
Next step in mutual defence – European Defence Union, say MEPs

France's decision to invoke the EU treaty's mutual defence clause and to ask for EU member states' help in its "war" against the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) should serve as an incentive to strengthen European security and defence, said MEPs in a resolution passed on Thursday. They call on EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini to draw up guidelines for similar future cases, so as to avoid any need for ad hoc measures and explicitly involve EU institutions.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, France called on EU member states to provide it with aid and assistance, including intelligence sharing, to fight ISIS. It invoked EU Treaty Article 42 (7), which says that "if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all means".

Use EU institutions as facilitators

MEPs welcome the unanimous support given to France by all EU member states and encourage them to go on contributing for as long as necessary.

But MEPs are concerned that managing mutual defence clause aid and assistance bilaterally, as has been done so far, will not be possible for all member states. They therefore suggest that member states should use the full potential of EU institutions as facilitators.

MEPs regret that the lack of guidelines on how the mutual defence clause should work has prompted member states to take ad hoc measures. They call on Ms Mogherini to propose practical arrangements to ensure an efficient collective response in similar circumstances.

Unique opportunity to establish a European Defence Union

The activation of the mutual defence clause is "a unique opportunity to establish the grounds for a strong and sustainable European Defence Union [...] ready to face the overwhelming internal and external security threats", says the resolution.

MEPs urge EU member states to look for ways to build more efficient cooperation among border management, police and other law enforcement agencies and to improve intelligence on the movement of weapons, explosives and terrorist suspects. They also suggest setting up an EU civil-military headquarters to prepare contingency plans, inter alia for collective defence.

The resolution was approved by 406 votes to 212, with 51 abstentions.

Further information

[Adopted text will be available here \(click on 21.01.2016\)](#)

[Video recording of debate \(click on 20.01.2016\)](#)

[Procedure File](#)

[EPRS note on EU's mutual defence clause](#)

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