

Europe security and defence: the way forward

Rising international tensions and conflicts at the doorstep of Europe urge us to take our collective security into our own hands. Lately, four major Member States advocated making security and defence a top priority for the Union. I fully agree: since the beginning of the mandate of this Commission, we have placed our Common Security and Defence Policy at the very heart of the EU's external policy. And while we have a long way to go, there is now an increased momentum to strengthen our collective capacity for action.



At our EU Defence Ministers meeting earlier this week, **we have set out an ambitious agenda to strengthen our ability to act autonomously as a Union whenever necessary and, at the same time, make the EU a better global partner and security provider.**

In order to raise our Common Security and Defence Policy to the necessary level, we intend to improve our capabilities, develop our potential for common operations, enhance our partnerships and adapt our structures to new threats and a modified environment.

We are now beginning to work on a future *Strategic Compass*. What we need primarily in Europe is a common strategic culture: a common way of looking at the world, of defining threats and challenges as the basis for addressing them together. The *Strategic Compass* should help us get there. To kick off this process, I will present an intelligence-led threat analysis to Member States before the end of 2020.

Also by the end of the year, **we have to reach an agreement on the 2021-2025 priorities for one of the core instruments of our security and defense policy, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).** At the same time, we need to spell out the conditions for third states' participation in PESCO projects, which would allow us to act on a larger scale if necessary.

Equally urgent is the need to strengthen our tools to counter hybrid

threats, including disinformation and cyber-attacks. The outbreak of Covid-19 has been a stark reminder of **how critical the subject has become to protect our societies.**

We must also develop the European defense industrial and technological base and reduce our critical dependencies from external suppliers. **This week's announcement on the first projects selected for funding under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, demonstrates the potential in that area.**

Yet if we want to be credible, **our objectives need to be backed by adequate budgetary means.** Hence the importance to reflect our security and defense priorities in the negotiations of the next EU budget for 2021-2027: **all our ambitions in the area of operations, capabilities, and resilience ultimately depend on the availability of financial resources.** We also need to strengthen our capacity of action outside Europe: **the new EUR 8 billion European Peace Facility will enhance the credibility of our efforts to collectively promote peace and security beyond our borders.**

Member States have a key role to play in this budgetary challenge. At a time of increased global uncertainty, **they need to maintain their levels of defense spending and avoid cuts at the expense of our collective security.** Above all, Member States need to **spend together, through common procurement and on commonly agreed capability shortfalls.**

Our global partnerships remain a cornerstone of European security and defense. Working closely with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, we made pragmatic proposals to strengthen further our cooperation in areas such as military mobility and exercises. By reinforcing our capabilities in security and defense, **Europe is strengthening the transatlantic alliance.** We also intend to **develop further our partnership with the United Nations, a concrete demonstration of EU's commitment to a rules-based international order.**

It is by advancing together on these different tracks that we will be able to gradually build and implement a credible and effective EU security and defense agenda. **We will go decisively ahead on this front with the support of all EU Member States.**

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