Recommendation to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the Implementation and governance of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

2020/2080(INI) - 20/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 464 votes to 90, with 137 abstentions, a recommendation to the Council and the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the implementation and governance of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO).

Towards a common EU defence policy

Parliament considered permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) to be an important step towards achieving the objective of gradually developing a common EU defence policy, leading to the establishment of a common defence. PESCO should be used to put into practice the duty of mutual aid and assistance set out in the EU Treaty, in order to better prepare Member States to show solidarity towards another Member State if that State is the object of armed aggression on its territory.

Members stated that the development of a common EU defence strategy is more necessary than ever in a context of multiple and growing threats where no single Member State can protect itself. The PESCO should enhance the Union's capacity to act as an international security provider in order to contribute effectively and credibly to international, regional and European security.

Recommendations

The report recommended, inter alia, that the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should:

- underline the importance of seeking conflict resolution as a priority;

- implement the Union's strategic vision, define common threats and strengthen the operational dimension of PESCO;

- prepare a White Paper on the security and defence of the Union;

- ensure coherence between the different EU defence initiatives and operations;

- encourage participating Member States to move from a strictly national view of defence to a European approach and to make structured efforts to increase the use of the European collaborative approach as a priority, as no individual participating Member States has the potential to address identified capacity shortfalls alone;

- increase the EU’s budgetary ambition for the strengthening of defence capabilities, notably through the sufficient financing of the future EDF and Military Mobility in the upcoming multiannual financial framework (MFF);

- ensure that the PSC is effectively used as an instrument towards a sustainable and effective EU defence cooperation, improvement of defence capabilities and interoperability as a common objective, in line with the ambition of greater strategic autonomy of the Union;

- focus PESCO on constructive projects with a genuine European strategic dimension to strengthen Europe's defence industrial and technological base, while stressing the importance of a small number of strategic projects which should be prioritised as they lay the foundations for a more integrated European defence;

- ensure that key capabilities such as future key land, sea, air, cyber and other platforms for the armed forces of the Member States be brought under PESCO or at least be closely connected to it;

- enhance the coherence of EU defence planning and development tools and initiatives.

Governance

Parliament recommended:

- reaffirming the central role of the PSC secretariat as a single point of contact for all projects;

- clarifying the role of the Political and Security Committee in the PESCO process, which is not provided for in the EU Treaty, and ensure, in this context, the central role played by the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) in the provision of ad hoc military advice;

- examining the creation of a European Defence Council based on the current Foreign Affairs Council in Defence Ministers format, which corresponds to the EDA Ministerial Steering Board and the PESCO format of the EU Defence Ministers.

Strengthening Parliament’s powers

Members recommended that Parliament be consulted on the review of PESCO, and that its views be taken into account to ensure greater accountability, transparency and oversight.

In general, Members believe that deepening defence cooperation between Member States at EU level should go hand in hand with strengthening the powers of scrutiny of Member States' parliaments and the European Parliament. The European Parliament should, together with the Council, exercise legislative and budgetary functions, as well as political scrutiny and consultation as provided for in the Treaties.