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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell
on behalf of the European Commission
(28.6.2021)

1. So far, the EU has not been involved in the development of the Future Combat Air System (FCAS). However, this activity, currently coordinated by France, Germany and Spain, is fully in line with the agreed EU Capability Development Priority ‘Air Superiority’, including the related Research and Technology development activities. It is identified in the 2020 Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) as a future collaborative opportunity. Against this background, Research & Development activities related to next generation air combat systems may be taken into consideration in the context of the European Defence Fund (EDF).
2. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a political and legal framework through which participating Member States have taken more binding commitments in the field of defence with a view to the most demanding missions and to fulfil the Union level of ambition¹. They can propose to launch PESCO projects to achieve these engagements, including capability projects that increase Europe's strategic autonomy and strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). The PESCO framework can be relevant for the development of FCAS and/or for the procurement strategy, if a project is proposed in that regard, and if so agreed by Member States.
3. Both FCAS and Tempest are ongoing programmes/projects conducted by the participating states outside the framework of the EU through intergovernmental discussions and agreements. The development of the sixth-generation fighter jet is an identified priority² from the EU perspective.

¹ See Article 42(6) TEU and Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, OJ L 331, 14.12.2017, p. 57.

² <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/eda-brochure-cdp>