

Defence: MEPs push for more EU cooperation to better protect Europe

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Terrorism, hybrid threats and cyber- and energy insecurity leave EU countries no choice but to step up their security and defence cooperation efforts, thus paving the way to a European Defence Union, say MEPs in a resolution passed on Tuesday. They suggest devoting 2% of GDP to defence, establishing multinational forces and EU headquarters to plan and command crisis management operations, and enabling the EU to act where NATO is unwilling to do so.

“Our Union is not equipped to face overwhelming defence challenges. For almost 30 years, most of its member states have been cutting their defence budgets, leading to smaller armed forces. Cooperation among member states is occasional and Europe continues to rely heavily on NATO capabilities and on the US solidarity”, said rapporteur Urmas Paet (ALDE, ET), in the debate on Monday. He stressed that “the momentum to move towards a working European Defence Policy has come.”

The security situation in and around Europe has worsened significantly in recent years, due to challenges like terrorism, hybrid threats or cyber and energy insecurity, that no country is able to tackle alone, says a resolution on the European Defence Union, approved by 369 votes to 255 and 70 abstentions. “Solidarity and resilience require the EU to stand and act together,” it says.

Pool military resources

MEPs want the EU to respond faster and more robustly to real threats, which, they say, demand that Europe’s armed forces work together better. Duplication, overcapacity and barriers to defence procurement result currently in annual waste of €26.4 billion, they say.

MEPs call on member states to pursue joint purchases of defence resources, and to pool share of non-lethal material such as transport vehicles or aircraft. They suggest introducing a “European Defence Semester, whereby member states would consult each other’s planning and cycles and procurement plans” and advocate strengthening the European Defence Agency’s coordination role.

The resolution asks the European Council to lead the creation of “common Union defence policy and to provide additional financial resources ensuring its implementation.”

An EU headquarters should be set up to plan and command crisis management operations, say MEPs. EU member states should aim to spend 2% of GDP on defence and should establish “multinational forces within the Permanent Structured Cooperation and make these forces available to the common security and defence policy”, they add.

EU support for defence research

MEPs back the proposed EU investment in defence-related research projects “of at least 90 million euro during next three years”, suggesting that this should be followed up by a separate European Defence Research Programme with an annual budget of €500 million.

Full synergy with NATO

Press release

MEPs stress that the EU and NATO should cooperate more, particularly in the east and the south, to countering hybrid and cyber threats, improve maritime security and develop defence capabilities. However, the EU should also be prepared to act autonomously in cases where NATO is not willing to take the lead, MEPs add.

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) review

“A thorough and substantial revision of the CSDP is needed in order to enable the EU and its member states to contribute in a decisive way to the security of the Union, to the management of international crisis and to asserting the EU’s strategic autonomy”, said rapporteur on the CSDP resolution Ioan Mircea Pascu (S&D, RO).

The EU “should be able to intervene across the whole spectrum of crisis management, including crisis prevention and crisis resolution”, while “all Council decisions on future missions and operations should prioritise engagements in conflicts directly affecting EU security”, says the text.

The resolution suggests launching a CSDP training operation in Iraq to support member states involved in the coalition against Daesh. MEPs also urge the Council to set up a start-up fund for the initial phases of military operations.

The resolution was passed by 386 votes to 237, with 74 abstentions.

Further information

- Adopted text (2016/2052 (INI)) will soon be available here (22.11.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 21.11.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of the press conference (22.11.2016 at 15.00) : <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/video?event=20161122-1500-SPECIAL-UNKN>
- EbS+ (21.11.2016) : <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=11/21/2016>
- EP Research service note on the future of defence cooperation (July 2016): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586607/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586607_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586607/EPRS_BRI(2016)586607_EN.pdf)
- EU Fact Sheets on the Common Security and Defence Policy (September 2016): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches_techniques/2013/060102/04A_FT\(2013\)060102_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/fiches_techniques/2013/060102/04A_FT(2013)060102_EN.pdf)
- Audiovisual material for media: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/default.aspx>

Political groups

- News pages by the EPP group
: <http://bit.ly/2gxBCXh>
- News pages of the S&D group
: <http://bit.ly/1WWG6F4>
- News pages of the ECR group
: <http://bit.ly/1Y0YFrj>
- News pages of the ALDE group
: <http://bit.ly/1XbSQs6>
- News pages of the GUE/NGL group
: <http://bit.ly/1UrAIM9>
- News pages of the Greens/EFA group
: <http://bit.ly/1TV9vvr>
- News pages of the EFDD group
: <http://bit.ly/1TUnDFU>
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: <http://bit.ly/2cxzxcR>

Press release

Contacts

Gediminas VILKAS

Press Officer

Telephone number: (+32) 2 28 46396 (BXL)

Telephone number: (+33) 3 881 64504 (STR)

Mobile number: (+32) 498 98 33 30

Email: gediminas.vilkas@europarl.europa.eu

Email: foreign-press@europarl.europa.eu

Twitter: EP_Defence