COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

The common security and defence policy (CSDP) sets the framework for EU political and military structures, and military and civilian missions and operations abroad. The 2016 EU Global Strategy lays out the strategy for the CSDP, while the Lisbon Treaty clarifies the institutional aspects and strengthens the role of the European Parliament. The CSDP has recently undergone major strategic and operational changes to meet security challenges and popular demand for increased EU responses.

LEGAL BASIS

The common security and defence policy (CSDP) is an integral part of the Union’s common foreign and security policy (CFSP).[1] The CSDP is framed by the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Article 41 outlines the funding of the CFSP and CSDP, and the policy is further described in Articles 42 to 46, in Chapter 2, Section 2 of Title V (‘Provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy’), and in Protocols 1, 10 and 11 and Declarations 13 and 14. The specific role of the European Parliament in the CFSP and CSDP is described in Article 36 of the TEU.

TREATY PROVISIONS FOR THE CSDP

The European Council and the Council of the European Union (Article 42 TEU) take the decisions relating to the CSDP. These decisions are taken by unanimity, with some notable exceptions relating to the European Defence Agency (EDA, Article 45 TEU) and permanent structured cooperation (PESCO, Article 46 TEU), to which majority voting applies. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who also acts as Vice-President of the European Commission (the VP/HR) — currently Federica Mogherini — usually issues the proposals for decisions.

The Lisbon Treaty introduced the notion of a European capabilities and armaments policy (Article 42(3) TEU), and established a link between the CSDP and other Union policies by requiring that the EDA and the Commission work in liaison when necessary (Article 45(2) TEU). This concerns in particular the Union’s research, industrial and space policies, for which Parliament was empowered to seek to develop a much stronger role regarding the CSDP than it had in the past.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has the right to scrutinise the CSDP and to take the initiative of addressing the VP/HR and the Council about it (Article 36 TEU). It also exercises scrutiny over the policy’s budget (Article 41 TEU). Twice a year, Parliament holds debates on progress in implementing the CFSP and the CSDP, and adopts reports: one on the CFSP, drawn up by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and including elements relating to the CSDP where necessary; and one on the CSDP, drawn up by the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE).

Since 2012, the European Parliament and the Member States’ national parliaments have organised two interparliamentary conferences per year to debate matters relating to the CFSP. Interparliamentary cooperation in these areas is provided for by Protocol 1 to the Lisbon Treaty, which describes the role of the national parliaments in the EU.

Innovations in the Lisbon Treaty have provided an opportunity to improve the political coherence of the CSDP. The VP/HR occupies the central institutional role, chairing the Foreign Affairs Council in its ‘Defence Ministers configuration’ (the EU’s CSDP decision-making body) and directing the EDA. The political framework for consultation and dialogue with Parliament is evolving in order to allow Parliament to play a full role in developing the CSDP. Under the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament is a partner in shaping the Union’s external relations and addressing the challenges described in the 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: ‘In modern democracies, where media and public opinion are crucial to shaping policy, popular commitment is essential to sustaining our commitments abroad. We deploy police, judicial experts and soldiers in unstable zones around the world. There is an onus on governments, parliaments and EU institutions to communicate how this contributes to security at home.’

ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament holds regular deliberations, hearings and workshops devoted to such topics as civilian and military CSDP missions, international crises with security and defence implications, multilateral frameworks for security, arms control and non-proliferation issues, the fight against terrorism and organised crime, good practices to improve the effectiveness of security and defence and EU legal and institutional developments in these fields.

Following the VP/HR’s 2010 declaration on political accountability, Parliament participates in Joint Consultation Meetings (JCMs) held on a regular basis to exchange information with the Council, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission. Given the key role that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) plays in underwriting European security, Parliament participates in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly with a view to developing the EU-NATO relationship while respecting the independent nature of both organisations.
CSDP: A RAPIDLY EVOLVING POLICY

While the CSDP did not change substantially in the first few years following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, it had great potential to evolve, both politically and institutionally.

In June 2016, the VP/HR presented to the European Council an 'EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy' (EUGS) for 2016. The EUGS identifies five priorities for EU foreign policy: the security of the Union; state and societal resilience to the East and South of the EU; the development of an integrated approach to conflicts; cooperative regional orders; and global governance for the 21st century. The implementation of the EUGS has to be reviewed annually in consultation with the Council, the Commission and Parliament.

On 16 September 2016 in Bratislava, the EU Member States (EUMS) reiterated their intention to strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence. What followed was called the ‘winter package on defence’, made of three initiatives.

Firstly, in November 2016, VP/HR presented to the Council an ‘Implementation Plan on Security and Defence’, the intention of which was to operationalise the vision set out in the EUGS on defence and security issues. The plan sets out 13 proposals, including: a coordinated annual review on defence (CARD), with an emphasis on spending (a first trial-run was completed in 2018, and the first full cycle will be launched in the autumn of 2019); a better EU rapid response, including through the use of EU Battlegroups; and a new single Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) arrangement for those EUMS willing to take on greater commitments to security and defence.

In parallel, the VP/HR presented a European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) to the Member States, with key proposals relating to a European Defence Fund (EDF) focusing on defence research and capability development. In December 2016, the Council adopted conclusions endorsing a plan to enforce the decisions on EU-NATO cooperation taken in Warsaw (42 proposals). Together these three plans represented a major step towards implementing the Treaty of Lisbon in the fields of security and defence. They demonstrated the EU's ability to deliver rapidly and coherently on the requests of the Member States, which have showed a strong political will to move forward.

Parliament has consistently demonstrated a willingness to act and pursue political initiatives in this field. It proposed that the EDA would conduct a pilot project on CSDP research on military requirements, which is now being continued via a Preparatory Action on Defence Research with an investment of EUR 90 million for 2017-2019. The latest Commission proposals on funding a research and technology support initiative for defence for the post-2020 period indicate that Parliament’s initiative did matter and was in the vanguard of an important process.

2017 TILL 2019: CRUCIAL DEVELOPMENTS FOR CSDP

The European Council reviewed progress in March 2017 and highlighted the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), a new structure
designed to improve the EU’s capacity to respond in a faster, more effective and seamless manner to the planning and carrying out of non-executive military missions. Today, the MPCC is overseeing three missions (Mali, Somalia, Central African Republic), and by 2020 it should be ready to manage an executive military operation. The Council also took note of progress in other areas, such as the European Peace Facility (EPF), aimed at increasing the effectiveness of EU missions, support its partners, and contribute to peace operations.

On 6 March 2018, the Council adopted a roadmap for the implementation of PESCO, which provided strategic direction and guidance on how to structure further work on processes and governance. Currently, 34 projects are being developed, with the participation of 25 Member States. In its 2018 resolution on the implementation of the CFSP, Parliament underscored its conviction that the complementary work of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF, will help the Member States deepen their defence cooperation and spend their defence budgets more effectively. Parliament further called for adequate financial resources to be made available for the EEAS under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2021-2027) and for the EU to focus its resources on strategic priorities. The report also stressed the need to adequately involve Parliament in the scrutiny and strategic steering of the instruments.

In August 2018, the European Commission established the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), aimed at supporting the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the EU’s defence industry. In December 2018, EU leaders acknowledged the progress achieved in the area of security and defence underlining, for instance, the evolution of the Civilian CSDP Compact (CCC). To facilitate its implementation, in May 2019 the European Commission and the EEAS presented a Joint Action Plan. In June 2019, the Council adopted conclusions following a discussion on the state of the EUGS. In such context, the Council recommended the full implementation of the European Defence Fund, which will strengthen the EU’s defence industry and technology. The third Global Strategy report, released in October 2019, calls for further work in the European Defence and Technological Industrial Base. The report also emphasises the progress the EU made in overcoming barriers limiting military mobility.

The relationship between the EU and NATO in the field of security and defence continues to be strong. Following the 2016 EU-NATO Joint Declaration on their strategic partnership, in July 2018 the two organisations signed an additional Declaration agreeing to expand the spectrum of their cooperation. In June 2019, the HR/VP and NATO’s Secretary General published a report on the implementation of 74 common proposals and their respective achievements. During a speech in October 2019, former HR/VP Mogherini stated: “strategic autonomy and cooperation with our partners — starting with NATO — are two sides of the same coin”, explaining how the EU’s partnership with NATO is essential for the functioning of its ‘cooperative autonomy’ approach.[3]

[3] With this expression, Ms. Mogherini refers to the EU’s ability to collaborate with NATO, as well as other partners, without compromising its own strategic autonomy on defence and security matters.
One area to which both the EU and NATO are dedicating a lot of effort is that of hybrid and cyber threats. Together, they created the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, based in Helsinki. In addition, the EU introduced chemical and cyber sanctions regimes, and it is collecting intelligence through its Hybrid Fusion Cell. Thanks to the Public-Private Partnership of the European Commission, in 2020 EUR 1.8 billion are expected to be invested on cybersecurity.

Parliament continues to act at its level and within its competences to prompt and help achieve the EU’s objectives as a security provider in an effective and visible manner, as requested by EU citizens. Between February and March 2019, Parliament reiterated its support for PESCO, CARD, the EDF, and the EPF. In April 2019, it adopted a partial agreement on the EDF Regulation for 2021-2027, the sensitive issue of third-countries participation still being open for EUMS to decide.

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