Challenges facing the European defence-related industries: a contribution for action at European level

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The EU Member States are moving towards the framing of a new architecture for European security. This architecture must take account of existing international organizations such as the WEU, NATO and the OSCE, and of the needs of EU Member States which have a tradition of military neutrality or non-alignment. The Commission involvement should focus on safeguarding employment levels and technological expertise in the EU defence industry. In order to maintain jobs and technology levels in the EU defence industry at a time when military demand is falling, reconversion and diversification must be speeded up. The focus should be on technological reskilling, exploiting the opportunities offered by dual-use technologies. The (albeit incomplete) application of single market principles to the defence sector, in tandem with the creation of new instruments such as the European Armaments Agency, must aim to improve the efficiency and productivity and hence the international competitiveness of the EU military industry. Community competence for foreign trade should gradually be extended to the armaments trade, inter alia with a view to preventing distortions being generated by differing national rules on arms exports. Future Community rules should be based on the principles already decided by the European Council in 1991 and 1992, and on broad criteria regarding transparency. In particular, the Committee calls for a European and international ban on the production, sale and use of anti-personnel land mines.