

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004647/25**  
**to the Commission**  
**Nikolaos Anadiotis (NI)**  
(20 November 2025)

*Subject:* Increase in defence spending and social security implications of activating the ‘escape clause’

According to the new EU economic governance framework, Member States are permitted to activate the so-called ‘national escape clause’ to increase their defence spending up to a certain percentage of GDP without this being considered a fiscal deviation. <sup>(1)</sup> The clause is activated due to geopolitical developments and the need to strengthen European defence. <sup>(2)</sup>

However, there is concern that the increase in defence spending could cause budgetary pressures. In Member States with high public debt and vulnerable social security systems, such as Greece, the possible knock-on effect of these on the welfare state through changes in pensions, contributions or other social benefits, will have serious implications, the assessment of which is imperative. <sup>(3)</sup>

In view of the above and given the fundamental importance of protecting pensions and social security:

1. What guarantees is the Commission implementing to ensure that the increase in defence spending does not lead to a burden on insured persons or to reductions in social and pension benefits?
2. Does the Commission have an assessment of the impact of the escape clause on the sustainability of pension and social security systems, and does it intend to carry out a study on this?
3. Will it ask Member States that activate the clause for data on the impact of defence spending on their social policies?

Submitted: 20.11.2025

**Answer given by Mr Dombrovskis on behalf of the European Commission**  
(26 February 2026)

The aim of activating the national escape clause is precisely to ease, in the short and medium term, the budgetary pressures that the Honourable Member refers to.

Instead of having to find budgetary space for extra defence spending rapidly — which could put pressure on other expenditure items such as social spending — Member States that activate the national escape clause can temporarily deviate from their net expenditure growth limits set by the Council. Conditions are set to preserve the sustainability of public finances <sup>(1)</sup>.

This approach will give Member States time to adjust their budgets and ensure a smoother transition to a structurally higher level of defence spending.

Member States can rely on different approaches to do that, depending on the policy priorities and specific challenges of a given Member State, for instance regarding its debt level or growth prospects.

One avenue is to improve the quality of public finances, for example by shifting the tax mix towards sources that are less detrimental to growth, curbing tax evasion, rationalising tax expenditures, implementing expenditure reviews and improving targeting of social spending.

The Commission continues to monitor the adequacy and the sustainability of pension and social security systems, in particular in the context of the European Semester and through the Social Scoreboard as part of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/national-escape-clause-for-defence-expenditure-nec>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/03/06/european-council-conclusions-on-european-defence>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.age-platform.eu/joint-statement-the-eu-must-protect-welfare>

<sup>(1)</sup> The assessment that fiscal sustainability is preserved over the medium term is provided in ‘European Commission, Assessment of the Fiscal Sustainability Condition for Member States Requesting the Activation of the National Escape Clause’, Institutional Paper 321, June 2025.