

Connecting and Defending the Union

PESCO and the Importance of Parliamentary Networks

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BUILDING EUROPE'S CAPABILITIES

The [initiation of Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\)](#) marks an important step in the continued development of a more integrated European defense architecture. Though still in its nascent stages, the number and scope of PESCO projects is impressive. Along with the Coordinated Annual Review of Defense (CARD), it is very possible for Europe to start down a path of meaningful capabilities development. A key issue however is the inclusivity of the initiative will make the necessary coordination difficult to initiate and maintain. As the necessary policy changes needed to enact many projects must be made at a national level, a pivotal role in PESCO will fall to national parliaments.

What is so interesting about PESCO is that it does not list a particular threat. PESCO can accommodate the variety of threat perceptions across Member States, as its primary goal is capability development that can support a host of actions, including conflict management, disaster response, and cyber-attacks. [As noted by Barbara Kunz](#), a long-time analyst of European security matters, PESCO has the potential to cut across the three dimensions of European defense (East v. South, the U.S. dimension, and the strategic autonomy dimension). Due to its focus on capability development, PESCO projects like Military Mobility and the logistics hub initiative could plausibly support any mission undertaken by any entity in Europe, be it a CSDP, NATO, or even national mission.

The initiative, particularly where it overlaps with civilian infrastructure projects, could also provide members of parliament the opportunity to have a fresh conversation regarding spending on defense. Perhaps most importantly however, it is output oriented; thereby creating an important incentive for states that may have been criticized by partners for their defense expenditures to demonstrate commitment beyond the politically loaded 2% NATO spending threshold. As noted during a [Center for Strategic and International Studies event](#), investing in mobility and infrastructure improvements plays an important role and stands as a critical metric for broadening our understanding of “defense contributions”.

PESCO also has a very real potential to go beyond military benefits. Take for example the Military Mobility project that is primarily tasked with improving intra-EU transportation for military units. This project could also play an important role in improving civilian transport infrastructure, an issue that has [caused concern across Europe](#) following a bridge collapse in Genoa. For example, the transportation issues from north to south along the Baltic-Adriatic corridor and west-east

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#EUDefence



17 PROJECTS ADOPTED IN 3 AREAS



COMMON TRAINING AND EXERCISES

- European Training Mission Competence Centre
- European Training Certification Centre for European Armies



OPERATIONAL DOMAINS (LAND, AIR, MARITIME, CYBER)

- European Medical Command
- Network of logistic Hubs in Europe and support to Operations
- Military Mobility
- Strategic Command and Control System for CSDP Missions and Operations
- Energy for Operational Function
- European Secure Software for Radio Systems



JOINT AND ENABLING CAPABILITIES (BRIDGING OPERATIONAL GAPS)

- Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle
- Indirect Fire Support
- Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability Package
- European Crisis Response Operation Core (European Force)
- Maritime Surveillance
- Maritime Mine Counter Measures
- Harbour Protection
- European Cyber Information Sharing Platform
- European Cyber Rapid Response Teams

Source: [Council of the European Union](#)

from the North Sea to the Baltic have been highlighted by experts in both [military](#) and [civilian](#) sectors as areas that need improved connectivity. Indeed, NATO has [already transferred its mobility requirements](#) to the Commission's Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) infrastructure investment program. This synergy between civilian and military needs creates both an important window of political opportunity and raises important questions.

Who maintains the legal competencies to undertake these programs? Should a project like Military Mobility be treated as a military or civilian priority? Where should dual-use PESCO projects go in the budget? These answers lie entirely at the national level, which is what makes coordination on the larger projects so difficult. Each member state has a different defense architecture, with some placing more power in the hands of parliamentarians and others in the governments.

Infrastructure investment takes different forms in each state as well, particularly as it comes to the involvement of the private sector. Furthermore, non-NATO Member States that are involved in PESCO will likely take issue with some elements of EU-NATO cooperation on projects, particularly in terms of maintaining a neutral nation status. While many CSDP competencies remain with the European Council, these important questions can best be answered in national contexts, through institutions that will likely struggle to find answers.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, an expert on network theories in world politics, [has stressed the importance](#) for policymakers to adapt institutions to the changing state of international threats, emphasizing that the interconnectivity of current and future threats undermine the ability of a single state to provide security. In turn however, it is the states that provide the legitimacy needed to buttress any security architecture. Efforts to address this challenge at the formal level have already been taken, with the establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defense Policy (IPC-CFSP/CSDP) under the Treaty of Lisbon. Furthermore, national parliaments play a scrutinizing role over their government's EU-level policy and maintain inter-parliamentary groups with other Member States. However, as was [noted in a Draft Report](#) by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Council: "the main effort will have to come from EU Member States, which need to adjust their national infrastructures and regulatory environments." Furthermore, [research has shown](#) that existing transgovernmental links in European defense policy making are weak, and hardly inclusive to all member state perspectives. As PESCO projects take on a much broader scope, new networks (even informal) that increase understanding of divergent views will need to be fostered.

This type of network is best framed through the concept of [inclusive diplomacy](#), a form of interaction that is discursive, emphasizing the role of dialogue and sharing views as the bedrock of sustainable change. Particularly in defense, where threat perceptions diverge so widely, inclusive efforts at diplomacy can reduce the perception that threats are being neglected by larger states that do not share the same view of the world. PESCO provides the opportunity for a wide reaching experiment in this form of discursive diplomacy. This type of network has been repeatedly activated by members that belong to them, an example being the [Mercator European Dialogue](#) initiative. Convening regularly, it also allows for more short-notice meetings on pressing issues, as with a recent gathering on the side lines of the NATO Summit to discuss threat perceptions and a European response.

PESCO offers Member States an opportunity to develop a resilient network between national parliaments to strengthen the security and safety in Europe. The first test will come in the form of developing new National Implementation Plans for the project, due early next year. Legislative input on these plans could emphasize inter-parliamentary connections to more readily define the relevant authorities of neighbors, clarify the national aims of project involvement, and promote the sharing of concerns related to threat perceptions and the EU-NATO relationship.

The National Implementation Plan (NIP):

The NIPs are the national level government actions and legislative actions that will comprise how a Member State will put into action the PESCO projects that they have signed on to. So far, Member States have published a single document that addresses all projects which they have joined, as seen in the [Dutch example](#).

Relevant authorities vary across Member States, as the way defense and infrastructure affairs are governed are different across states. Governments and parliaments could consider the input of neighboring states in their plans, and maintain dedicated, ongoing lines of communication during the development process.

Learn more about the Mercator European Dialogue, download reports and get in touch with other members at www.mercatoreuropeandialogue.org



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