

EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the initiative report by Marietta GIANNAKOU (EPP, EL) on the EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects.

Members highlight the EU's **insufficient capacity to respond to international crises in a timely and efficient manner**, in spite of its long-standing commitment to preserving peace, safeguarding human rights, preventing conflicts and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter. They stress that it is in the interest of the EU and the Member States to act coherently as a security provider, not only within Europe, but also in the rest of the world and especially in its own neighbourhood.

They recall the EU's firm attachment to a comprehensive approach to crisis management, integrating a wide spectrum of diplomatic, economic, development and, **in the last resort, military means**.

Members regret that recent military operations in both Libya and Mali have **demonstrated the lack of progress toward a truly Common Security and Defence Policy** and stress the need for more coordination and cooperation at the European level.

Cuts in military budgets: Members reiterate their grave concern at the continuing and uncoordinated cuts in national defence budgets and reaffirm Parliament's recommendations to counter the negative effects of the crisis on military capabilities at EU level through better coordination of defence planning, **pooling and sharing of capabilities**. They urge the EU Member States and the Commission to take the necessary measures to facilitate the restructuring and consolidation of defence industrial capacities, in order to **reduce existing overcapacities**.

They also call on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) **to present proposals which will reflect the recommendations of this resolution**, and will include options for advancing European cooperation in security and defence among the Member States willing to do so.

Improving EU capability to plan and conduct military operations: Members note that, ten years after the first autonomous EU-led military operation, the EU **still does not possess a permanent military planning and conduct capability**. They recall that the current arrangements, which require *ad hoc* activation of a national headquarters, constitute a purely reactive approach and do not provide resources for the necessary advance planning. They therefore, once more, call for the **creation of a fully-fledged EU Operational Headquarters** within the European External Action Service (EEAS), if necessary through permanent structured cooperation. It should be a civilian-military structure, responsible for the planning and conduct of both EU civilian missions and military operations.

Enhancing the EU battlegroups: the Union's rapid reaction and stabilisation instrument: Members recognise the contribution of the EU battlegroups to the transformation of Member States' armed forces and regret the fact that the concept has not yet proven its utility as a rapid reaction instrument in operations. They consider that the reviewed ATHENA mechanism for common costs of military operations still does not take adequately into account the specificities of the battlegroup concept, and call for a significant expansion of the common costs for rapid reaction operations, up to a full coverage of costs when battlegroups are used, applying the **'costs lie where they fall'** principle. They also call on the

VP/HR to make proposals with the view to adjusting the ATHENA mechanism to the specificities of the battlegroups, if necessary through permanent structured cooperation.

They invite the European Council to explore ways of **streamlining the political decision-making process at EU** and national level to make rapid reaction a reality.

Further on, they encourage the development of battlegroups as longer-term partnerships lasting beyond the stand-by period to maximise the military and economic benefits of joint procurement of equipment and services and of pooling and sharing. In their view battlegroups **cannot be considered a universal crisis management tool**.

Members also call for the Helsinki Headline Goal of 1999 of being capable of deploying 60 000 men in 60 days for a major operation to be achieved.

Building structures and capabilities to address key capability shortfalls: Members regret the absence of firm capability commitments by the Member States and call on the Council to provide for the implementation of the related evaluation requirement. They call for a more structured approach **to address key capability shortfalls at European level** and in particular in the areas of key force enablers and force multipliers such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, strategic air lift, helicopters, medical support, air-to-air refuelling and precision-guided munitions. They also call for an evaluation of the establishment of a permanent CSDP warehouse (with functions similar to the NATO Support Agency) and, reiterate their call on the Member States to consider joint ownership of **certain expensive capabilities**, notably space capabilities, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or strategic lift assets.

At the same time, **Members deplore the declining national budgets for defence research** and the fact that it is mostly fragmented along national lines.

Increasing coherence in permanent multinational structures of EU Member States: Members call for the strengthening of links between Eurocorps and the EU Military Staff, and invite more Member States to join Eurocorps' multinational structure.

Strengthening the European dimension in education, training and exercises: Members welcome the progress in the European initiative for the exchange of young officers, inspired by the ERASMUS programme, and support pooling and sharing initiatives in education and training. They stress the opportunity for **common training and exercises provided by the EU battlegroups**. They draw attention to the need to avoid potential overlaps with NATO, e.g. in the area of cyber security training.

Increasing the benefits of EU-NATO cooperation: Members urge much closer and more regular collaboration at a political level between the VP/HR and the Secretary-General of NATO for the purposes of risk assessment, resource management, policy planning and the execution of operations, both civilian and military. They emphasise the importance of NATO standards for European defence cooperation. They note that the NATO Response Force and EU battlegroups are complementary, mutually reinforcing initiatives, which, however, require similar efforts from the Member States.

Moving the CSDP to a new level: Members encourage the Member States willing to do so to proceed, if necessary, in accordance with Articles 42(6) and 46 TEU on **permanent structured cooperation**. This cooperation should include, in particular, the following elements aimed at enhanced operational effectiveness:

- the establishment of a permanent EU Operational Headquarters,
- common funding of rapid reaction operations using EU battlegroups,
- a commitment to contribute to the battlegroup roster, with aligned rules of engagement and streamlined decision-making procedures.

Any agreement on permanent structured cooperation should at least include commitments to:

- structured coordination of defence planning;
- common evaluation and review of capability building; and
- increased funding for the EDA.

Permanent structured cooperation should also facilitate increased coherence between European collaborative initiatives, in the spirit of inclusiveness and flexibility.

It should be noted that this report is the subject of a minority opinion which calls for radical (nuclear) disarmament at EU and global level and the setting in place of a civil European Union that favours civil conflict resolution and no military assistance obligation, whether in or outside the EU.