

Defending Europe Advancing Opportunities under SAFE

A CEE – Canada Forum on Defence
Manufacturing, Innovation and Procurement

12-13 May, 2026

Bálna Budapest, Hungary

Europe's defence requires a stronger and more resilient industrial base.

Expanding manufacturing capacity, diversifying supply chains and securing advanced technologies are identified urgent priorities, as are greater Member State interoperability and faster capability delivery. Deeper transatlantic cooperation is expected to offer solutions to these needs:

This conference brings together industry leaders and policymakers in Central and Eastern Europe and from Canada to explore these challenges.

PRECONFERENCE

19:00-21:00 **VIP reception**

Venue: TBA

DAY ONE

08.15 **Registration and Coffee**

09.00 **Welcoming Remarks - TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR OWN SECURITY - IS THERE AN UPSIDE TO THE UNCERTAINTY WE NOW LIVE IN?**

Nicholas Sarvari, President, Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hungary

09.05 **Welcoming remarks - CATALYSING INNOVATION AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH IN THE CEE DEFENCE ECOSYSTEM** - Europe's capability gaps, industrial requirements and the strategic imperative for accelerated cooperation and the role of CEE in the defence of Europe.

Tamás Vargha, Deputy Minister of Defence, Hungary

09.20 **Keynote - CANADA'S ROLE IN A STRONGER EUROPEAN DEFENCE: INNOVATION, INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY AND TRANSATLANTIC INTEGRATION -**

Focus on Canada's complementary strengths, industrial partnerships, technology contributions and long-term commitment to European security.

John Hannaford, Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Canada to the European Union

09.35 **Keynote - SAFE EXPLAINED - OBJECTIVES, GOVERNANCE, AND INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS - Why SAFE was launched, its link to EU strategic autonomy, and how it complements NATO. The ≥65% European content requirement—what it means for primes, SMEs, and partners.**

Andrius Kubilius, Commissioner for Defence and Space, European Commission - DG DEFIS



10.00 Panel One - EXPANDING MANUFACTURING MASS AND BUILDING CAPACITY: CAN HUNGARY BE A SAFE HUB? -

Discussion of Europe's manufacturing shortfall, opportunities for joint CEE-Canada production, increasing throughput, and creating scalable capacity for a long-duration conflict situation.

Moderator: TBD

Panelists:

Timo Haas, CDO Rheinmetall AG

Clay Bridges, Bell Helicopter

István Sárhegyi, CEO 4iG Space & Defence Technologies

Michael Humbek, CEO Dynamit Nobel Defence Hungary

11.00 Coffee and Networking Break

11.30 Panel Two- FORTIFYING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE THROUGH DIVERSIFICATION - Focus on reducing strategic dependence, benefits of integrating non-European suppliers into European networks, creating redundancies and ensuring component security across borders.

Moderator: TBD

Panelists:

*Colin Barker - Executive Director, Defense Exports Division, Government of Canada
BDSV*

Tomasz Husak - DG DEFIS

Oliver Dörre - CEO Hensoldt

John de Boer - VP Government Relations BlackBerry Canada

Roberto Cingolani - CEO Leonardo

Eric Beranger - CEO MBDA-Systems

12.30 Lunch

13:30 **Panel Three - CRITICAL ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES AND EUROPEAN NEEDS**

Examination of technology gaps in surveillance, sensors, command systems, cyber defence, unmanned platforms, advanced materials, and the impact of Artificial Intelligence. Showcasing the complementary strengths of CEE and Canadian innovators.

Moderator: Defence technology expert from the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) or 4iG

Panelists:

France Hebert - President CAE Defense & Security Canada

Keith Blasingham - Senior Director Security Product Portfolio BlackBerry Canada

Michael Schoellhorn - CEO Airbus Defence and Space

Misha Neidinger - Territory Director BD Europe, L3Harris WESCAM

Steve Mills - Vice President, Global Government - Eutelsat

15.30 **Coffee Break**

15:45: **Keynote - INTEROPERABILITY AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION UNDER SAFE**

Providing a view on EU policy direction on interoperability and SAFE objectives

Andrius Kubilius or Herald Ruijters (DG DEFIS)

16.15 Panel Four - INTEROPERABILITY AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION UNDER SAFE: INDUSTRY VIEW - This panel explores practical steps for harmonising standards, accelerating data exchange, aligning platforms and training, enabling seamless joint operations and the role of technology in advancing interoperability.

Moderator: TBD

Panelists:

Pietro Mazzei - President & CEO Rheinmetall Canada

Zoltan Poser, CEO N7

Thales Canada

France Hebert - President CAE Defense & Security Canada

17.15 **End of Day One**

19:00 – 21:00 Reception

Location: TBD



DAY TWO

08.30 Registration and Coffee/Networking

09.00 **Roundtable- DEFINE THE AREAS FOR COOPERATION ALONG THE NATIONAL NEEDS -** National representatives sharing the areas of planned capability development under SAFE that would need stronger industrial cooperation to fulfill EU and national demand.

Panelists:

Col. László Deme - National Armament Director, Hungary

Adrian Kollar - Director Armament Division, Modernization Department, Slovakia

Maj. Gen. Dr. Artur Kuptel or Col. Krzysztof Komorowski - Head of the Armament Agency, Poland

Brig. Gen. Ion-Cornel Plesa - Deputy Chief, General Directorate for Armaments, Romania

Colonel Nikolay V. Nikolov - National Armament Director, Bulgaria

Vice-Admiral Giacinto OTTAVIANI - National Armament Director, Italy

Emmanuel Chiva - Chief Executive of the DGA, France

10.00 **Keynote - INVESTMENT SUPPORT SCHEMES TO FACILITATE EUROPEAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT** - Showcasing how the right Foreign Direct Investment incentive schemes can make a country as a hub for SAFE.

István Joó, CEO Hungarian Investment and Promotion Agency

10.30 Coffee and Networking Break

11.00 **B2B & B2G Matchmaking** - Structured meetings between CEE firms, Canadian companies and government procurement representatives. Focus on immediate collaboration prospects.

12.30 Lunch



13.30 Roundtable - JOINT PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE RAPID CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

- A moderated conversation on how European, NATO and national procurement agencies see joint procurement under SAFE and their recommendations towards the industry.

Moderator: TBD

Panelists:

OCCAR

Attila Simon, CEO, Védelmi Beszerzési Ügynökség, Hungary

NSPA

Brig. Gen. Ion-Cornel Plesa, Deputy Chief, General Directorate for Armaments, Romania

14.30 Roundtable - FINANCIAL ENABLERS FOR RAPID CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT-

The right financing scheme is instrumental to enable rapid capacity development of OEMs to enable fulfilling contracts under SAFE. Discussion will focusing financing options enabling both OEMs and their supply chain.

Moderator: TBD

Panelists:

Klaus Houben - Business Development Director, EDC - Europe

Henry Möykkynen - Investment Officer EIB

OTP

15.30 Closing Session - Action Items, Partnership Announcements and Next Steps

15.45 Departures