

PESCO: THE CHALLENGE OF COHERENCE OF EU DEFENCE INITIATIVES AND THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is an EU treaty based framework to deepen defence cooperation between Member States. PESCO is one of the three areas of the common security and defence policy (CSDP) where the Council takes decisions acting by a qualified majority (Article 46.2 TEU), allowing swifter decision-making. The other qualified majority decisions relate to EDA (Article 45.2 TEU) and the start-up fund for military missions (Article 41.3 TEU).

The Council established the Permanent Structured Cooperation in December 2017. The launch followed the signature of a joint notification setting out a list of 20 binding common commitments in the areas of defence investment, capability development and operational readiness. Twenty-five Member States participate in PESCO¹ (PESCO25).

The PESCO25 subscribed to more binding commitments to invest, plan, develop and operate defence capabilities more together, within the Union framework. The objective is to jointly arrive at a coherent set of defence capabilities available to Member States for national and multinational (EU, NATO, UN, etc.) purposes. This will enhance the EU's capacity as an international security actor, contribute to the protection of the EU citizens and maximise the effectiveness of defence spending.

In addition to the legally binding commitments, a large number of PESCO projects have been launched in three successive waves since 2018². Projects cover areas such as training, land, maritime, air and cyber warfare. Each of the projects is carried forward by varying group of project members and is coordinated by one or more project coordinators.

In 2020, the Council conducts a strategic review in order to update and enhance PESCO, reflecting the evolving European and global environment, and assessing the fulfilment of the PESCO commitments by participating Member States. Moreover, the strategic review process presents the opportunity to consider further synergies between PESCO and other EU defence initiatives, such as the Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and the upcoming European Defence Fund (EDF). So far, it is unclear how the coherence between these initiatives will be ensured.

The coherence between initiatives under PESCO, NATO, at national and multinational levels, is key to the improvement of military capabilities and for more effective defence spending. Since programmes and initiatives are being jointly developed and funded at European and at

¹ The participating Member States are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

² So far, 47 projects have been accepted by the PESCO25.

national levels, the issue of a coherent parliamentary scrutiny by the European and the national parliaments needs to be addressed.

The European Parliament and the national Parliaments could determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular inter-parliamentary cooperation on PESCO in particular and a coherent Common Security and Defence Policy in general.

(Possible) Points of discussion:

- Who ensures the coherence between EU, national, multilateral and NATO initiatives, and how is that ensured?
- Is the current level of transparency and information on PESCO sufficient for effective parliamentary scrutiny? What works well, what does not?
- Among the PESCO projects, which would you consider having structuring effects? Should Parliaments cooperate to scrutinise those projects?

