

Implementation of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP)

Through the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), the European Union (EU) seeks to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries and international, regional or global organisations with shared principles on human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms. The CFSP promotes multilateral solutions to common problems, based on international law and values. The European Parliament is set to vote on the annual CFSP report covering 2020 during the January 2021 plenary session.

Background

Title V (Articles 21-46) of the [Treaty on European Union](#) (TEU) sets out general provisions on the EU's external action, and specific provisions on CFSP. Declarations 13 and 14 annexed to the Treaty maintain that the CFSP provisions do not affect 'the responsibilities of Member States for formulation and conduct of their foreign policy'. The Treaty gives the EU legal personality; however, unanimity in decision-making and relatively limited roles for the European Commission and for the European Parliament reflect the continuing intergovernmental nature of CFSP. Recently, there has been progress on CFSP. Common EU positions are now much more the rule than the exception. The European External Action Service is increasingly taking the lead in coordinating responses and EU-27 diplomacy. Established by the Lisbon Treaty, the position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) is wide-ranging – from the overall steering of foreign and security policy on behalf of the EU, to building consensus between Member States' positions and representing the EU at international meetings. The [budget for the CFSP](#) has also been increased: the total Multiannual Financial Framework allocation for 'Neighbourhood and the World' is €98.4 billion for 2021-2027, compared to the 'Global Europe' heading with €58.7 billion in 2014-2020.

CFSP challenges in 2020

The 2016 [EU Global Strategy for foreign and security policy](#) (EUGS) stated that 'in a more complex world, we must stand united'. The call for a united foreign and security policy remains the main challenge today, as the EU faces a new geopolitical situation in its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, the confrontational policies of some countries such as [Turkey](#), the erosion of multilateralism, hybrid threats, [disinformation and propaganda](#), uncontrolled migratory flows and international terrorism. The [coronavirus pandemic](#) highlighted the need for [strategic autonomy](#) and for a more united foreign policy in order to defend the rules-based international order and multilateralism. Coherent and inclusive global responses to the pandemic, and initiatives such as '[Team Europe](#)', provided tangible support from the EU. Furthermore, the EU adopted a [new approach to enlargement](#), enhancing the credibility of its enlargement policy.

European Parliament position

On 3 December 2020, Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) adopted its [report](#) on the implementation of the CFSP in 2020. It recalls that the CSFP must be guided by the promotion of the objectives outlined in Article 21 TEU, such as democracy, human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of religion or belief, the protection of all minorities and religious communities and the promotion of gender equality. It calls for a 'new level of ambition for the CFSP' and revision of the EUGS. It regrets the lack of progress in improving the decision-making process on CFSP matters, which affects the efficiency, speed and credibility of the EU action. Finally, it calls to open a debate on the possibility of moving from unanimity to qualified majority voting at least in selected CFSP areas.

Own-initiative report: [2020/2206\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: AFET; Rapporteur: David McAllister (EPP, Germany).

