EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a report by Javi LÓPEZ (S&D, ES) on EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward.

Since 2003 the EU has acquired extensive experience in deploying military operations and civilian missions to promote peace, security, stability and progress in Europe and in the world. These common security and defence policy (CSDP) operations and missions regularly operate alongside and complement missions of the Member States, United Nations, NATO, other international organisations and third countries.

The geopolitical landscape in Europe has changed dramatically after the outbreak of war on European soil and the overall global security situation has worsened. Therefore, the EU needs to be more responsive and credible in addressing crises.

While NATO remains the key institutional framework for Euro-Atlantic security, the EU urgently needs to assume more responsibility for its own security by acting in its neighbourhood and beyond. To achieve this end, the EU must improve its own security and defence capabilities to ensure its strategic autonomy as well as its ability to safeguard its own values and interests.

The EU Strategic Compass (approved by the Council in March 2022) called for the creation of a **European Rapid Deployment Capacity** that would allow the EU to send up to **5 000 troops** to the field in the event of a crisis.

Establishing a European Union Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC)

Members welcomed the VP/HR's proposal to establish the EU RDC. They stressed the importance of the EU having the necessary flexible, robust and credible instruments, capabilities, and command and control structure to act effectively and respond rapidly and decisively to prevent and manage crises in order to assert itself as a more credible security and defence actor and serve and protect the Union's citizens, interests, principles and the values enshrined in Article 21 TEU across the world. It considers the EU RDC to be crucial for closing the gap between the EU's level of ambition and its actual capabilities. The EU RDC should reach full operational capability by 2025 at the latest.

The committee strongly encouraged the VP/HR to **propose a Council decision** for an EU RDC to respond to imminent threats or to react rapidly to a crisis situation outside the Union. The EU RDC should conduct regular joint exercises at the strategic, joint forces, and tactical level in line with NATO standards within an EU framework based on operational scenarios and following uniform training and certification standards, such as NATO's, to improve readiness and interoperability.

Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)

The report pointed out that the EU RDC should have permanent, fully-fledged operational headquarters under the MPCC. A permanently active headquarters requires up to 350 staff members capable of planning and running EU RDC deployments. Members underlined the need for appropriate funding to

allow its headquarters to carry out its functions and mandated tasks. They also called for the EU RDC to have the possibility of being deployed and acting in emergencies, natural disasters such as floods or wildfires, or other significant civil-protection crises within EU territory.

Article 44 of the TEU – acting in the name of the European Union

Article 44 TEU provides for possibilities to react within an EU framework to different crises in a more rapid and flexible manner with the aim of safeguarding the Union's values and interests. However, Article 44 TEU has never been used, and is imprecise in terms of how it would work in practice. The report highlighted that the use of Article 44 can offer significant benefits, such as speed, flexibility and freedom of action while preserving joint EU action in situations where troop deployment needs to be rapid to prevent further escalation and where the risks to combat troops are at the higher end. It highlighted, that decision-making on the deployment of the EU RDC based on Article 44 TEU also allows for the involvement of **third countries** in EU RDC missions where necessary and desired.

Budgetary aspects

According to the report, the EU RDC's administrative expenditure should be funded from the Union budget. It is provided that the CFSP budget is considerably increased and that ongoing civilian CSDP missions do not see their budget reduced as a consequence. Regarding operating expenditure, including for joint exercises for fully operational capability (FOC) certification and the costs of ammunition, leasing military equipment by the EU and costs related to organising and carrying out live exercises, this should come from a revised European Peace Facility with an increased budget.

Lastly, Member States are called on to show political will and to provide the adequate amount of funds and personnel needed to take action as soon as possible to deliver the transformation of the EU battlegroup system into a more robust and flexible instrument to match the needs of the EU RDC.