly important in terms of security policy. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has also significantly exacerbated almost all military risks for Austria. Security policy and the role of defence have regained importance. This poses particular challenges for Austria's whole-of-government strategic capability and ability to act, including increased political, civilian, and military anticipation and command capabilities.



# 3 Austria's interests, goals, and priorities in a changed environment

Security policy today can no longer be reduced to defence against threats and attacks; above all, it must be seen as an opportunity for active influence. Our need for security has changed in recent years due to the environment described above. The demand for security has increased, and the concept of security has broadened. Not least because of these changes, security must be considered comprehensively. An insecure environment affects all areas of life. Consequently, all areas of life and all parts of society must contribute to ensuring stable and secure framework conditions. A comprehensive understanding of security takes into account the interaction between different policy fields. Austria's security is rooted in the consistent, whole-of-nation implementation of our security interests.

Austria's essential security interests are

- the comprehensive protection of the population in Austria,
- guaranteeing the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Austria's as well as the EU's freedom and ability to act, both domestically and internationally,
- the protection of the constitutional order and the rule of law, including human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- the maintenance of social peace and cohesion,
- the sustained protection of livelihoods and the environment,
- stability and security in the neighbourhood of the EU, and
- the promotion of freedom and security in the world.

Austria's national security interests and goals are closely connected with those of our European partners. We are not only connected historically and geographically, but also via the European Treaties. Cooperation and interdependencies within the EU have massively increased due to the crises in recent years and the changed security environment. Austria's security policy accounts for the European dimension and the EU's security strategies and concepts, and it embraces opportunities to exert active influence within the EU and in the international context. Contributing to the shaping of global security plays a vital role for Austria as a seat of the UN and the OSCE, as a member of the Council of Europe, and as a NATO partner.

On the basis of these security interests, we pursue the following goals as top priorities:

- Ensuring the protection of the Austrian population in the spirit of a comprehensive understanding of security
- Protecting the constitutional order and the rule of law, including human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Guaranteeing Austria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom to act
- Maintaining social peace and cohesion
- Protecting the climate to mitigate the effects of climate change and global warming
- Contributing to the internal and external security and stability of the EU, both domestically and internationally
- Strengthening the rules-based international order on the basis of mutual trust and the promotion of effective multilateralism
- Protecting the natural resources and the environment in a sustainable manner, and contributing to peace and security

These interests and goals are to be implemented in the following areas:

- Sovereignty and resilience in all areas of security policy as well as the defence capability at the national level must be strengthened in accordance with the European dimension and critical dependencies have to be reduced.
- Austria will actively and in solidarity contribute to the CFSP/CSDP and thereby strengthen both Austria's and the EU's security.
- Austria uses the wide range of instruments at hand, from diplomacy, economy, trade, and international peace missions to development cooperation and humanitarian aid, so as to contribute globally to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, and human security. This, in turn, contributes to a reduction in causes of flight and migration. In this context, our membership in international organisations as well as our participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) are channels for concrete contributions to stability and security, taking into account the possibilities offered by the constitution.
- Austria's population must be protected against terrorism and crime, including cybercrime as well as international serious and organised crime. The effective combating of human trafficking and migrant smuggling will contribute to limiting irregular migration.
- Resilience must be strengthened especially vis-à-vis hybrid threats, external influence, and disinformation.
- Social peace and cohesion in Austria, especially equality, combating increasing inequality and discrimination, as well as fighting poverty and protecting vulnerable groups must be ensured.

- Democratic society must be strengthened against tendencies inimical to the constitution, and social integration and peaceful coexistence are to be fostered.
- A consistent and coherent migration and integration policy shall contribute to ensuring social peace.
- Austria strives to protect livelihoods and the environment in a sustainable manner and aspires sustainable development in line with the UN's Agenda 2030.
- In the face of global warming, Austria contributes to increased national and international climate action and braces itself for consequences such as natural disasters and extreme weather conditions. This includes the mitigation of, but also adaptation to, the effects of climate change, including disaster management and medical care.
- In view of the experiences made during the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole-of-nation reaction to the security, medical, and economic effects of health crises must be optimised.
- The safeguarding of a productive economy, including measures against crisis-induced disruptions, and the resilience of critical entities and infrastructure has to be ensured. Furthermore, an open, internationally coordinated and rules-based economic, financial and trade system must be guaranteed, including the sustainable supply of raw materials and energy, to maintain Austria's prosperity. Austria supports the EU's open strategic autonomy – which means cooperating multilaterally where possible but being able to act independently where necessary.
- The supply of essential goods and strategic resources must be ensured.
- Austria must promote innovation and technological development and ensure access to new technologies. These will be used responsibly vis-à-vis people and the environment.
- Fostering of a broadly-based awareness of security among the population, which is also prepared to assume responsibility for its security as a common task.

# 4 Security policy fields of action and opportunities for Austria

Austria will implement its national security interests, goals, and priorities in the security policy fields of action as described below. These will open possibilities and opportunities we aim to utilise as best as possible.

## 4.1 Diplomacy, cooperation, and partnerships

Austria's security does not end at its borders. Therefore, we must export stability so as not to import instability. Foreign policy and diplomacy are an essential part of security policy. With its network of embassies and permanent representations, the Austrian diplomatic service plays an important role in the early detection of security risks (crisis radar) and as a hub for international crisis management. Consular protection and assistance for Austrian expats, especially in crisis situations, are a core task of diplomacy. Austria will use all means of diplomacy and cooperation even more intensely in order to advance its interests together with its partners, and to actively and in solidarity shape security policy at the European and international level. Achieving these tasks and expanding the network of representations of the Austrian diplomatic service requires sustained personnel and financial resources.

Our security is intrinsically linked to that of Europe. As a comprehensive community of peace, security, and solidarity, the EU provides the central framework for Austria's security policy. Austria will continue participating in and taking an active interest in the EU's CFSP and advocates for an effective and coherent use of all CFSP instruments to assert common European interests. This also applies to the imposition and enforcement of restrictive measures and the prevention of their circumvention.

With its 193 member states, the UN enjoys the greatest degree of legitimacy with respect to international law. For Austria – as one of the four UN headquarters – the UN is the most important forum for international cooperation in jointly overcoming global challenges. The UN Charter is the central instrument for achieving sustainable, people-centred peace and security based on shared trust and respect for international law. On this basis, we aim to increasingly engage in partnerships on an equal footing with African, Asian, and Latin American states.

We can only assert our global interests together with our European partners. In this regard, the European security architecture is fundamentally rooted in the transatlantic partnership.

NATO remains the foundation of the collective defence for those states that are members of it.<sup>2</sup> Cooperation between the EU and NATO has achieved a new quality through the joint declarations on EU-NATO cooperation of 2016, 2018, and 2023. We regard this close cooperation between the EU and NATO as a contribution to transatlantic and European security. It is also against this backdrop that Austria has participated in the PfP since 1995. With the Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes (ITPP), Austria has the appropriate basis to expand political dialogue and deepen military cooperation. It is essential that we exhaust the possibilities of cooperating with NATO in the fields of conflict prevention, crisis management, and cooperative security in the interest of strengthening the interoperability of our military capacities.

Host to the OSCE, Austria advocates for preserving the OSCE as an indispensable instrument for security in Europe and its neighbourhood. This commitment follows the OSCE's comprehensive understanding of security in the politico-military field, in the economy, the environment, and the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The OSCE must be preserved as an inclusive, transatlantic, and consensus-based forum for dialogue in the face of the Russian war of aggression. As a matter of principle, its instruments should be applied in the most effective manner during all phases of conflicts.

The Council of Europe remains a central institution for the preservation, defence, and further development of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the rule of law and democracy.

Austria will maintain and expand bilateral and regional cooperation in an interest-driven and value-based way to meet current challenges together. Given its impact on the security situation in Austria, the stability of the Western Balkans is a priority of our foreign and security policy. Austria will continue to advocate for the EU accession perspective of the Western Balkan states, including vis-à-vis EU partners, and continue to facilitate their gradual integration into the EU. Austria supports the regional cooperation of the Western Balkan states and the efforts of regional organisations pursuing this goal.

Together with our EU partners, we continue to stand with Ukraine in full solidarity to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We support Ukraine – as well as Moldova, and Georgia – on their European path. In doing so, we also contribute to the security of Austria and preventing war from spilling over.

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2 Informal meeting of heads of state or government, Versailles, 10–11 March 2022;  
The Versailles declaration, 10 and 11 March 2022

Cooperation with Forum Salzburg member states is particularly important for Austria as one of its founding members. It provides a central European partnership and a platform for multilateral dialogue on topics pertaining to domestic security.

In the area of defence policy, Austria will expand its partnerships and cooperations. Such partnerships aim to maintain and further develop military capabilities. Furthermore, defence cooperations aim to cooperate with national and international partners to achieve whole-of-government security goals. Therefore, cooperations and partnerships are to be further developed within both the national and international environment. To achieve this, Austria will develop a defence policy cooperation portfolio.

## **4.2 Contributions to peace, human security, and sustainable development**

Austria will, actively and in solidarity, contribute to the UN's efforts towards peace, human security, and sustainable development, thus contributing to a secure and stable environment. The UN Charter, as the foundation of international relations and international organisations – OSCE, NATO PfP and the Council of Europe – plays a vital role. Austria will actively make use of its opportunities for participation. Moreover, the EU enlargement policy also has specific relevance for Austria's security.

Building on its historical tradition of being a mediator and place of dialogue, Austria will raise its profile in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding and continue its efforts in this regard. The capacities for mediation at state and civil society levels are to be expanded. In addition to the mediation facility at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we will advance the creation of the Civil Peace Service as an instrument of peace policy. Austria will further consolidate its role as host to numerous international institutions. These institutions contribute to Austria being recognised and used as a hub for security and sustainable development. We aim to increase the visibility and the importance of this role.

Austria comprehensively advocates for effective multilateralism with a strong UN at the centre. We will continue to play a leading role in the UN's work. In addition to our established priorities in the areas of the rule of law, human rights, women, peace and security (WPS), disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, and humanitarian commitment, we also aim to address the issues of climate and security and the responsible use of new technologies. Austria pursues a holistic approach to peace, integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), peacebuilding, and conflict prevention. We intend to be a strong voice for dialogue and conflict prevention in the UN and will prioritise partnerships in all activities for world peace and international security, especially between the UN and regional organisations. Austria will contribute to the UN Secretary-General's New

Agenda for Peace. We are ready to take on additional responsibilities in the interest of the international community and will continue to apply for membership in UN bodies, including the UN Security Council.

Respect for and implementation of international law, treaties, and customary international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL), are essential for our security. Therefore, Austria advocates, bilaterally and multilaterally, for compliance with international law and the strengthening of the rule of law. We firmly uphold compliance with IHL and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and support the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression must not go unpunished. Austria actively contributes to the fight against impunity with respect to these international crimes. It will continue to support the International Criminal Court in The Hague and other tribunals and mechanisms. To this end, a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach as well as the involvement of civil society are important.

Commitment to human rights – including the rights of minorities – is a fundamental prerequisite for lasting peace, prosperity, and security. In the spirit of an active human rights policy and in implementing Agenda 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), we promote the protection of women and children from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts, as well as the full, equal, and effective participation of women in political processes, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Based on UN Security Council Resolution 1894, we also set initiatives to improve the protection of civilians.

We see it as our responsibility, jointly with European partners and like-minded states, to counteract the deadlock and setbacks in international disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control regimes, to strengthen them, and to respond to new challenges. Austria will continue to advocate for humanitarian disarmament, which combines obligations under IHL and human rights. This paradigm shift towards a focus on the humanitarian impact and the risks of nuclear weapons must be carried forward in the spirit of delegitimising nuclear weapons and promoting nuclear disarmament. We remain committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world and will work hard for the universalisation and implementation of all pertinent treaties, in particular the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The integration of autonomy in weapons systems raises key humanitarian, legal, security, military, technological, and ethical questions. Austria advocates for a worldwide regulation of autonomous weapons systems to ensure meaningful human control over these weapons and to preventively ban such weapons systems that violate fundamental legal principles or lack meaningful human control. We will continue to play a leading role in efforts to curb illegal arms trade, secure ammunition stockpiles, and advocate for the implementation of the conventions on chemical weapons, biological and toxin weapons, anti-personnel mines, and cluster munitions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 SDGs is the UN framework for tackling global challenges and achieving stability, peace, and security. On this basis, the Austrian Development Cooperation supports measures designed towards the fight against poverty, environmental protection, and equal rights as prerequisites for sustained peace, education, and strengthening civil society. In addition, we aim to provide humanitarian aid in acute and protracted emergency situations to give the local populations prospects for the future and help to minimise the causes of flight. Within the framework of its international commitment, Austria will attach great importance to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) for the needs-based cooperation between humanitarian, development, and security actors, to achieve the overarching goal of human security and to create resilience for the management of fragile situations. In this way, an environment is to be fostered which reduces threats and risks for Austria upfront and supports partners in their independent development towards risk management.

### **4.3 Protection of Austria's sovereignty and contributions to European defence, international conflict prevention, and international crisis management**

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has permanently changed European security structures. As a result, war and conventional military threats have returned to Europe. For the foreseeable future, Austria and Europe will be affected by hybrid conflicts. These developments illustrate that a high-quality and threat-appropriate national military defence taking into account the available military potential in the European neighbourhood and Austria – embedded in the EU's CSDP – is inevitable. Traditional military tasks of defence and countermeasures have significantly gained importance in all European armed forces as well as in Austria. Austria's defence and the protection of its population reach far beyond solely military tasks. This is why Comprehensive National Defence, which has constitutional status, must be strengthened again as a core task for the whole nation.

The goal of national military defence, as part of Comprehensive National Defence, is to preserve territorial integrity and sovereignty, and to protect and defend the constitutional institutions, their ability to act, and the democratic freedoms of the population against violent attacks. National military defence should contribute to strategic military stability in Europe, prevent potential adversaries from attacking, and, in case of an armed attack, repel them. The purpose of this strategy of prevention and defence is to prevent hostile actors from achieving their objectives by military means or other forms of targeted damage.



To this end, capable armed forces are maintained, productive cooperations are entered into, existing partnerships are intensified. EU defence cooperation will be further supported by means of the Strategic Compass. At the same time, political and military anticipation and command capability are required. To support the whole-of-government situational analysis by intelligence and counterintelligence services – within the framework of national military defence (Art. 79(1) Federal Constitution Act) – these services are to be adapted to the changed framework conditions in terms of personnel, materiel, and legislation. With respect to strengthening strategic foresight, Austria will ensure whole-of-government cooperation between relevant security actors in connection with analysis and assessment, and, where possible, in implementing the measures derived.

As regards Comprehensive National Defence, Austria will strengthen the resilience of state institutions, society, and the economy. The Austrian Armed Forces (AAF) will receive all necessary resources to accomplish their tasks. These will be used to establish military capabilities in the land, air, cyber, and space domain, as well as in the information sphere.

The AAF are ready reserve armed forces based on universal conscription. The ready reserves are an integrated part of all units of the AAF, which will be partly or fully mobilised to successfully manage national military defence operations. The immediate capability to respond of ready reserve units will be raised by increasing the number of exercises. In active operations, the AAF will rely on a personnel system consisting of active personnel, including conscripted personnel, and ready reserve forces. The prerequisites for conscription and effective ready reserves are the capacity and readiness for national defence, firmly rooted in the population and based on a responsible security awareness. These are to be strengthened through suitable measures within the framework of intellectual national defence.

With the National Defence Financing Act and the plan thereby enabled to build the AAF 2032+, planning and implementation steps have already been taken by Parliament and the government to reestablish existing and implement new military capabilities. This is accompanied by the strengthening of necessary measures to make the AAF a competitive and appealing employer and to make military service more attractive. This will ensure the availability of suitable personnel with the right skill sets in the required quantity. The necessary legal and political measures will be implemented.

The financial means determined by the National Defence Financing Act will be invested in the crucial military areas of mobility of the operational forces, protection and effects, as well as autarky and sustainability. Considering current and future security risks and the challenges of climate change, the AAF's assertiveness and resilience are to be optimised.

Concrete steps are required to increase the whole-of-nation resilience and defence capabilities. These will be established in a corresponding planning and implementation document<sup>3</sup>. This is intended to ensure a whole-of-nation ability to act in an increasingly challenging security environment by further developing and strengthening Comprehensive National Defence and the Comprehensive Security Provision. This will take into account civil, military, intellectual, and economic national defence measures as well as important dimensions such as ecology and health. In order to ensure the best national and European technological innovations for Austrian soldiers during active operations, a Defence Research Strategy and a Defence Industry Strategy will be developed.

The EU's security is the foundation for the security of Austria. Therefore, the EU provides our primary security framework. As an EU Member State, we actively participate in the CSDP to manage crises and security challenges in a common spirit of solidarity. Our commitment covers the entire spectrum of activities listed in the TEU and their further development in accordance with the Austrian constitution. In terms of strengthening the strategic autonomy of the EU, we are part of shaping a Union capable of acting in the area of security and defence.

The EU must increasingly be able to assume more responsibility for its security and defence. It should be able to react quickly and decisively to external conflicts and crises, expand cooperation with partners, and ensure the protection of the Union and its citizens. We will contribute to the EU's role as a stabilising and influential actor in the area of security and defence and implement the measures of the Strategic Compass together with EU partners.

Austria will proactively realise its possibilities within the CSDP framework to foster and assert European and Austrian security interests. Crises and wars in the EU's neighbourhood and challenges within the EU are also challenges for Austria. European solidarity is not a one-way street; it relies on trust and reciprocity. Austria commits to making significant further contributions to the CSDP. This also includes any assistance and support provided under Article 42(7) TEU, in accordance with the Austrian constitution. Austria can also expect such contributions made in solidarity from its EU partners. Austria will continue to participate in rapid reaction capacities of the EU (e.g. the Rapid Deployment Capacity). We will continue to support the development of capabilities within the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework and participate in PESCO projects as required by our needs. We will utilise the potential of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) to achieve synergies in technological developments and procurement. Austria supports the initiatives within the EU framework regarding the strengthening of the European defence industry and the common procurement of defence products.

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3 Based on the previous National Defence Plan.

In addition, the close cooperation between the EU and NATO is a key pillar of European and therefore Austrian security. Austria is increasingly involved in civilian and military cooperation formats, exercises, and platforms of the NATO PfP, in particular to ensure the interoperability of the AAF.

In the field of crisis prevention and international conflict management, Austria commits to increased engagement in those crisis regions immediately affecting the EU's and therefore Austrian security. Priority regions for Austria's commitment, which also includes international operations and missions within the framework of the UN, the OSCE, and NATO PfP, are Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean region, the Middle East, as well as parts of Africa. Once our national security interests are affected, we will contribute to stabilisation and conflict resolution within the framework of international organisations and in support of partner states to the best of our ability, in order to strengthen Austrian and European security. Within their available capacities, the AAF make high-quality contributions with the highest possible functional scope.

Investments in strengthening partners' resilience also mean more security for Austria and the EU. We will thus continue to focus on partner states' capacity-building measures as contributions to maintenance of peace, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of international security. In addition to bilateral projects, Austria will continue to advocate for the use of the existing EU instruments (European Peace Facility, European Neighbourhood Instrument, development and international cooperation, twinning) and will take the initiative where national interests are affected. Austria focuses particularly on training and educational cooperation, which is carried out bilaterally and within the framework of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). The targeted provision and deployment of military and civilian forces and resources are coordinated and jointly realised in a whole-of-nation interest in line with the HDP nexus.

We will strengthen our role as a reliable partner in crisis management by increasingly deploying civilian experts from government and non-governmental areas to international missions. In this context, an amendment of the Federal Constitutional Act on Cooperation and Solidarity in Deploying Units and Individuals Abroad has to be considered to account for changed mission profiles and challenges in the field of civilian missions and international crisis and conflict management. Austria will continue to actively support the efforts of the UN, the EU, and the OSCE in conflict prevention, mediation, maintenance of peace, and peacebuilding. With respect to civilian CSDP, we will continue our commitment regarding the use of new technologies to meet security challenges and foster the expertise of Austrian businesses and research institutions.

## 4.4 Internal security, crisis preparedness and resilience measures

The increasing complexity of the security environment and the high vulnerability of our society lead to growing challenges for internal security. Protecting the population as part of a whole-of-society approach is the top priority in overcoming these challenges. The promotion of European values and the preservation of the European way of life are fundamental. If people are able to live in accordance with their fundamental rights and freedoms, and if these rights and freedoms are also respected by the state, it will serve to sustain freedom and security and strengthen their subjective sense of security.

In the fight against extremism and terrorism, the use of modern methods and technologies is essential for recognising and combating these threats as early as possible. In order to establish a comprehensive early-warning system for such threats, national and international cooperation must be intensified, organisational and inter-ministerial cooperation in the area of internal and external security strengthened, human resources in threat research, hazard prevention and the investigation of extremist and terrorist threats and offences expanded, and the legal framework further developed. We will continue to focus on deradicalisation and the prevention of extremism. The early analysis and assessment of regional developments and conflicts and their impact on both Austrian and European security is of particular importance in this context.

Protection programmes and the prevention of violence have high priority, also against the backdrop of the increasing challenges due to irregular migration organised by migrant smugglers. Overall, emphasis is placed on raising civil courage and developing strategies for non-violent conflict resolution. Special consideration is given to vulnerable groups. Programmes for women, young people, and children are of particular importance.

Migration, asylum, and returns require a robust and integrated protection of the EU's external borders, the development of a functioning European asylum system, the establishment of strategic partnerships with third countries, the encouragement of returns to countries of origin and safe third countries, the effective prevention of irregular migration, and the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking. For security and socio-political reasons, asylum and orderly, regulated immigration must be clearly distinguished. This requires whole-of-nation approaches to reduce the causes of flight and migration, e.g. creating better living prospects in regions of origin.

In order to continue ensuring the state's ability to act efficiently in the area of migration and asylum, readmission agreements, asylum procedures in safe third countries, and comprehensive migration partnerships should be sought. Thereby, the distribution of refugees can be organised sustainably at the global level. To ensure a whole-of-govern-

ment approach in the external dimension (migration diplomacy), the national structures of inter-ministerial cooperation need to be optimised. Regarding the strengthening of the protection of the external Schengen borders, operational cooperation within the framework of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) will be further expanded. At its core is a permanent reserve of operational personnel, which is to be gradually increased to up to 10,000 operational forces by 2027. As an EU Member State, Austria will fulfil its obligation to deploy personnel. Within the EU, our goal is to achieve a functioning Schengen area that contributes to stable social coexistence in line with the Austrian fundamental values of democracy and the rule of law.

To prevent the instrumentalisation of migration by autocratic states or non-state actors, an effective whole-of-government strategic communication is required. This should also effectively counter disinformation and manipulation attempts. A forward-looking and responsible discourse on the connections between migration, society, democracy, and the rule of law must continue to be guaranteed in all areas of education.

Austria is stepping up its commitment to integration and thus to good and peaceful coexistence. The goal is equal participation and involvement in social life. Integration is a reciprocal process that requires willingness and effort from all sides.

In the area of crime prevention, the focus is on cybercrime. As all citizens can be affected by cybercrime, their personal responsibility must be strengthened and society must be sensitised to the safe use of new technologies. Resilience against cybercrime can only be built through the comprehensive capacity to act, communication, and cooperation as well as a targeted approach to threat situations. Law enforcement is to be equipped for the digital age. The procurement of modern software solutions and databases is intended to ease the burden of daily investigative work. Strengthening the areas of IT investigations, digital evidence recovery (IT forensics), and making the police profession more attractive for IT specialists are also of great importance. The prudent and fundamental-rights-compliant use of new technologies – such as artificial intelligence to support the rapid detection, analysis, and combating of criminal phenomena – will become essential. Cooperation between science, research, and the private sector will be further developed, and inter-agency knowledge transfer will be expanded.

In the fight against serious and organised crime, inter-agency and inter-ministerial cooperation must be further strengthened at national level, e.g. with the customs authorities. The best possible utilisation of existing and the establishment of necessary additional investigation authorities and units should efficiently advance the targeted fight against various criminal phenomena. An effective exchange of information between law enforcement and judicial authorities is crucial to combat organised crime effectively.

In the fight against complex criminal phenomena, cooperation with European and international law enforcement authorities and active participation in projects, working groups and Joint Investigation Teams (Europol, INTERPOL) will be intensified at the European and international level. In addition, transnational and global cooperation between public authorities, international organisations, and research institutions as well as relevant businesses will have to be strengthened. In order to be able to fight organised crime structures in a proactive, targeted, and, above all, sustained manner, strong partnerships and networks will also be further developed at police and judicial levels.

In addition to intensifying inter-agency cooperation, the establishment of close partnerships with civilian stakeholders (Public-Private Partnerships) is necessary in order to fight crime effectively. This should sensitise the economy, promote trust in society, and consequently prevent or uncover criminal activity. Indeed, since the outbreak of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the promotion of and participation in the international detection and documentation of war crimes as well as the efforts of relevant organisations for the preservation of evidence and prosecution have been essential.

Austria is part of an interconnected world that is largely determined by the further development of digitalisation. It is therefore crucial to actively shape Austria's digital sovereignty in order to ensure the security of the population. To be able to do so, organisations must train their staff accordingly and adapt their structures to the advancing digitalisation. In order to guarantee adequate cybersecurity and cyber defence, a comprehensive strengthening of the security of network and information systems (NIS) will be implemented and continually developed on the basis of the Austrian Cybersecurity Strategy. Important aspects thereof will be the cybersecurity of constitutional institutions, the creation of standardised minimum requirements for cybersecurity for the federal government, the economy, and the expansion of crisis response capacities.

In order to enter a secure digital future, a new organisational structure for cybersecurity needs to be established, in addition to the further development of the respective legal bases to increase cybersecurity and the expansion of national and international cooperation. With regard to strengthening Austria's cyber resilience, the necessary continuous development of cybersecurity and cyber defence capacities, including innovative IT solutions and sufficiently trained personnel for threat identification, will only be possible by strengthening cooperation between the public sector, science and research, business, and civil society. Cooperation with the private sector as well as the EU and international partners is crucial for the early identification of vulnerabilities. A sufficient number of highly qualified personnel must be ensured, also and especially through the active professional support of women in this area. Furthermore, in the context of cybersecurity and cyber defence, the legal framework will need to be developed further in a responsible manner.

In the area of counterintelligence, national and international cooperation with relevant partners will be expanded in order to avoid threats to and detrimental effects on Austria and its international position and to be able to take effective countermeasures. In addition, public officials must be better sensitised to the issue of espionage and the associated disadvantages for Austria as a hub of business and science. In research, it is important to protect the knowledge acquired in Austria by expanding security consulting and raising awareness, thus preventing the undesirable drain of research results. In order to keep Austria an attractive and secure location, the sensitisation of relevant companies and institutions will be enhanced. The aim is to achieve security through consulting in the industrial technology and research sector as well as for manufacturers of goods in the field of key technologies.

Hybrid threats and influence are not only used by autocratic states and their intelligence services but also by non-state actors to destabilise the EU, its member states, and Austria. Hybrid threats include cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and extremism. Special attention must be paid to future developments in the areas of disinformation and (data) manipulation. The increasing use of artificial intelligence in this context will pose a decisive challenge. Austria is also affected by hybrid influences and threats to a noticeable extent and is required to develop its resilience to hybrid threats.

The inter-ministerial election cooperation network set up for this purpose is responsible for protecting democratic processes and institutions by monitoring nationwide elections. Through this network, the necessary information from all required ministries and authorities should be made available and analysed within the scope of the respective ministerial responsibilities and result in a suitable response. This will enhance the resilience of our democratic institutions, which will be further strengthened by means of targeted prevention and counselling in the respective areas of responsibility. This is supported by active nationwide communication. In addition, the teaching of sufficient media skills, inter alia in schools, is essential.

Another step towards increasing Austria's overall national resilience is the further development of the resilience of critical facilities and the protection of critical infrastructure. In the future, targeted risk assessments of critical entities will be carried out on the basis of a national strategy, taking into account all natural and man-made risks (all-hazards approach). Building on this, critical entities must take appropriate technical, security-related and organisational measures to ensure appropriate physical protection, and to respond to or prevent security incidents. The competent authority is obliged to support critical entities by providing information or consulting and training services, for example, in order to ensure operational sovereignty. Going forward, critical entities will be obliged to comply with the requirements, are subject to ongoing official monitoring, and can be penalised in case of violations.

The prevention of and fight against corruption is being further developed. A whistle-blower contact point for the public to submit complaints has been set up at the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption. The further development of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the implementation of action plans for self-imposed compliance, and the promotion of integrity in all ministries also aim to ensure quality assurance for the promotion of integrity among public servants at federal, provincial and municipal levels. In addition, integrity awareness is to be raised among young people as part of their education. For instance, anti-corruption events will be organised at schools, and events that promote awareness of corruption, particularly in the educational sector, will be supported.

One pillar of Comprehensive National Defence is Civilian National Defence, which comprises Civil Protection and all related preparations and regulations for a potential threat to Austrian sovereignty, as well as any measures taken to protect the people from natural or human-caused hazards. This especially necessitates a functioning National Crisis and Disaster Management, which builds on periodical risk analyses and the network of representative authorities and thus serves as a crisis radar. In addition, regular whole-of-government situational awareness updates facilitate the early detection of crisis tendencies and the development of courses of action. Crisis response mechanisms should take effect in emergencies. The Federal Crisis Security and Resilience Act ensures a whole-of-government approach to crisis prevention and management by incorporating all relevant stakeholders. Permanent situation monitoring will be implemented in a federal situation centre in the Federal Ministry of the Interior. A modern media centre will also be set up for transparent, nationwide communication with the public. These measures will contribute to greater planning security and stability, and thus to domestic security and the protection of the population.

The Austrian Armed Forces, as the Republic's strategic reserve, continues to provide qualified assistance services in accordance with the legal framework, following a whole-of-government planning process.

Both conscripted military service and alternative civilian service have continually been refined to become more attractive. Those who perform either provide essential services for our security and social cohesion.

Recruiting and developing highly qualified personnel in the context of the wide range of challenges to internal security will be a decisive factor in all areas.



## 4.5 Awareness of democratic values and reinforcement of social cohesion

The measures outlined here have the following purposes: First of all, they aim to convey the importance of the values underlying the foundation of the Republic of Austria for our freedom and security and thus to strengthen social cohesion. Secondly, their purpose is to establish a democratic willingness to defend, which creates the broadest possible basis for domestic and international security policy efforts. Thirdly, these measures aim to embed an awareness of security and defence in society to render it resilient to all sorts of crises, thus providing the Republic of Austria with the best possible ability to act.

By promoting democratic values and endorsing social cohesion, we will also strengthen both Austria's and the EU's domestic and international security. The focus lies on a basic consensus on individual freedom, mutual respect, and the value of an open society, and on the need to defend these values domestically and internationally. Our way of life and model of society, which are based on human dignity, allow the different strengths and abilities of each and every individual to come into full effect. It enables a self-determined life and respectful, good, and peaceful coexistence, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation or ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. On the basis of universal human rights, it also promotes peaceful international relations based on mutual trust for mutual benefit.

It is also crucial for social cohesion and state stability that the population identifies with the state and the democratic Republic of Austria, be aware of its associated rights and obligations, and behave accordingly. This also requires appropriate cooperation in the interests of the common good. In order to preserve and defend this model of life and society, it is necessary to develop a common awareness of it and to make this model of life the core of our understanding of security and defence. Its consolidation can also remove the breeding ground for authoritarian tendencies and inhumane, extremist ideologies.

In order to maintain and strengthen this fundamental consensus as well as social cohesion and peace, it is essential to strengthen the democratic and constitutional identity. This can be achieved, for example, through training, education, integration processes, and by communicating the benefits of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms in a way that is appropriate for the respective target group. This basic understanding should be incorporated and taught as early as possible, not only in school but also in voluntary services, in conscripted military service and alternative civilian service, and in basic and advanced training in the public sector, especially in security-relevant areas. This maxim must also be observed in immigration and integration. The associated challenges and opportunities for action require a whole-of-nation approach.

By the same token, Intellectual National Defence aims to convey democratic values and to create comprehensive awareness of the human rights and fundamental freedoms anchored in our constitution. It helps to ensure a basic democratic consensus and social cohesion and to promote a better common understanding of the concept of a formative, comprehensive security policy in the national, European, and global contexts. Intellectual National Defence aims to bolster the security and defence awareness and democratic resilience of each and every individual and to strengthen the readiness to perform military service. The functioning and interaction of state and social institutions is of particular importance.

The right to education is enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the First Additional Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, both of which have been ratified by Austria. Access to education is an important prerequisite for a decent and good future and therefore also for confidence and hope, particularly in view of increasing social polarisation and in times of crisis and conflict. Social cohesion is anchored in and promoted through sustainable framework conditions, cooperation, and openness to the world that are oriented towards the common good, as stated in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

In all areas of education, the Federal Government ensures that democracy, which is firmly rooted in the Federal Constitution, and a comprehensive awareness of living in freedom, equality, peace, and security are taught on the basis of a clear commitment to the rule of law and an active human-rights policy. In the context of Comprehensive National Defence and Comprehensive Security Provision, civic education is also essential in communicating that the protection against war and violence, the inviolability of human dignity and a self-determined life, and the safeguarding of livelihoods are central to state and societal action.

It is the task of all educational institutions to take measures for sustainable development and in the interest of good, respectful coexistence across all aspects of society. These institutions will impart the skills relevant for a resilient democratic community that is willing to resist aggression. The essential basis for this is the reinforcement of our values and the ability to clearly distinguish between democratic and undemocratic behaviour. This enables us to identify anti-democratic tendencies, remove the breeding ground for them, and counteract them in time through a society-wide and human rights-based approach. We also need to be able to fend off hybrid threats and to identify and counter conspiracy theories, hate speech, and disinformation with expertise and sound judgement. The spread of uncertainty and fear among the public must be countered in a determined and comprehensive manner. Positive narratives on the benefits of our free, open societies must be communicated proactively. We will promote this through appropriate public-relations work and a media policy aimed at integrity and diversity.

In this context, we will also analyse why parts of the population increasingly reject the state, politics, science, the media, and the institutions of the EU.

A better understanding of the fundamental importance of European values for our freedom and security, clearly communicated, strengthens the resilience of society and democracy and increases the democratic capacity to act, including in times of crisis. This starts in school. Civic education must be anchored in all school types and levels. Civic education can and must be utilised in the best possible way for security policy issues and, where appropriate, expanded. Democracy at school itself contributes to political and civic education. Additional skills for the proficient use of new media are also required in this context. Supplementary teaching programmes such as the democracy workshop in the Parliament should also be attended. Historical knowledge plays a central role in one's ability to recognise, analyse, and reflect on one's own convictions. General awareness of the lessons learnt from National Socialism and the Holocaust must be raised further, and the prevention and combating of authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies, antisemitism, and racism through education must be promoted.

Contributions to Austrian security policy are also incorporated into training and further-education programmes for teachers. The Federal Government supports the spread of relevant information by means of new media and with a corresponding educational programme.

The population's understanding of the new challenges to national security must be deepened. Developments in CFSP, as well as the measures of Comprehensive National Defence and Comprehensive Security Provision, must be communicated to the people for them to understand that Austria's security is inseparably linked to that of the EU. Awareness of the importance of European values are not only for a self-determined life and respectful coexistence in the EU, but also for international relations based on international law and universal human rights. This understanding must be strengthened through targeted communication strategies, also at the European level.

Crises place particular demands on the resilience of the entire state and civil society. International solidarity, our global commitment to human rights, and the high level of willingness in Austria to take active responsibility for the weaker members of society form a good basis for crisis resilience and stability. A functioning welfare state is an important basis for maintaining social peace. Social policy in Austria not only significantly contributes to the prevention and avoidance of poverty, but it also creates an essential prerequisite for social cohesion and security for the population by helping to manage social, demographic, and economic change.

## 4.6 New technologies, digitalisation, and innovation

Technological progress creates opportunities but also harbours risks for state institutions, science, the economy, and society. Accordingly, Austria will actively participate in the development of new technologies in the interests of the common good, utilise them for this purpose, and at the same time promote resilience and technological and digital sovereignty at national and European levels. To this end, the transformative and disruptive potential of new technologies will be analysed in detail, and resilience against their misuse will be strengthened. Of particular interest are the effects on democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental and human rights, on prosperity, equal participation, the environment and climate, as well as on supply infrastructure and competitiveness. This also applies to states and businesses increasingly pursuing their interests across borders and attempting to exert influence. Technological and digital sovereignty requires the availability of corresponding scientific and technological expertise, which must be promoted. European and international partnerships play a key role, including the regulation of artificial intelligence. At the same time, one-sided dependencies should be reduced and avoided.

Digitalisation enables a high level of economic and social connectivity, increasingly covers all areas of basic human needs, and is the cornerstone of numerous innovations. However, this increasing interconnectivity also contains risks. Cyberattacks, for example, have a high potential for damage. Attacks on critical infrastructure and businesses in particular can lead to incalculable consequences and have a massive impact on essential services and supply chain security. If cyberattacks are directed against private individuals, they can suffer far-reaching social, economic, and societal consequences. The actors behind malicious cyber activities are often not clearly identifiable. In many cases, there is a connection to foreign actors, which is why European and international cooperation is of great importance. In the framework of cyber diplomacy, Austria is therefore committed to the full application of international law to cyber activities, including human rights and international humanitarian law, and to strengthening and applying the norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. At the same time, the Austrian Cybersecurity Strategy provides for the continuous and sustained improvement of technologies, processes, and capabilities related to whole-of-government cybersecurity and cyber defence.

In view of increased geopolitical competition, cyberspace is of great importance within the broad spectrum of hybrid instruments, as it can be misused for hybrid activities with relatively simple means. False narratives and anti-democratic values, disinformation, and technologically manipulated content (deepfakes) can be spread by hostile actors to manipulate public opinion, political discourse, and democratic processes, as well as the media. Taking forward national approaches to tackling hybrid threats, including national coordination mechanisms for detecting and monitoring disinformation and the protection and expansion of structures and resources for national strategic communication, are

relevant to strengthening resilience against these threats and to Austria's effective international cooperation. In this context, human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the freedom of expression and personal rights, and maintaining a global, open, free, stable, and secure cyberspace are the main yardsticks.

The basic building block of comprehensive digital sovereignty is the availability and management of data. On this basis, existing knowledge and information can be better utilised, and new knowledge can be generated. However, the wide range of possibilities for using data creates great challenges, including systems with intelligent, self-learning behaviour. In this context, freedom and security requirements must be taken into account, including full compliance with the legal framework, in particular with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially the right to privacy and data protection as well as data sovereignty.

In addition to the rapid progress of digitalisation, significant developments in the area of key technologies can be expected in the future, which will be associated with uncertainties. Advances and challenges in domains such as artificial intelligence, quantum technology, the life sciences and bio technologies, nano technologies and information technologies, microelectronics, and energy and climate technologies will affect all areas of life. Developments in the area of human/machine technologies (transhumanism) can also be observed in this context. There are also advances in agricultural and chemical engineering as well as in new manufacturing technologies and materials.

There exists a global competition for expertise and industrial capacities with the aim of achieving technological supremacy. Strengthening technological and digital sovereignty directed towards resilience and sustainability in the context of the EU's open strategic autonomy is therefore of key importance. With this in mind, it is important to continuously assess dependencies and implement the right balance of measures. With regard to the development and use of key technologies, Austria will also pay particular attention to a transparent, norms-based, human-centred, and responsible approach. The timely, continuous identification and evaluation of corresponding developments and options for action in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders will therefore be promoted, where necessary within the appropriate institutional framework.

Austria contributes to the development and implementation of global norms and technical standards in the area of global governance that are firmly based on sustainable development, human rights, and international law and are developed in line with a multi-stakeholder approach. Austria advocates at the international level for the promotion of a rights-based, open, free, stable, and secure internet and for closing the digital divide, especially with the countries of the Global South. In order to ensure access to expertise and key technologies and to utilise opportunities to actively shape the development, Austria is also expanding its capacities for digital and tech diplomacy. In addition to

prioritising the cooperation with the EU, cooperation with international organisations such as the UN and its specialised agencies, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the OECD, and NATO is based on the principles of responsible research and innovation as well as digital humanism, i.e. a human rights-based and human-centred digitalisation.

In order to build on the relevant foundations, Austria is maintaining and strengthening its involvement in the areas of national and European research for security and defence, supported by the research funding instruments developed for this purpose, including cybersecurity research. This enables improved strategic foresight and increases the efficiency of crisis prevention, early crisis detection, and the crisis response capability. Broad research activities also serve evidence-based policy-making. In addition, security and defence research contributes to the maintenance and further development of Austria as a hub of business and science through the knowledge gained and the increased use of its results.

Apart from strategic foresight and openness to new technologies, particular framework conditions for appropriate research, development, and innovation are required for Austria to remain competitive in the geopolitical competition. As part of a comprehensive and active research and innovation policy, Austria therefore ensures that innovation also takes place in areas that are crucial for national and international security and the safeguarding of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for contributing to the achievement of the climate and biodiversity goals.

These efforts are supplemented by training and further education measures as well as knowledge security. In order to generate knowledge, skills, and subsequently key technologies, stronger cooperation between basic research, training and education, and the economy is necessary. The fostering of skilled workers with a diverse background is essential. Requirements and skills must be evaluated and, if necessary, further developed in regular exchange dialogues between all stakeholders. Austria is also committed to and promotes the freedom and independence of science and research. At the same time, knowledge security is strengthened in order to prevent illegitimate influence and an undesired drain of knowledge. This is based on awareness-raising, transparency, and appropriate risk management, embedded in structured processes that favour exchange without compromising the values of a liberal democracy.

## **4.7 Economic security and critical resources**

Global upheavals have led to the need to modify economic and energy policies to ensure economic security. In the context of economic security and critical resources, particular importance is placed on reducing resource and supply dependencies and protecting critical infrastructure, preparing for crises and improving the resilience of businesses,

the stability of the financial market, and preventing undesirable foreign economic interference. Particular attention must also be paid to the uncontrolled drain of critical technologies and expertise to third countries.

Foreign economic interference, which also occurs as part of hybrid conflicts, can have a negative impact on Austria's economy and security, including through the existence or development of one-sided dependencies on specific raw materials or products. Therefore, the aim is to ensure the independent functioning of the state, the society, and the economy, including in times of crisis, disaster, and war. As a result, there is now a particular focus on issues such as crisis preparedness and the resilience of businesses, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, resource independence, diversification of supply chains, and the supply of essential goods, as well as the provision of critical infrastructure and services, and the availability of the necessary skilled labour force. The single European market, which favours innovation and investment, as well as security of supply, is a prerequisite for a crisis-proof Union. An effective social policy mitigates the social repercussions of economic crises and stabilises the economy during the economic cycle.

Austria will work together with the EU and its European partners to strengthen its location for business, to create an investment-friendly environment that is globally competitive, socially balanced, and climate-friendly, and to promote a spirit of innovation and pioneering. A strong industrial base with high added value, Research & Development intensity, and technological expertise, as well as a well-trained and skilled labour force strengthens a country's economic security and sovereignty in the long term. In this context, Austria has taken measures to achieve climate targets, create and safeguard jobs, foster competitiveness of businesses and industry, ensure supply chain security, and protect intact ecosystems in Europe. The Union's technological and digital sovereignty, for example in semiconductor production, must be maintained in the best possible way and at the same time further expanded through international cooperation. This is essential in research-intensive and critical industry sectors. The central role of research and the industrial production of pharmaceuticals in the EU was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, ensuring the affordability and availability of medical supplies is a prerequisite for strong, solidarity-based healthcare systems and the basis for equal access to healthcare throughout the EU. Securing the long-term supply and increasing the production of critical and strategic goods, together with research into strategically important goods, are the core elements of the EU's open strategic autonomy.

In order to counter future hybrid and interconnected crisis scenarios in the economic sector in the best possible manner, Austria will continue playing an active role in shaping and implementing EU measures, for example as part of the EU's Economic Security Strategy. The legal instruments developed in this context protect against security risks in connection with foreign investments in critical economic sectors and against detri-

mental economic measures taken by third countries. In addition, the negative effects of the drain of critical technologies and know-how are analysed at EU level, and suitable options for action are evaluated in order to counter new threats.

The basis for economic security is a resilient and secure critical infrastructure as well as the strengthening of the resilience of critical entities. In the energy sector, the use of the network-bound energy carrier gas must be reduced as quickly as possible, and the infrastructure for the use of renewable gaseous energy sources must be established for sectors that are difficult to decarbonise. Austria is keen to end its dependence on Russian energy imports in line with the decisions by the European Council in order to protect the economy and households from new price and supply risks. The share of gas imports from Russia into the EU was reduced from 45 percent in 2021 to 15 percent in 2023. According to the European Commission's plans, a complete phase-out is possible well before 2030 by reducing gas consumption, diversifying supply sources, and expanding domestic renewable energy at competitive prices. The President of the European Commission has committed to the goal of a Europe-wide phase-out of Russian natural gas supplies by 2027. Austria is also committed to these goals. The phase-out of Russian gas should take place as part of an overall strategy to transform the energy system that takes equal account of decarbonisation, security of supply, and affordability for households and businesses. Particular attention must be paid to providing households and businesses with the best possible support in this transition.

Against this backdrop, the energy supply companies must also fulfil their responsibilities. They have to take the measures necessary to ensure a secure and cost-effective supply and the necessary infrastructure for a secure gas supply, to reduce the share of Russian gas, and to ensure a secure energy supply including in the event of an immediate disruption of Russian gas supplies. In order to upgrade the existing gas infrastructure for imports from other sources, the Parliament has decided to contribute to the costs of the accelerated expansion of the West-Austria Pipeline and thus to ensure that it is expanded as quickly as possible.

At the same time, the expansion of decentralised, renewable energy generation and resilient electricity grids must be accelerated. This will enable Austria to further reduce existing import dependencies, to achieve a high level of supply diversity, particularly for network-bound energy carriers, and thus to secure the basis for favourable energy prices in Austria.

Cooperation between state institutions, critical infrastructure providers, and other supply-relevant businesses is also of great importance in the areas of telecommunications and digital infrastructure in order to take measures suitable for technical, security-related, and organisational resilience. This makes it possible to respond to or prevent security incidents and to ensure suitable protection.



Austria pursues an effective, supportive, and responsible domestic and international trade policy. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) forms the cornerstone for a global, rules-based trade and economic order in the context of fair competitive conditions. In addition to the necessary measures at the EU level, the complementary national instruments, also in the areas of export control and investment screening, must be utilised effectively. If necessary, these must be adapted to current security conditions, new developments, and the legal requirements of the EU. Greater diversification of trade markets should be pursued.

Furthermore, a targeted prioritisation of international trade activities is important. Strategic partnerships must be strengthened, particularly in critical sectors such as critical raw materials for technology production. A structured and regular exchange between national stakeholders and international partners is essential. This supports effective de-risking, reduces dependencies on individual markets and suppliers through market diversification, strengthens the resilience of the national and European economies, and at the same time contributes to the EU's open strategic autonomy.

Well-functioning supply chains increase economic security as they ensure the availability of products and raw materials. In recent years, disruptions have demonstrated the vulnerability of international supply chains. Measures such as greater diversification, improving resilience, exercising corporate due diligence, and increasing the transparency of supply chains increase their stability and economic security.

Close coordination and cooperation between financial institutions are essential cornerstones for promoting financial stability. In order to counter potential threats to the stability of the domestic financial system, the Financial Market Authority and the Austrian National Bank act in close cooperation with the European Central Bank, the European supervisory authorities, and the national supervisory authorities of the member states to create the best possible legal framework and to be able to use targeted supervisory instruments if necessary.

In addition to the activities at EU level, it is important to strengthen and regularly evaluate the economic resilience of Austria by implementing Economic National Defence as an inherent part of Comprehensive National Defence. The objectives of Economic National Defence are to protect businesses, to avoid one-sided dependencies, and to ensure supply for the population in the event of a crisis. In order to achieve this, businesses and the population must also consciously assume joint responsibility and be involved, sensitised, and informed, particularly with regard to continuous stockpiling and appropriate equipment. Measures to prepare for an economic crisis are implemented as part of statutory control measures to ensure the availability of energy, critical goods, and raw materials, adapted to current security-policy requirements. The effects of climate change must also be increasingly taken into account.

Austria ensures a secure, crisis-proof, and sustainable supply of energy, water, and critical raw materials and products to the population and systemically important institutions. The potential of domestic renewable energy generation in particular, as well as raw-material exploration and the production of goods, must be utilised at a high technological and ecological level. The energy infrastructure must be further expanded and converted in a targeted manner. Moreover, a focus must be placed on diversifying the sources of energy and primary products and on reducing one-sided and critical dependencies. With respect to heating, the use of gaseous energy sources should be reduced as quickly as possible for reasons of security of supply.

The changed security environment not only poses challenges to but also offers opportunities for the Austrian economy. Austria's economy can also benefit from the increased need for security, the initiatives adopted in this regard within the EU framework, and the expected global investment to increase comprehensive security. Austrian businesses, in particular small and medium enterprises, are already active in the security and defence industry. Their innovation and competitiveness should continue to be guaranteed<sup>4</sup> within the international value chains. The new framework conditions can offer new opportunities for the Austrian technology and industry. In addition to the opportunities for the economy, the existence of a national and European security and defence base generally contributes to strengthening resilience.

The use of outer space for security and defence purposes will continue to gain in importance against the backdrop of changes in the security environment. Austrian security and defence stakeholders proactively use European space services, especially in the fields of earth observation, navigation, telecommunications, and meteorology. Austrian businesses and research institutions participate in relevant European space infrastructure in the security and defence sector and should increasingly benefit from European space-related activities. This should significantly contribute to the protection of critical infrastructure, civil protection, and maintaining the state's ability to act in crises. In addition, research, development, and innovation should also be promoted at the national level.

In order to reduce or avoid existing and new economic dependencies on other energy sources and critical raw materials, such as hydrogen, technical and economic risks must be considered in addition to issues of security policy and strategic aspects, including the geopolitical dimension. The more domestic renewable resources are utilised, and the less Austria is dependent on imported energy sources, the more resilient the Austrian economy will become with lower supply chain risks.

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4 All measures in this area are taken in accordance with the Act on War Material and the relevant constitutional provisions.

## 4.8 Protection of livelihoods

Human-caused climate change and the associated effects not only threaten our health, prosperity, and livelihoods but also pose a significant and growing risk to national, European, and international security.

As a result of global warming, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense worldwide and in Austria, causing damage to both people and nature. The risks increase further as global warming progresses. This is particularly the case when tipping points are reached in the climate system, causing major components of the Earth's system to change, sometimes irrevocably, and exacerbating climate change-related threats.

Both mitigation of climate change and adaptation to the consequences of climate change are essential for lasting peace, long-term supply security, and economic and social resilience. Every year, weather and climate change related disasters claim lives, damage or destroy goods and infrastructure, and have serious impacts on the economy and on society. In order to mitigate climate risks, combating the causes of climate change and achieving climate neutrality are top priorities. This is the only way we can stay within the limits of our chances of adaptation. Urgently needed investments for rapid and effective measures are far more profitable in the long term. They avoid or reduce the costs and damages that unmitigated climate change entails. The Paris Agreement also recognises adaptation to climate change as an equally important second pillar of climate policy. The aim is to enhance adaptability, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate impacts. Austria adopted its first strategy for adaptation to climate change in 2012 and has developed it further at regular intervals since then. In line with the precautionary principle, the aim of this strategy is to provide a decision-making basis for forward-looking action with regard to future climate impacts and to promote its successful implementation.

The effects of climate change are strongly felt at the local level and must therefore be prevented or minimised at the regional and local levels. In the context of this Security Strategy, measures to adapt to the consequences of climate change are required in various areas to protect our livelihood. Electricity generation and the grid infrastructure must be geared towards future requirements in order to continue to guarantee a high level of supply security. The quality and quantity of the drinking water supply must be maintained. In agriculture, preventive measures must be implemented to safeguard food supplies and security. Forestry measures are necessary in order to maintain the function of protective forests. The transportation infrastructure must be adapted towards future climate change-related challenges and a higher risk of natural hazards. Redundancies are required for communication networks and analogue communication channels shall be maintained. Businesses are required to carry out risk assessments in relation to cli-

mate change related damage or supply chain disruptions. Self-preparedness in private households must be strengthened. Risk awareness, risk communication, forecasting, warning, and measurement systems must be further optimised. The well-functioning, National Crisis and Disaster Management system, including volunteer work as a key pillar, must be maintained and adapted with regard to extreme events caused by climate change. Adequate training courses with content relevant to climate change adaptation must be provided.

Due to the higher frequency and increasing intensity of extreme climate and weather events, an increased burden on the well-established Austrian volunteer organisations that bear the main burden in disaster relief is to be expected. If these capacities are overstretched, support by military means must be continued. In the context of international disaster relief, both civilian and military aid units and international aid organisations will be increasingly called upon. In such operations, changing environmental conditions must be taken into account as a particular challenge, which can place an extreme strain on the success of the operation as well as the operational capability and health of emergency personnel. Logistics, equipment, and gear must be adapted in order to be prepared for more extreme weather and climate conditions. In order to cope with the consequences of climate change, more domestic deployments are also to be expected, particularly for disaster relief or border protection.

With regards to adaptation to climate change, there is need for action, particularly in the development of continuous strategic risk analysis that incorporates the growing climate risks. Due to global interdependencies, close cooperation within the EU, UN, OSCE, and with international partners is essential for solutions to the challenges posed by the climate-security nexus. One of the key factors in this respect is the dissemination and accessibility of joint evidence-based analyses regarding climate and environmental risks as well as close cooperation between member states. Stable international climate financing and technology transfer are also essential instruments for supporting those countries most affected by loss and damage in the fight against climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that health crises not only have medical implications but can also have significant consequences for security and the economy. It is therefore essential for our society to be properly prepared for far-reaching health crises and to take effective and evidence-based action in response.

Preventive and early preparation, a coordinated response strategy, and swift and decisive action will strengthen our ability to respond to a wide range of health threats and manage them in the best possible and targeted manner. Such threats include pathogens with high pandemic potential, antimicrobial resistance, and chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear threats and their impact on healthcare as well as the health consequences of climate change.

To this end, it is essential to intensify the early detection and surveillance of disease outbreaks, systematically expand cross-agency and cross-sector strategies and mechanisms for dealing with health emergencies, also on the basis of past experience and international cooperation, and thus to strengthen the healthcare system in the long term.

Effective cooperation between the various stakeholders, the comprehensive implementation of the principle of a comprehensive health policy, and a holistic view of public health (“One Health”) are crucial for optimising a holistic response. In this context, the health literacy of the population also plays a decisive role. This can help to curb misinformation, promote cooperation with the authorities, and counteract the spread of diseases at an early stage.

# 5 Implementation

The implementation of the Austrian Security Strategy, and the interests, objectives, and measures contained therein, serves to ensure the best possible protection of the population and of Comprehensive National Defence. The implementation thereof is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society task and must be comprehensive. Rooting the strategy in the population, creating a broad awareness of security, and strengthening the subjective sense of security are essential. Comprehensive security must be supported by the citizens.

## 5.1 Institutional structures, mechanisms, and coordination

The implementation of the Austrian Security Strategy takes place in a transparent process and dialogue with all relevant bodies and is coordinated at the national level between concerned ministries. It can only be fully effective with the involvement of other key players, including the province level. Existing structures, in particular the National Security Council and the structures and actors, established under the Federal Crisis Security and Resilience Act, and their reports, will be taken into account in the implementation and utilised accordingly.

A steering group will be established under the leadership of the Federal Chancellery to ensure a coordinated approach. This group will regularly assess the validity of the security environment analysis and Austria's strategic situation, review the status and effectiveness of the implementation of the Austrian Security Strategy and the interests, objectives, and measures formulated therein, and propose any further measures that may be required.

In addition, the National Security Council will be kept informed, and there will be an exchange with Parliament and other relevant stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis.

## 5.2 Evaluation and adaptation

As Austria's strategic guiding document and framework on national security-policy, the Austrian Security Strategy is designed for the long term. Despite this overall long-term orientation, a continuous evaluation of its implementation is necessary in order to be able to react flexibly to significant changes in the global framework conditions.

Status reports on the results of the continuous evaluation and on the progress of implementation must be submitted to the Federal Government every two years or as required. These reports may subsequently be forwarded to Parliament for discussion in accordance with its rules of procedure.

### **5.3 Further framework for action and sub-strategies**

In order to take account of the changing framework conditions, it is expedient to further develop existing sub-strategies. In addition, new sub-strategies and any further planning and implementation documents to increase overall national resilience and defence capability must be examined and elaborated for additional relevant aspects.

The sub-strategies are evaluated on a continuous basis, adapted as required, and, if necessary, implemented as part of ministerial strategies. The results of these evaluations are incorporated into the continuous evaluation of the implementation of the Austrian Security Strategy and into the relevant status reports.

## List of abbreviations

AAF	Austrian Armed Forces
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ATSS	Austrian Security Strategy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDF	European Defence Fund
ESDC	European Security and Defence College
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IT	Information Technology
ITPP	NATO – Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS	Network and information systems
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PESCO	EU – Permanent Structured Cooperation
PfP	NATO – Partnership for Peace
SDGs	EU – Sustainable Development Goals
TEU	Treaty of European Union
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN	United Nations
WPS	Women, peace and security
WTO	World Trade Organisation





