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

2022/2145(INI) - 19/04/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution by 444 votes to 96, with 86 abstentions, on EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward.

In adopting the **Strategic Compass**, Member States agreed that they should collectively be able to respond to imminent threats or to react rapidly to a crisis outside the Union at any stage of the conflict cycle, and to develop a rapid deployment capability that would allow the Union to deploy rapidly a modular force comprising land, air and sea components, as well as the necessary strategic assets.

Establishing a European Union Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC)

Parliament welcomed the VP/HR's proposal, enshrined in the Strategic Compass, to establish the EU RDC. Members 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. The EU RDC should reach full operational capability **by 2025 at the latest**.

Parliament encouraged the VP/HR to propose a **Council decision** on an EU RDC to protect the values of the Union and to serve the interests of the Union as a whole, to respond to imminent threats or to react rapidly to a crisis situation outside the Union including in non-permissive environments and during all stages of a conflict cycle.

In particular, the EU's RDC should be based on the following axes:

- being established as one of the types of European Union military capability for crisis response with its own legal and institutional identity, to allow for setting up the EU RDC as a force that is permanently available and trains together with the goal of reaching a standing force;

- reflect the challenges, risks and threats identified in the EU threat analysis;

- have at least **5 000 troops**, excluding strategic enablers;

- conduct regular joint exercises at strategic, joint and tactical levels, in accordance with NATO standards, within a European framework based on operational scenarios and following uniform training and certification standards;

- provide for all force elements of the EU's CDR to be assigned exclusively to it;

- be based on rotating units, with a rotation period of 12 months;

- be **deployed on the ground**, so at the time of their engagement all participating Member States must notify EU RDC Headquarters of what units and equipment, including air, sea and land transport, will be permanently at the disposal of the EU RDC.

Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)

The resolution 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. The headquarters should have adequate infrastructure, an integrated secure communication and information structure drawing on the EU's secure connectivity programme, and facilities for secure meetings and for the use of intelligence services. Appropriate funding is necessary to allow its headquarters to carry out its functions and mandated tasks.

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. Parliament 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 resolution, 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.