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Answer given by Mr Breton
on behalf of the European Commission
(16.7.2021)

In response to the Member States' calls¹, the Commission adopted the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) on 30 November 2016², aiming at contributing to the efforts for the European defence industrial base to meet Europe's security needs and enhance the Union's strategic autonomy. In the EDAP, the Commission committed to creating a more integrated defence market throughout the Union and proposed in particular to launch a European Defence Fund (the 'Fund') to support investments in joint research and development project, thus fostering synergies and cost-effectiveness.

In line with the standard legislative practice, the Commission made a proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Defence Fund (COM(2018)0476³) based on an Impact Assessment⁴ which concluded that the European defence industry faced significant challenges linked to increasing costs, low investments in defence Research and Development (R&D) and limited cooperation. Therefore, a single and coherent Fund at EU level providing support for the full cycle of R&D of defence capabilities would bring significant value added by incentivising collaborative defence R&D projects in Europe in key capability areas.

In 2016, in his personal capacity, Mr Thierry Breton alerted on the need for a stronger European cooperation in the field of defence, through a European Security and Defence Fund. Such a fund had a different purpose than the European Defence Fund presented by the Commission and adopted by the co-legislators.

¹ Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions, 17.10.2016

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2016:950:FIN>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018PC0476>

⁴ Staff working Document of 13.6.2018, SWD(2018) 345 final:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0345>