Implementation of the common security and defence policy - annual report 2021

2021/2183(INI) - 21/12/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Nathalie LOISEAU (Renew Europe, FR) on the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – annual report 2021.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the rise in global threats and the Union's vulnerability due to its external dependencies. The pandemic has expanded the concept of security and strategic autonomy to cover health, technological and economic concerns.

Moreover, given that Europe is facing a rapid and lasting deterioration in its strategic environment, States have expressed their ambitions for more power and pursuing **expansion strategies** that involve the use of armed force. Through the military capabilities of its Member States, the EU has a total budget of EUR 395 billion, putting it in second place globally.

Developing an EU security and defence doctrine

2020 was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic and numerous challenges to the Union's foreign, security and defence policy, which exposed insufficient coordination and dependencies on the rest of the world. Members stressed that the EU must learn lessons from this with a view, in particular, to reinforcing digital and technological sovereignty and overall strategic autonomy as an international actor, and its capacity and willingness to decide and act autonomously, if needed, in foreign affairs, security and defence matters and to re-evaluate its dependencies on actors that do not share the same values.

The EU should also strengthen its autonomy in healthcare.

Members welcomed the Strategic Compass which aims to cement the foundations for a shared vision for EU security and defence among European Union Member States.

CSDP missions and operations in 2020

The report recalled that the Union is currently deploying 11 civilian missions and seven military missions and operations. Members suggested that the budget, planning and equipment of EU CSDP missions and operations be assessed in the light of the lessons learned from COVID-19.

The report acknowledged the contribution of CSDP missions and operations to peace security and stability but pointed to the persistent structural weakness and lengthy decision-making processes for CSDP civilian and military missions and operations. Therefore, the report stressed the importance of providing military missions with **more flexible and more robust mandates** which are **tailored** to the situation on the ground. Changes should be made to CSDP structures and procedures so that missions can be deployed in faster, more flexible and more coherent ways. CSDP missions and operations must be provided with the necessary personnel, training and capabilities to fulfil their mandates.

The report called for the strengthening of the Union's command structures, in particular the Military Staff (EUMS) and the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), which must be provided with the necessary personnel, equipment and resources as soon as possible, and be able to exchange classified information in a secure way.

Deploring the actions of the coup leaders in Mali, Members stated that any cooperation with a private Russian military company, the Kremlin proxy Wagner Group on training the Malian armed forces, would be incompatible with security and defence cooperation with the European Union and would therefore require the EU to reassess its commitment to Mali.

Members expressed concern about the increasing manipulation of information, disinformation and hybrid threats stemming in particular from Russia, and China affecting several theatres and CSDP missions and operations directly, destabilising whole regions and delegitimising the EU's missions abroad. In this regard, they called for a structured response to these threats by CSDP missions and operations as a matter of urgency.

Anticipating and managing crises

Members stressed that the valuable contribution of the armed forces during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of the use of Member States' military assets and capabilities in support of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. However, the EU lacks the land, sea and air know-how and capabilities. In this regard, they expressed support for the ambition of creating a **'rapid entry force'** which should include a multinational land brigade of around 5 000 troops and air, maritime and special forces components that can be mobilised in a security emergency.

The report stated that the **instrumentalisation of migration flows** through the EU's eastern external borders coupled with disinformation campaigns to be a form of combined hybrid warfare that aims to intimidate and destabilise the EU. The EU is called on to develop relevant legislation providing necessary safeguards to effectively react and respond to the instrumentalisation of migration for political purposes by third countries, to ensure the effective protection of the EU's external borders and the protection of human rights and human dignity.

Members noted the EU did not have the full capacities and capabilities to ensure the safe and coordinated evacuation of its citizens from **Afghanistan** during the chaotic military evacuation of Kabul International Airport. They called, therefore, for a thorough evaluation.

Financing

The report called on the Commission to continue its efforts to counter the fragmentation of the EU's internal market for defence products, which is still leading to unnecessary duplication and the multiplication of inefficiencies in defence spending by the Member States. Member States are called on to ensure that their national defence budgets amount to at least **2 % of their GDP**.

Defending multilateralism on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation

Members called for support to be given to strengthening and preserving the arms control architecture in Europe in a context of gradual erosion marked by the United States' and Russia's withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies.

They believe that the EU should help prevent an international hypersonic missile arms race. Members stressed that the EU should take the lead in global efforts to set up a comprehensive regulatory framework for the development and use of **AI-enabled weapons**.

Strengthening dialogue and partnerships

The report called for deeper cooperation with international organisations and in particular with the UN, including between CSDP missions and peacekeeping operations, especially in common theatres. Members stressed the need to strengthen transatlantic cooperation between the EU and the US on the basis of an

equal partnership and called on the UK government to open negotiations to establish robust cooperation on foreign policy, security, defence and capability development.

Improving European governance of the CSDP

Parliament should be actively involved in the evaluation of CSDP missions and operations with a view to enhancing their transparency and political and public support. A fully-fledged Security and Defence Committee should be created in the Parliament. Member States are called on to assess a reform of the decision-making process extending qualified majority voting (QMV) to EU foreign and security policy in areas relating to CSDP.