

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000862/26
to the Commission
Engin Eroglu (Renew)
(3 March 2026)**

Subject: Participation of strategic partners in SAFE — status and evaluation of applications from Japan, South Korea and Türkiye to join common defence procurement

The industrial fragmentation of the European defence market, alongside regulatory hurdles and a lack of collective demand, have further hampered the necessary upscaling of production in the defence industry. This is causing a substantial loss of efficiency and weakening the resilience and competitiveness of the EU's Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). With this in mind, and given the acute threat situation associated with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Commission has devised the instrument for Security Action for Europe (SAFE) to promote common procurement and incentivise stronger collaboration in the defence industry.

Japan, South Korea and Türkiye have made bids for access to common procurement under SAFE. Cooperation in the defence industry with strategic partners outside the EU is not just an option; it is a necessity for strengthening Europe's political agency, resilience and deterrence capabilities. Partners in the Indo-Pacific currently play a vital role in robust supply chains, technological innovation and geopolitical stability.

1. What is the current status of the applications to SAFE from Japan, South Korea and Türkiye?
2. How does the Commission evaluate each application's chance of success?
3. What specific steps is the Commission considering in terms of further assessment and the potential opening of negotiations?

Submitted: 3.3.2026

**Answer given by Mr Kubilius on behalf of the European Commission
(28 April 2026)**

The Security Action for Europe (SAFE) ⁽¹⁾ instrument provides for an open architecture that allows concluding bilateral agreements with third countries — specifically acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries or those with whom the EU has entered into a security and defence partnership. Regarding the expressions of interest submitted by Japan, South Korea, and Türkiye, the Commission is currently assessing these requests and finalising loan agreements that each Member State will sign with the EU.

Once these loan agreements are established, the Commission will have a clearer picture on any possible budgetary leftover under SAFE. That also includes the possibility of certain amounts under the agreed national plans that could be re-attributed to other procurements.

This would be also the right moment to discuss with Member States on the possibility to negotiate additional SAFE bilateral agreements.

Any potential opening of negotiations of a bilateral agreement in the context of SAFE, needs to follow the procedure set out in Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) ⁽²⁾, where the Council may authorise the Commission to negotiate the said agreements on behalf of the EU.

Furthermore, Article 17 of the SAFE Regulation spells out conditions for the participation of third countries' entities and products in SAFE, including the conditions and modalities of participation of contractors and subcontractors established in the third country in the common procurement under the SAFE instrument; the rules related to the cost of components originating in the third country; conditions of any financial contribution to be provided by the third country to the EU.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/1106/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2008/art_218/oj/eng.