

International Conference:

EU TECHNOLOGICAL AUTONOMY: STRATEGIES, FUNDING, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Time and venue: 24 September 2025, Central Military Club, Sofia, Bulgaria

Working language: English (no interpretation to Bulgarian)

AGENDA OVERVIEW

9.00 – 9.15 - Registration

9.15 – 9.45 Opening Session

Welcome address and brief overview of the conference objectives

Yordan Bozhilov - President of the Sofia Security Forum

Miguel Alonso Berrio – Ambassador of Spain

Martin Danovski – Deputy Minister of Innovations and Growth

**Dimitar Gardev – Chairperson of the Parliament Committee on European Affairs
and Oversight of the European Funds**

**9.45 – 10.00 Key note speech: Maintaining technological edge of NATO with EU
efforts for Technology Autonomy**

*Assoc. Prof. Velizar Shalamanov, Institute of Information and Communication
Technologies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Former Member of the
Parliament, Minister of Defense of Bulgaria and Chair of NATO C&I Agency Board*

10.00 – 11.00 - Panel 1: "Strategic Visions for EU Technological Development"

Luis Moya - INDRA representative, EU Defence department

Prof. Boyan Mednikarov, Flotilla Admiral Ret., Naval Academy, EnduroSat

**Moderator: Monika Panayotova, PhD, University Lecturer, University of
National and World Economy, Vice-President of the Sofia Security Forum**

Q&A session

11.00 – 11.30 – Coffee break, Networking and informal discussions

11.30 – 12.30 - Panel 2: "From Policy to Practice: Implementing EU Strategies"

Gonzalo León Serrano, Vice-president of the Technology for the Defence and Security Foundation.

Borislav Bankov, PhD, Lead of the NATO Test Centre on dual-purpose technologies, GATE Institute - "Engaging non-traditional defence actors such as disruptive startups in the Euro-Atlantic defence innovation and production"

Moderator: Yordan Bozhilov, President of the Sofia Security Forum, Former Deputy Minister of Defence

Q&A and interactive session with audience participation to brainstorm and refine ideas

12.30 – Closing Remarks and networking cocktail

Conference Concept:

The Russian war against Ukraine and its increasingly aggressive rhetoric, ongoing geopolitical shifts, and persistent global and regional challenges, has fundamentally altered the strategic environment in which Europe operates. The critical question now is: Is Europe prepared to effectively respond to these new realities?

It is clear that valuable time has been lost. The European Union must act swiftly to close the gap by strengthening its technological base, enhancing its defense capabilities, and accelerating the development and deployment of advanced technologies.

Europe must not only allocate sufficient resources but also ensure that they are strategically targeted. Through coordinated policy alignment and investments, the EU can enter a new phase of technological advancement - one that enhances the competitiveness of its technological and industrial ecosystems, including the vital European defense sector.

This conference will serve as a dynamic platform for multistakeholder dialogue on the EU's evolving approach to technological autonomy. It is designed to facilitate both high-level strategic discussions and practical sessions focused on implementation, creating a comprehensive framework to support the EU's long-term technological ambitions. The conference aims not only to produce actionable insights and policy recommendations but also to act as a catalyst for future collaborative projects.

Key questions to be analyzed:

Building sovereign digital and technological infrastructures and driving innovation through public-private-research partnerships

Creating an environment that supports innovation through enhanced collaboration among public institutions, research organizations and the private sector to boost emerging startups and established technology companies;

Aligning regulatory frameworks and funding strategies to channel investments and accelerate the development and deployment of advanced technologies across both defense and civilian sectors.

Strengthening the EU defense technological and production base to secure strategic autonomy and resilience.

Participants: About 100 participants among which Bulgarian and foreign officials, security experts, representatives from businesses, academia, Diplomatic corps, etc.