



EURODÉFENSE-FRANCE

12 May 2009

Working paper on the implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation Presentation

EuroDefense France drafted a first version of the attached paper entitled “Draft Agreement on implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation” which was sent to EuroDefense associations in 12 other EU countries for comment. Five associations have replied to date: EuroDefense United Kingdom, EuroDefense Belgium, EuroDefense Portugal, EuroDefense Spain and EuroDefense Germany.

EuroDefense United Kingdom did not propose any amendments to the document, but expressed reservations in principle about the steps envisaged on three grounds:

- the United Kingdom’s political timetable
- the British position – reaffirmed on numerous occasions – in favour of cooperation between states rather than any new supranational approach
- the desire to gauge the effects of France’s decision to consolidate its position in NATO before taking any new initiatives.

The UK association suggested focusing on new practical measures aimed at opening up and developing the European Defence Equipment Market in the immediate future. It should be noted that Section 2 of the draft Agreement largely reflects this objective.

EuroDefense Belgium suggested improvements to the original text most of which have been taken up and incorporated in the attached paper. As the proposed Agreement was extremely wide-ranging and ambitious, the Belgian association also raised the possibility of dividing it into four separate agreements:

- an agreement on headquarters for the planning and conduct of operations,
- an agreement on the creation of permanent joint forces,
- an agreement on defence equipment,
- an agreement on space initiatives.

This would have the advantage of greater flexibility and would enable countries that so wish to be party to some but not all the agreements. It would however make it extremely difficult to define participation criteria. The attached paper remains based on the idea of a single agreement.

EuroDefense Portugal recognises that significant efforts are needed to give credibility to the European Security and Defence Policy and acknowledges the value of the mechanisms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in order to achieve that goal, in particular the concept of Permanent Structured Cooperation. Nevertheless, the Portuguese association – in keeping with the line taken by its President in October 2008 – insists on the importance of adopting a prudent, gradual and pragmatic approach that respects the following principles:

- the intergovernmental nature of the decision-making process,
- the sovereignty of states in defence planning and the military capability development process,
- respect for NATO’s strategic role in Europe’s security,

- observance of the Berlin Plus agreement to avoid duplicating operational command structures,
- transparency, convergence, complementarity and mutual reinforcement with NATO of the military capabilities development process through the existing “Capabilities Development Mechanism”,
- establishment of participation criteria that will enable the largest possible number of states that so wish to be party to the agreement.

EuroDefense Portugal also made specific comments on certain articles which have been largely taken up and incorporated in the attached paper.

EuroDefense Spain welcomes the proposed initiative to advance the concept of Permanent Structured Cooperation without waiting for ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, but feels that the paper goes into too many concrete details that will have to be left to the states concerned to discuss and reach consensus on. This comment is of course well-founded and in order to better reflect the exploratory nature of the paper, its title has now been changed to “Working paper on the implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation” instead of “Draft Agreement on...”.

EuroDefense Germany fully supports the proposal as a whole and has not put forward any amendments as yet. It suggests the paper should hereafter be submitted for discussion to an international working group made up of representatives from the different associations. The principle of this working group could be agreed on at the next presidential meeting.

EuroDefense Belgium and EuroDefense Portugal made similar comments on the point relating to the financial criteria for participation. Both associations consider that the figures proposed in Article 1 are far too high and likely to discourage many states from participating. This is clearly a difficult issue: if the criteria are inadequate the very spirit of PSC would lose its substance, and if the criteria are too ambitious, a large number of countries would likely be excluded. It is therefore important to strike the right balance and at this stage there seems to be little point in changing the figures given by way of example in the original paper as they will in all likelihood be reviewed and discussed in depth at the appropriate time. The example target figure for the percentage of GDP allocated to defence represents the average between European spending now and in the mid-80s.

To conclude, despite its many imperfections the attached document should prove to be a useful first working paper for those EU member states that wish to further explore opportunities for a relatively ambitious implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation in the short and medium term. The paper’s sole aim is to afford a practical approach to problems and initiate discussion on a subject that offers an exceptional opportunity to strengthen capabilities within the European pillar of transatlantic defence where the added value of the EU would provide joint military capabilities that are greater than the sum of the individual capabilities of the member states.
