

Seminar on Permanent Structured Cooperation Royal Military Academy, 13 July 2010

Press Release

In support of the High Representative, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU organized an expert level seminar on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) on 13 July 2010.

The seminar was held in the facilities of the Royal Military Academy in Brussels. The audience consisted of 150 experts on security and defence from EU Member States and EU institutions.

Permanent Structured Cooperation is one of the instruments that have been laid down in the Lisbon Treaty and is one of the priorities in the work program with regard to security and defence. It calls upon a military cooperation between willing Member States in order to improve defence capabilities in support of a credible common security and defence policy. It's clear that the current economic and budgetary context is an opportunity for more and better cooperation .

The synergy that can be attained through PESCO, should ultimately lead to operational advantages, a more efficient spending of the available defence budgets and help to eliminate the current duplications and identified shortfalls with regard to defence capabilities. In other words, this instrument should help us to manage the available resources more efficiently.

The Belgian Presidency wants to build further on the Spanish presidency initiative and wishes to explore the options for possible implementation of PESCO. The seminar on 13 July, at the very beginning of the Belgian Presidency, was a first step to move forward towards a common understanding and the awareness of the added value of PESCO.

Substantial reflections subscribed by Belgium, Hungary and Poland in a Position paper were presented and discussed during the seminar.

Pragmatic illustrative cases, such as the joint Belgian-French fighter pilot training school (AJeTS), the Admiral BeNeLux naval cooperation program and the Nordic Defence Cooperation, were presented during the seminar and showed the potential for the coming decade. Pooling of capabilities is another example of how working together can lead to efficient synergies.

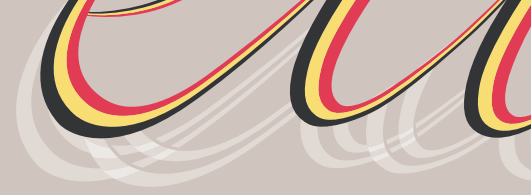
Notions such as inclusiveness, civilian-military approach and the role of the European Defence Agency however deserve further reflection.

The Belgian Presidency will take away the observations and constructive recommendations resulting from the seminar as a basis for further exploration in the coming weeks and months.

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Closing the seminar the Belgian Minister of Defence, Pieter De Crem, indicated that with the Permanent Structured Cooperation the Lisbon Treaty offers an instrument allowing to give a political incentive for a gradual shift from purely national defence planning to a more “Europeanized” and hopefully a more efficient one. He underlined that participation in PESCO may not lead, in the actual budgetary context, to higher national defence expenditures, but to a better spending of our available budgets.

Minister De Crem concluded that PESCO is clearly a project which needs political will as a basic condition for success and that the informal Minister of Defence meeting in Ghent on 23 and 24 September, will probably be a good opportunity for a first informal exchange of ideas at the political level.