Official Journal
of the European Union

EN
L series

2026/2231

2.10.2026

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2026/2231

of 1 October 2026

on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support the Balkan Medical Task Force

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 28(1) and Article 41(2) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

(1) Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 [1] establishes the European Peace Facility (EPF) for the financing by Member States of Union actions under the common foreign and security policy to preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security pursuant to Article 21(2), point (c), of the Treaty. In particular, pursuant to Article 1(2) of Decision (CFSP) 2021/509, the EPF is to be used for the financing of assistance measures such as actions to strengthen the capacities of third States and regional and international organisations relating to military and defence matters.

(2) The Balkan Medical Task Force (BMTF) was set up as a regional initiative bringing together six Western Balkan countries, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, with the aim of providing a quick and effective response to disaster-stricken countries or regions by using the existing military medical capacities of participating nations. Each of the participating nations takes over the role of 'Framework Nation' on a two-year rotating basis. Serbia covers this role for the period June 2024 to June 2026 and North Macedonia will take over for the next period. In the second half of 2021, the BMTF introduced new internal rules allowing longer-term deployment in support of missions and operations, including as part of common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions and operations outside the Western Balkans.

(3) By establishing an assistance measure to equip the medical units of the non-EU armed forces participating in the BMTF with the needed equipment and material, the Union would strengthen the military medical capabilities of the Western Balkans countries involved and reinforce a multinational military medical unit that could potentially support EU CSDP military operations or the military aspects of peace operations beyond the region and achieve NATO and Partnership for Peace capability targets.

(4) An assistance measure would also strengthen the Western Balkans' ability to respond to crises and increase the region's resilience, thus ultimately contributing to regional stability and enabling the countries in the region to better protect their populations. It could contribute to regional cooperation and cohesion and promote good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans.

(5) On 30 April 2026, by letter addressed to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative'), BMTF Representatives requested the Union to support the BMTF with the procurement of key equipment to strengthen the capacity of its medical units.

[1] Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of 22 March 2021 establishing a European Peace Facility, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2015/528 (OJ L 102, 24.3.2021, p. 14, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/509/oj).

(6) In line with the Council's conclusions on EPF, an assistance measure would empower the BMTF and its non-EU participating nations to respond autonomously to crises. By bringing together five Western Balkans countries, an assistance measure would also feed into the broader CFSP and CSDP goals in the region, such as promoting regional cooperation and dialogue.

(7) Assistance measures are to be implemented taking into account the principles and requirements set out in Decision (CFSP) 2021/509, and in particular compliance with Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP ([2]), and in accordance with the rules for the implementation of revenue and expenditure financed under the EPF.

(8) The Council reaffirms its determination to protect, promote and fulfil human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles and to strengthen the rule of law and good governance, in compliance with the United Nations Charter, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international law, in particular international human rights and international humanitarian law,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Establishment, objectives, scope and duration

1. An assistance measure benefiting the Balkan Medical Task Force (BMTF) and non-EU participating nations, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, (the 'beneficiaries') to be financed under the European Peace Facility (EPF) (the 'assistance measure') is hereby established.

2. The objectives of the assistance measure are the following:

(a) to strengthen the cooperation between the Union and the Western Balkans countries in security and defence, including through enhancing regional cooperation;

(b) to contribute to enhancing the security and defence capacities of the BMTF and its non-EU participating nations, thereby strengthening the overall security, resilience and stability of the Western Balkans countries and better protecting the civilian population in crises and emergencies.

3. To achieve the objectives set out in paragraph 2, the assistance measure shall finance the following types of equipment not designed to deliver lethal force:

(a) communication and information systems;

(b) military medical vehicles;

(c) field hospital equipment.

The assistance measure shall also finance related supplies and services, including technical and maintenance training, where needed.

4. The duration of the assistance measure shall be 42 months from the date of adoption of this Decision.

([2]) Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment (OJ L 335, 13.12.2008, p. 99, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/compos/2008/944/oj).

Article 2

Financial arrangements

1. The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure related to the assistance measure shall be EUR 10 000 000.

2. All expenditure shall be managed in accordance with Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 and in line with the rules for the implementation of revenue and expenditure financed under the EPF.

Article 3

Arrangements with the beneficiaries

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (the 'High Representative') shall make the necessary arrangements with each of the beneficiaries to ensure its compliance with the requirements and conditions established by this Decision as a condition for the provision of support under the assistance measure.

2. The arrangements referred to in paragraph 1 shall include provisions obliging each beneficiary to ensure:

(a) compliance of the units of the BMTF supported under the assistance measure with relevant international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law;

(b) proper and efficient use of any assets provided under the assistance measure for the purposes for which they were provided;

(c) sufficient maintenance of any assets provided under the assistance measure to ensure their usability and operational availability over their life cycle;

(d) that any assets provided under the assistance measure are not lost or transferred to persons or entities other than those identified in those arrangements.

3. The arrangements referred to in paragraph 1 shall include provisions on the suspension and termination of support under the assistance measure in the event of the beneficiaries being found in breach of the obligations set out in paragraph 2.

Article 4

Implementation

1. The High Representative shall be responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Decision in accordance with Decision (CFSP) 2021/509, and in line with the rules for the implementation of revenue and expenditure financed under the EPF and with the Integrated Methodological Framework for assessing and identifying the required measures and controls for assistance measures under the EPF.

2. The implementation of the activities referred to in Article 1(3) shall be carried out by ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) and the administrator for assistance measures.

Article 5

Monitoring, control and evaluation

1. The High Representative shall monitor the compliance by the beneficiaries with the obligations set out in Article 3. That monitoring shall be used to provide awareness of the context and the risks of breaches of the obligations set out in Article 3, and to contribute to the prevention of such breaches, including violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the BMTF units supported under the assistance measure.

2. The post-shipment control of equipment and supplies shall be organised as follows:

(a) delivery verification, whereby EPF delivery certificates are to be signed by the end-user forces upon transfer of ownership;

(b) reporting on the inventory, whereby the beneficiaries are to report annually on the inventory of designated items until such reporting is no longer deemed necessary by the Political and Security Committee (PSC);

(c) on-site visits, whereby the beneficiaries are to grant the High Representative and the EPF auditors access to conduct on-site checks and EPF audits, upon request.

3. The High Representative shall conduct a final evaluation upon completion of the assistance measure to assess whether the assistance measure has contributed to reaching the objectives set out in Article 1(2).

Article 6

Reporting

During the period of implementation, the High Representative shall provide the PSC with six-monthly reports on the implementation of the assistance measure, in accordance with Article 63 of Decision (CFSP) 2021/509. The administrator for assistance measures shall regularly inform the Facility Committee established by Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 on the implementation of revenue and expenditure in accordance with Article 38 of that Decision, including by providing information on the suppliers and subcontractors involved.

Article 7

Suspension and termination

1. The PSC may decide to suspend wholly or partially the implementation of the assistance measure in accordance with Article 64 of Decision (CFSP) 2021/509.

2. The PSC may recommend that the Council terminate the assistance measure.

Article 8

Entry into force

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

Done at Luxembourg, 1 October 2026.

For the Council

The President

J. O'CALLAGHAN