



Position Paper by Belgium, Hungary and Poland on Permanent Structured Cooperation

*To build a secure Europe in a better world, we must do more to
shape events. And we must do it now.¹*

Europe has the will and potential to increase its substantial contribution to a more secure world. The Lisbon Treaty now provides the European Union with instruments to further reinforce its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In particular the instrument of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) can bring about a new dynamic among Member States that want to cooperate militarily within the framework of the Union in order to improve the European defence capabilities with a view to carrying out the most demanding missions.

In the current economic and budgetary context ever fewer nations will still be capable to develop such capabilities individually. The synergies that can be attained through PESCO, should ultimately lead to a more efficient spending of the available defence budgets. A better cooperation should also eliminate the current duplications and identified shortfalls with regard to defence capabilities. Besides the advantages in terms of capabilities PESCO also offers perspectives in the operational domain; currently only 4% of the Union's available armed forces are actually deployed. Finally, the mechanism can contribute to a better cooperation with regard to the development of defence capabilities.

In consequence, we believe PESCO to be an instrument that could offer a considerable added-value both at European and at national level.

A Methodological Approach

The Permanent Structured Cooperation can initiate a process to actually remedy the identified shortfalls.

However, its implementation requires a cautious and pragmatic approach, since both a political and a technical agreement need to be reached. In this respect, it is essential that the discussion does not get bogged down early on in a technical debate, but that first of all space is created for a political rapprochement.

Therefore, first of all a clear standpoint needs to be taken on the existing dualities regarding vision and objectives of PESCO. Subsequently, it is important to establish the general principles the commitments should comply with. Finally, further thought should be given to the specific role of the European Defence Agency (EDA).

¹ Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, Brussels, 11 December 2008.

First Step, dealing with existing dualities

Inclusive versus Exclusive

In accordance with the provisions of Article 1 of the Protocol, i.e. that the cooperation shall be open to any Member State which is prepared to undertake the commitments specified, it is in the EU's best interest to involve as many interested Member States as possible in this institutionalised defence cooperation. PESCO should not be limited to a core group of a small number of countries. PESCO should, from a BE-HU-PL perspective, rather be inclusive. A two-speed European defence needs to be avoided.

Moreover, the work performed within the framework of PESCO has to remain transparent to all EU Member States.

Capabilities versus Capabilities / Armament / Operational Aspect

It is advisable to include the various stages in the capability development process (from R&T up to operational deployment) in a structured cooperation. It is in the best interest of both the Union and its Member States to make the European cooperation regarding armament as well as the operational cooperation structured and permanent in character.

Military versus Civil-Military Approach

In accordance with the provisions of the Protocol, which explicitly refer to a defence or military approach, we are in favour of an initial military realisation of PESCO. It is for the time being premature to consider a complete integration of the civilian and military aspects, though this possibility should not be excluded.

Fixed versus Flexible Configuration

As the name as well as the legal interpretation clearly state, PESCO is unique and permanent. In other words, there is only one PESCO.

Moreover, the cooperation needs to be lasting, and is not some form of occasional cooperation with a flexible geometry. This does not mean that Member States cannot still set up cooperation outside of the institutional framework of the EU in the domains that are not part of the Union's exclusive competences. With regard to defence there are numerous, mainly operational, examples of successful cooperation. Institutionalising these existing forms of cooperation by incorporating them into the PESCO does not offer any additional advantages. PESCO should rather be considered as an overarching and strategic framework to give structure to the thematic forms of cooperation in different domains.

Process versus Current Situation

PESCO should, from a Top-Down approach, aim at improving the required defence capabilities – including armament and R&T – that are needed for conducting the most demanding operations. In other words, the structured cooperation should be considered as a process ultimately leading to convergence. Therefore, PESCO is not intended to reflect the current defence efforts of the different Member States, but it should incite the Member States to reach specific objectives within an agreed time frame.

Second Step, define principles the criteria should comply with

Criteria emphasize multinational cooperation and standardization

Cooperation among Member States occupies a central position in the Protocol. The basic principle is indeed that identified shortfalls, both in terms of capabilities and operations, can only be remedied through a multinational approach. In this context, the importance of standardization should not be lost sight of: it is an absolute prerequisite for an efficient cooperation. Criteria should also take into account to what extent Member States are willing to make means available for missions, headquarters and units for the benefit of the EU and to participate in multinational projects proposed by the EDA.

Criteria are consistent with NATO commitments

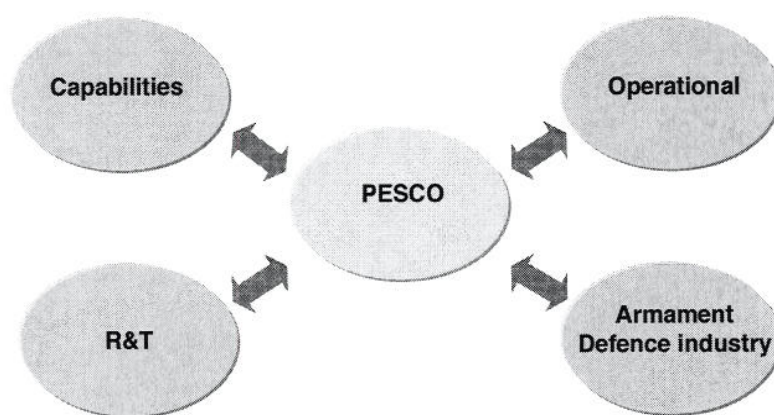
Many EU Member States have made commitments to NATO. From a BE, HU and PL viewpoint, it is therefore of the highest importance that proposed criteria should be consistent with these commitments.

Criteria are output-oriented (being capable of)

Since PESCO pursues enhanced defence capabilities, the criteria should not only stress input – for instance what Member States dedicate to defence – but should also measure the output expected, expressed in acquired capabilities or executable tasks. Criteria should however be measurable and should take into account the balance between ambitious criteria and inclusive cooperation.

Compromise between ambitious criteria and inclusive cooperation

We are convinced that as many Member States as possible should accede to the mechanism. Accession should, on the other hand, be a challenge. The objective pursued consists indeed in bringing European defence to a higher level. Also, criteria that are not sufficiently ambitious would appear to contradict the proposed PESCO ambition level and the purpose of Article 42 and of the Protocol. From both approaches it appears that structured cooperation can be proposed as a unique concept with several pillars. To BE, HU and PL, PESCO is indeed unique. In other words, there is only one Permanent Structured Cooperation. The concept can however be subdivided into several domains. This approach offers the best prospect for a differentiated defence output and prevents PESCO from only concentrating on capabilities.



It is further important that objectives that result from negotiations among the various willing Member States are defined per domain. These objectives should

indeed encourage hesitant Member States to participate and convince them of the PESCO's added value, i.e. increase in scale, cost efficiency, operational efficiency, spin-off effect for industry and others. Member States that want to participate, commit themselves to meet the objectives that have been defined and that are converted into specific criteria. Actual participation (e.g. the number of criteria that have to be complied with for different domains) is subject to further elaboration and subsequent decision.

With respect to capabilities, that undoubtedly occupy a fundamental position within the concept, a clear connection with the Capability Development Plan (CDP) should be looked for from our viewpoint. This plan, proposed by the EDA Steering Board and endorsed by the participating Member States, is indeed an outstanding instrument for the development of European defence capabilities in the years to come. The scheduled update of this plan in 2010 is an opportunity to better harmonize CDP and PESCO.

Criteria fulfilled by an agreed deadline

From the current economic viewpoint and taking into account the fragmented defence efforts, Member States cannot be expected to comply with too strict criteria at the start of the PESCO. It goes without saying that such an approach is counterproductive in the long run. BE, HU and PL therefore plead for making criteria for accession develop according to time, i.e. systematically increase the target figures. PESCO should encourage Member States to systematically increase their current level of ambition.

Third Step, EDA's role needs reflection

Article 3 of the Protocol defines a specific but restricted role for EDA as far as PESCO is concerned: the yearly assessment of participating Member States' contributions with regard to capabilities, in particular contributions made in accordance with the criteria to be established. The EDA shall report to the Council but this action is not binding. For the time being, the exact role of the Agency with respect to PESCO is still unclear and will undoubtedly be influenced by the Council's implementation act and the specific roles of the EUMC and the EDA.

BE, HU and PL consider the Agency as a facilitator, that urges the Member States to cooperate and to participate in joint programmes. In other words, from this viewpoint PESCO will consequently confirm and reinforce EDA's existing role.

Conclusion

Permanent Structured Cooperation provides the framework that can help EU Member States to better cooperate to further develop a credible security and defence policy.

In this respect, a political agreement should first be reached on the added value, the basic starting points and objectives of this framework. In this way, we could pave the way for their technical completion, such as the proper definition of the criteria.

PESCO shall lead to concrete progress in terms of development and deployability of capabilities. This will undoubtedly require far-reaching efforts, the political responsibility of which rests with the Member States. It is in our interest to involve all Member States wanting to do so in this process.