

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

2012/2319(INI) - 12/09/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 403 votes to 178, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on the EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects.

Parliament highlights 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. It stresses 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.

It recalls 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**.

Parliament regrets that recent military operations in both Libya and Mali have **demonstrated the lack of progress toward a truly Common Security and Defence Policy** and stresses the need for more coordination and cooperation at the European level if the EU is to be taken as an effective and credible world actor.

Cuts in military budgets: Parliament reiterates its grave concern at the continuing and uncoordinated cuts in national defence budgets. It urges the Member States to stop **and reverse this irresponsible trend**, as well as to step up efforts at national and EU levels to limit its consequences through increased cooperation and pooling and sharing.

Parliament reaffirms its 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**, supporting defence research and technological development, building a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European defence technological and industrial base, **establishing a European defence equipment market**, and finding new forms of EU-level funding. It urges 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**.

Parliament also calls 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: Parliament notes that, ten years after the first autonomous EU-led military operation, the **EU still does not possess a permanent military planning and conduct capability**. It recalls 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. It therefore, once more, calls for the creation of a **fully-fledged EU Operational Headquarters** within the European External Action Service (EEAS), if necessary through permanent structured cooperation. This 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: Parliament recognises the contribution of the EU battlegroups to the transformation of Member States' armed forces and regrets the fact that the concept has not yet proven its utility as a rapid reaction instrument in operations. It considers 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 calls 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. It also calls 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.

Parliament invites the European Council to explore ways of **streamlining the political decision-making process at EU** and national level to make rapid reaction a reality. It calls for more **political will** to be shown to address the challenges and encourages reflection on possible simplified procedures regarding deployments of battlegroups for limited periods of time. It suggests, in particular, that any costs that are not linked to military operations, such as preparation and stand-by costs of battlegroups, could be charged to the EU budget.

Parliament's resolution goes on to 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**.

Parliament also calls 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: Parliament regrets the absence of firm capability commitments by the Member States and calls on the Council to provide for the implementation of the related evaluation requirement. It calls 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. It also calls for an evaluation of the establishment of a permanent CSDP warehouse (with functions similar to the NATO Support Agency) and, reiterates its call on the Member States to consider joint ownership of **certain expensive capabilities**, notably space capabilities, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or strategic lift assets. Parliament underlines the need to create a common approach in Europe towards developing a medium-altitude long-endurance **remotely piloted air system** (MALE RPAS) and encourages the Commission and the Member States to develop an innovative approach for achieving this ambition.

At the same time, **Parliament deplores the declining national budgets for defence research** and the fact that it is mostly fragmented along national lines. It is also seriously concerned about the increasing dependencies on non-European technologies and sources of supply and its implications for European autonomy.

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

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

Parliament reiterates its full support for European structures and projects in the area of education and training and stresses, in particular, the contribution of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) to the promotion of a **common security culture**.

Increasing the benefits of EU-NATO cooperation: Parliament urges 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. It emphasises the importance of NATO standards for European defence cooperation. It notes 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: Parliament encourages 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.

Parliament notes that the Treaty clearly states that permanent structured cooperation is to be established within the Union framework, observing that the vast majority of activities developed under it could therefore benefit from **access to the EU budget** under the same conditions as other EU activities, in line with Article 41 of the EU Treaty.

Lastly, Parliament considers That permanent structured cooperation should also facilitate increased coherence between European collaborative initiatives, in the spirit of inclusiveness and flexibility.