

Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) 7–9 September 2017, Tallinn

Background information

Invigorating the unity of the west and transatlantic relations

The Western world is united by the values of democracy, human rights, and economic and political freedom. However, this unity has been put to test by violations of international law and changes in the international security environment. The rise of populism and its inability to solve problems was emphasized by the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker in his annual "[State of the Union](#)" speech in September 2016.

Developments within the EU

The result of the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum of 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union shook the European unity. On 29 March 2017 the UK formally triggered Article 50 to begin the process of leaving the EU. [On 22 June 2017, the European Council](#) reviewed the latest developments in negotiations with the United Kingdom and endorsed the procedure for the relocation of EU agencies currently located in the UK. Thereafter, political events in the UK and elections in other EU countries were closely observed. The outcome of the elections in the Netherlands and the election of Emmanuel Macron as the President of France has been perceived as a positive development for European unity and the results of the German federal election in September 2017 will also have an impact on future developments in the EU.

Transatlantic relations: NATO

The relationship between the European Union, US and Canada is based on shared values and common interests in the area of foreign and security policy. Strengthening transatlantic relations is important across all policy areas, including in trade, security and the fight against terrorism. Moreover, Europe has a close transatlantic partnership in the form of NATO. [The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy](#) states that "The EU will deepen its partnership with NATO through coordinated defence capability development, parallel and synchronised exercises, and mutually reinforcing actions to build the capacities of our partners, counter hybrid and cyber threats, and promote maritime security." Cooperation between NATO and the EU is based on a [joint declaration](#) by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg of July 2016. [42 measures to advance NATO-EU cooperation](#) were approved by both [Council of the European Union](#) and NATO foreign ministers in December 2016. The first [progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by NATO and EU Councils on 6 December 2016](#) was published in June 2017. The EU is committed to strengthening itself as a security community and working towards setting levels of defence spending and investments at the level of member states. The US encourages its European allies to deliver on their commitment to spend at least two per cent of their GDP on national defence.

Transatlantic relations: beyond NATO

EU and US cooperate closely in the field of energy security. US liquefied natural gas (LNG) has entered the European energy market and provides competition to Russian natural gas that has dominated the European market. The EU and US have also worked together to close a nuclear deal with Iran and lift the sanctions. Topics of discussion in transatlantic relations further include the Paris Agreement to combat climate change and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The European Parliament voted in favour of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada on 15 February 2017 but it still needs to be ratified by national parliaments.

Relations with Russia

The EU sanctions against Russia were also imposed in coordination with the United States. Russian aggression against Ukraine and annexation of Crimea are a clear violation of the principles of international law and constitute a threat to the world security order. The European Council adopted a nonrecognition policy on the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol already in [March 2014](#) and it has been implemented since then. New legislation, signed by the US president Donald Trump 2 August 2017, imposes new sanctions against Russia and gives the Congress new powers regarding US sanctions against Russia. Possible sanctions concerning penalising companies that invest in new pipelines are required to be coordinated with US allies. A provision allowing for new sanctions on energy sector has raised concerns within the EU due to the possible impact on EU energy independence.

Points for discussion

1. What are the values that Western unity is based on?
2. How does the changing security situation change European values?
3. What are the factors that affect transatlantic relations the most?