Defence equipment: European policy, industry and market

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative drafted by Lus QUEIRO (UEN, P) on defence equipment. Parliament emphasised that the EU should endow itself with military capabilities, in order to ensure the credibility of its foreign and defence policy objectives. If this project is to be successful, Member States must make a commitment to military expenditure over a period of time corresponding to their long-term defence obligations. NATO remains not only a fundamental guarantee for the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area, but also an essential framework for developing joint operations. It is therefore in the common interest to increase the interoperability of intra-European and transatlantic defence equipment. Favourable conditions to be established for the development of a European defence equipment industry which is competitive and viable. Parliament asked Member States to restructure the defence equipment industries sector and subscribe to the principle of industrial and technological interdependence in this sector, so as to ensure that public defence spending is used more effectively and overlapping is avoided. Competitiveness and to the principle of Community preference must be supported without excluding cooperation with third countries or the acquisition by Member States of defence equipment outside Europe, where supply proposals are more economically attractive than those available within the EU and where these purchases operate in a form that is complementary to the realisation of a European project. Parliament called for the progressive establishment of a European armaments market and asked the Commission to propose transparent procedures and simplification measures. The internal opening-up of military markets should be accompanied by a further strengthening of export controls at the external borders of the EU. The EU and its Member States should fully implement all of Parliament's recommendations on the implementation of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. A Community support programme should be set up devoted exclusively to the development of equipment for the protection of the EU's external frontiers, with the objective of meeting the requirements of the fight against international terrorism and organised crime, illegal immigration, trafficking in arms, narcotics and human beings, and maritime crime. Parliament went on to recall the European Council's decision to create an intergovernmental agency in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments. It considered that the Agency should deal, firstly, with the equipment and armament of the European crisis intervention force, especially in relation to its compatibility. The Agency should also develop a long-term approach towards capability needs. It should also have a budget which should concentrate on the research and development of new technologies.