



Common Defence



Posted by: **EUROMIL**



Manifesto 2014: Security has a social dimension!

Confronted to a new financial and security context, European armed forces are required to collaborate closer and military personnel to train and work more and better together. The EU should therefore enable this process by developing its common defence policy.

The future framework of the European defence should include a strong social dimension. Hundred thousand of men and women serve in the European armed forces under conditions that widely differ from one country to another. It is therefore essential that the EU Institutions work towards the harmonisation and standardisation of European armed forces to facilitate the cooperation of their military personnel. This process should however not only focus on capabilities but also on the development of common standards for the living and working conditions of the “Citizens in Uniform”.

Vote on the European Parliament Resolution

vote on the European Parliament Resolution on the European Defence Union

Vote Breakdown

 369

For

 255

Against

 70

Abstain

 31

Absent

313 votes required to pass.

The vote on the resolution on the European Defence Union by rapporteur Urmas Paet (ALDE), took place on 22 November 2016.

Key Issues

The EU as a global actor

In June 2016, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini presented the new EU Global Strategy which was welcomed by the European Council. She then presented an implementation plan on security and defence and a European defence action plan. In December 2016, the first document was endorsed and the second welcomed by the Council. In the following months, several conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence were adopted. The priorities set by the new strategy are to respond to external conflicts and crises, to build the capacities of partners and to protect the Union and its citizens.

The position of the European Parliament on the Global Strategy was presented in the resolution of 13 April 2016 on [the EU in a changing global environment – a more connected, contested and complex world](#). The Parliament will have to follow-up on the discussions held and ensure that it plays its full role in the decision-making process.

A common defence

The Lisbon Treaty stipulates that the “common security and defence policy

shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides.” Since its meeting in December 2013, the Council decided to further focus on defence and adopted meanwhile several conclusions on the matter.

The European Parliament supports the development of a strong CSDP, further defence cooperation among EU Member States and the establishment of a European Defence Union. This was particularly highlighted in the following resolutions:

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2015 on the [implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy](#);

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2015 on [the impact of developments in European defence markets on the security and defence capabilities in Europe](#);

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2015 on [financing the Common Security and Defence Policy](#);

European Parliament Resolution of 22 November 2016 on the [European Defence Union](#);

European Parliament Resolution of 23 November 2016 on the [implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy](#);

European Parliament Resolution of 14 December 2016 on the [implementation of the common foreign and security policy](#);

European Parliament Resolution of 16 March 2017 on the [Constitutional, legal and institutional implications of a common security and defence policy: possibilities offered by the Lisbon Treaty](#).

Social dimension in European defence

The European Parliament Resolution on the European Defence Union of 22

November 2016 includes the essential element EUROMIL is calling for, namely a reference to the social dimension of a future European defence. More particularly, the text, in §12, “Calls on the Member States to particularly recognise the right of military personnel to form and join professional associations or trade unions and involve them in a regular social dialogue with the authorities; invites the European Council to take concrete steps towards the harmonisation and standardisation of the European armed forces, in order to facilitate the cooperation of armed forces personnel under the umbrella of a new European Defence Union.”

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The European Parliament Resolution of 16 March 2017 on the [Constitutional, legal and institutional implications of a common security and defence policy: possibilities offered by the Lisbon Treaty](#) further adds to the last sentence, in §14, “(...) as a step towards the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy”.

The first time the European Parliament called on Member States to grant servicemen and -women the right to freedom of association was in 1984, in its resolution on the [rights of members of the armed forces to form associations](#). Since then, the Parliament has repeatedly promoted the fundamental rights and freedoms of military personnel.

Although the adoption of the resolution and its §12 is an important step for EUROMIL, the organisation recalls that, for what concerns the text on the right of association, ensuring that military personnel fully enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms, both in legislation and in practice, remains the sole

responsibility of each Member State.

EUROMIL thus thanks the Members of the Parliament who have been supporting the European armed forces personnel over the past years and sincerely hopes that EU Member States will seriously consider and follow up on the newly adopted resolution.

In the current parliament, EUROMIL particularly thanks Ivo Belet (EPP), Michael Gahler (EPP), Ana Gomes (S&D) and Ioan Mircea Pașcu (S&D), who have shown strong dedication in building up a Common Security and Defence Policy that would include a social dimension.

EUROMIL nevertheless trusts that more could be done in the fields of health and safety and labour conditions in general for European servicemen and -women. For instance, in its documents published on the EU Working Time Directive in April 2017, the European Commission emphasised that the Working Time Directive is applicable to the armed forces. It would certainly be useful if the European Parliament would also remind EU Member States whenever possible that EU social and labour legislation apply to all workers, including those wearing uniforms.

Regarding personnel in CSDP missions, the European Parliament could do more to ensure that personnel receive the best possible equipment, training, healthcare, insurances and legal support. In January 2017, a workshop was organised by the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) on civilian and military personnel for CSDP missions and operations. While challenges were identified and recommendations made, a follow-up is needed on the matter.

Standout MEPS



Michael Gahler

Group of the European People's Party

In the parliament, MEP Michael Gahler has continuously shown support for the rights and interests of armed forces



shown support for the rights and interests of armed forces personnel in Europe. Through reports, hearings, plenary votes and personal engagement with representatives of military personnel, he actively contributed to raising up the condition of military personnel in Europe.
