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9 EUROPE AS A STRONGER GLOBAL ACTOR / UP TO €27BN

FOLLOW-UP BY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL TO THE COMMISSION'S INITIATIVE CALLING FOR A MORE EFFICIENT DECISION-MAKING FOR THE EU'S COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

[DEPARTURES]

CONTENT

In his 2018 State of the Union address in the plenary of the European Parliament, President Juncker stressed the importance of the EU being able to engage in more fast and effective decision-making in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). As such, the Commission put forward a proposal inviting the European Council to use the existing possibilities in the Treaty to take more decisions by qualified majority voting (QMV).

The key legal tool in this respect is Article 31(3) of the Treaty on European Union, the so-called 'passerelle clause'. This article empowers the European Council, the heads of state of all EU Member States, to decide by unanimity about extending the QMV procedure to other CFSP matters which do not have military or defence implications. The Commission argues that more efficient decision-making in foreign policy is necessary for allowing the EU to adequately address global and geopolitical challenges.

As such, the Commission proposed 3 initial areas where QMV could be applied: human rights promotion, EU sanctions, launching civilian missions. Furthermore, EU leaders are thereby invited to agree on broadening the scope of QMV in CFSP at the Summit in Sibiu, Romania on 9 May 2019.

The 8th term of the European Parliament is a supporter of the extension of the QMV procedure. In its 16 February 2017 resolution, Parliament stated its opinion that there should be more progress in using the Lisbon Treaty provisions including acting by QMV, and in reducing the unanimity procedure. On 13 December 2017, the EP once more expressed the opinion that QMV should be applied for CFSP and on 12 December 2018 it supported President Juncker's State of the Union proposal. In the latter resolution, Parliament encouraged Member States to examine ways to act more efficiently in CFSP and called upon the European Council to consider extending QMV to more CFSP areas. Moreover, on 17 January 2019, Parliament also called for shifting away from the unanimity procedure in the Council to QMV and most recently, on 13 February 2019, its resolution on the state of the debate on the future of Europe reiterated the obstacle represented by the unanimity procedure, advocating instead for the QMV.

On 9 May 2019, EU leaders gathered in the Romanian city of Sibiu to discuss a strategic agenda for the EU. They unanimously agreed on 10 commitments, including unity, defending Europe, always looking for joint solutions, protecting citizens and Europe's role as a responsible global actor. Seemingly no decision has been taken during the summit with regards to the extension of QMV to other policy areas.

On 16 July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen, the new Commission President, has presented her political guidelines for the next European Commission. In the respective document, she has indicated her will to push for qualified majority voting to become the rule in the

EU's external action, seeing this measure necessary for the EU 'to be a global leader' and act faster. In the mission statement to Josep Borrell, the designate for High Representative, President von der Leyen mandated him to seek to make use of the passerelle clauses allowing certain decisions on the CFSP to be adopted by QMV.

References:

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- European Parliament, [Resolution of 13 February 2019 on the state of the debate on the future of Europe](#).
- European Parliament, [Resolution of 17 January 2019 on differentiated integration](#).
- European Parliament, [Resolution of 12 December 2018 on the annual report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy](#).
 - European Commission, [Qualified majority voting: a tool to make Europe's Foreign and Security Policy more effective](#), 12 September 2018.
 - European Commission, [State of the Union 2018 Letter of Intent to President Antonio Tajani and to Chancellor Sebastian Kurz](#), 12 September 2018.
 - European Commission, [State of the Union 2018: Making the EU a stronger global actor – European Commission proposes more efficient decision-making in Common Foreign and Security Policy](#), Press release, 12 September 2018.
 - European Parliament, [Resolution of 13 December 2017 on the Annual Report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy](#).
 - European Parliament, [Resolution of 16 February 2017 on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union](#).

Further reading:

EPRS, Ensuring efficient decision-making in foreign policy (p. 18) in [Unlocking the potential of the EU Treaties: An article-by-article analysis of the scope for action](#), 7 January 2019.

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