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Department of Defence

**European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002**  
**Six-monthly Report**  
**German Presidency**

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

**Department of Defence**



## **Measures, proposed measures and other developments in relation to the European Communities and the European Union**

The following report is submitted to the Oireachtas in accordance with Section 2(5) of the EU (Scrutiny) Act 2002.

### **Part 1**

#### **Summary of Key Policy/Legislative Developments in the EU**

The following is a brief summary of significant events and developments in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

#### **Background**

Since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP) now conducts the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS). In this regard, the EEAS manages the EU's response to crises, has intelligence capabilities and cooperates with the European Commission in areas with which it shares competence.

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) primary function is to provide the Union with an operational capacity to undertake peacekeeping and crisis management missions outside the territory of the Member States. In addition to military tasks, there is a significant civilian and humanitarian dimension.

Germany's Council Presidency ran from July to December 2020. In recognition of the enormous effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Europe, the Presidency chose the motto "Together for Europe's Recovery" with overcoming the pandemic the key focus of Germany's Presidency. Germany's guiding principles included:

- overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic permanently, as well as the economic recovery
- a stronger and more innovative Europe
- a fair Europe
- a sustainable Europe
- a Europe of security and common values
- a strong Europe in the world.

A central goal of the German Council Presidency was to substantially enhance European resilience in the area of Security and Defence. A number of items on the Security and Defence agenda were highlighted as contributing to this goal:

- Advancing the development of the Strategic Compass
- Increasing responsiveness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic via the European Medical Command PESCO project and closer cooperation between Member States Armed Forces.
- Promoting ambitious objectives for the second initial phase of PESCO 2021 – 2025.
- Finalising Third States' participation in PESCO projects.
- Continuing the development of a European Peace Facility with the aim of enabling the EU to both train and sufficiently equip partners in missions.
- Improving EU resilience in the digital field through innovative digital solutions, striving to improve digital skills and cyber defence capabilities of the armed forces of Member States.

### **Meetings and Seminars**

Key meetings held during the German Presidency included the formal and informal meetings of EU Defence Ministers and EU Defence Policy Directors. Due to the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, many meetings during this presidency were held via VTC with the informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in August held in person and the subsequent formal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in November held by VTC. The two meetings of EU Defence Policy Directors were held by VTC. The key agenda items discussed included *inter alia* the European Peace Facility, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the PESCO Strategic Review and the Strategic Compass, CARD and Current Affairs, the Security and Defence dimension of COVID-19, CSDP Maritime including the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) Concept and EU CSDP Missions and Operations amongst others.

The report is broken down as follows:

**Part 1:**

- A. EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy**
- B. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**
- C. Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)**
- D. European Defence Action Plan**
- E. EU-UN Cooperation**
- F. EU-NATO Cooperation**
- G. Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)**
- H. European Defence Agency**
- I. EU Action Plan on Military Mobility**
- J. Strategic Compass**
- K. European Peace Facility**
- L. Crisis Management Operations**
- M. Main Priorities for the Portuguese Presidency**

**Part 2:**

**Update on Proposals/Measures submitted for review by the Oireachtas**

**ANNEX 1**

**Operations conducted during the German Presidency**

## Part 1

### A. EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)

Work continued on the implementation of the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in the area of security and defence during the German Presidency. The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges during the reporting period, highlighting new and previously unforeseen challenges facing the EU in ensuring the safety and security of European citizens. Germany launched the Strategic Compass during its Presidency, an initiative that allows EU member states to exchange views on relevant security and defence issues and decide on a common line on the basis of a threat analysis. Germany also successfully concluded lengthy negotiations regarding third state cooperation in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO): in the future, non-EU member states will be able to participate in relevant EU security and defence projects. This aims to strengthen the European pillar of NATO and cooperation between the EU and NATO as a whole. Implementation included milestones in relation to the finalisation of the PESCO Strategic Review and deliverables in the area of CARD. Progress also continued on the Commission's European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) while this reporting period also saw the culmination of negotiations of the HRVP's European Peace Facility (EPF) proposal. As a strong supporter of CSDP Ireland remained fully engaged in discussions at EU level on the range of issues outlined above.

Following on from HRVP Borrell's first official visit to the United States in February 2020, a joint communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on 'A new EU-US agenda for global change' was published on 2 December 2020. This communication seeks to propose a new forward-looking transatlantic agenda for global change centred on areas where EU-US interests converge, where collective leverage can be best used and where global leadership is required. It calls for the EU and US to reaffirm their joint commitment to transatlantic and international security, to establish a structured EU-US Security and Defence dialogue, to work on substantially improving and increasing the exchange of information and to work together to promote an ambitious international arms control and disarmament agenda.

#### Coherence

In relation to interactions, linkages and coherence among EU defence initiatives such as Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD), Permanent Structured Cooperation

(PESCO), and European Defence Fund (EDF), the German Presidency further advanced the work first initiated under the Romanian Presidency and continued by the Finnish and Croatian Presidencies. The second report from the HRVP on coherence between defence initiatives was published in early 2020, this was followed by the circulation of a joint letter by the Defence Ministers of France, Spain, Germany and Italy entitled ‘At the heart of our European Union’ in May 2020. Among a number of other topics covered, the letter called for enhanced coordination between EU Institutions and improved coherence of EU tools. In his speech at the EDA’s Annual Conference in December 2020, HRVP Borrell referenced the potential of the Strategic Compass to give clear direction and enhance coherence between all the EU’s defence initiatives and strategies. The fact that nine PESCO projects have already received financial support under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) was highlighted by Greek Minister of Defence Nikolaos Panayotopoulos as clear evidence of the coherence between initiatives.

## **B. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**

Based on Articles 42.6 and 46 and Protocol 10 of the Treaty of the European Union, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) provides a mechanism whereby military crisis management capabilities can be developed by Member States in support of CSDP Operations. Ireland has participated in PESCO since it was established by Council Decision on 11 December, 2017.

A total of 47 projects were established under PESCO, 46 are currently being progressed. Following the closure of the European Union Training Mission Competence Centre project in January 2020, Ireland is participating in one PESCO project, “Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance”. To date, Ireland has also confirmed Observer Status on nine other PESCO projects where we have national interests; six from the first tranche of PESCO projects (March 2018), two from the second tranche (November 2018) and one from the third (November 2019).

The most recent call for PESCO project proposals was issued in May 2019. A third tranche of 13 PESCO projects was adopted by participating Member States at the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) with Defence Ministers on 12 November 2019.

A periodic Strategic Review of PESCO is required as per the Council Decision establishing PESCO which was adopted in December 2017. As 2020 marked the end of the first initial phase of PESCO, a Strategic Review was initiated during Q4 2019. Work on the PESCO Strategic Review took place throughout 2020 informally through a number of workshops hosted by the EDA and formally through council structures and working groups. The process for the Strategic Review began under the Finnish Presidency and continued throughout the duration of the Croatian Presidency.

Work on the PESCO Strategic Review was further advanced during the German Presidency via questionnaires, workshops and discussions at Defence Policy Directors meetings, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the Politico-Military Group (PMG). At the FAC Defence on 20 November, Ministers exchanged views on the strategic review of PESCO, with the Council approving Conclusions via written procedure. This approval successfully concluded the formal process of the 2020 PESCO Strategic Review.

At the August 2020 Informal Defence Ministerial meeting, the HRVP and a number of MS raised the outstanding issue of third state cooperation and participation in PESCO. Following extensive discussions, Member States reached agreement. In November, the Council established the general conditions under which non-EU countries could, exceptionally, be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects by Council Decision. These conditions reflect the nature and goals of PESCO. As a result of this Decision, third states that can add value to a PESCO project may be invited to participate if they meet a number of political, substantive and legal conditions.

## **C. Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)**

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) is a two-year cycle which aims to create greater transparency by sharing Member States information on future defence policy, capability development, budgets and investment in order to provide a broad picture of the European defence capability landscape. The process monitors defence plans including national capability development and investment and procurement proposals, as well as the implementation of CDP priorities, assesses data on defence cooperation in Europe, and identifies cooperative opportunities.

The initial CARD process commenced in 2017 and the first full CARD cycle was launched in September 2019 whereby all Member States hosted bilateral meetings with the EDA CARD secretariat. In June 2020, the CARD Aggregated Analysis was provided to all Member States. In November 2020, the CARD report was adopted by Ministers of Defence. The CARD Report, its recommendations and its findings will support Member States to be better placed and more informed to enable greater coordination across their defence planning and spending. It will also encourage engagement in collaborative opportunities. These measures, should in time, contribute towards improving consistency in Member States defence spending and overall coherence of the European capability landscape. It is hoped that it will also serve to enhance interoperability and capability options in a more cost effective and efficient manner, including providing options for consideration in the PESCO and EDF frameworks.

## **D. European Defence Action Plan**

Implementation work on the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) continued during the German Presidency. The overall objective of the European Defence Action Plan initiative is to contribute to ensuring that the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) remains integrated, competitive, innovative, and sufficiently broad to support the development of the military capabilities for CSDP, including those capabilities which Member States may need to meet future security needs.

### **European Defence Fund**

On 13 June 2018, the European Commission proposed a new regulation establishing the European Defence Fund (EDF) under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The EDF is an instrument intended to foster competition and innovation in the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). It aims to trigger cooperative programmes that would not happen without EU contribution and, by supporting research and development activities, to provide the necessary incentives to boost cooperation at each stage of the industrial cycle. The Fund will also foster innovation and allow economies of scale thus enhancing the competitiveness of the EU defence industry.

The EDF provides financial incentives for Member States to foster defence cooperation, from research, to the development phase of capabilities, including prototypes, through

co-financing from the EU budget. The new “Directorate General on Defence Industry and Space” DG DEFIS has the responsibility in administering the EDF.

The final budget of just under €8 billion was agreed in July, under the Germany Presidency as part of the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. It will be split between a research budget of €2.651 billion, and a capability budget of €5.302 billion. The 2021 draft Work Programme is currently being discussed and negotiated amongst Member States. The 2021 draft Work Programme will be finalised in May 2021 with the first call for proposals expected to be launched in June 2021

## **E. EU UN COOPERATION**

The UN is a key strategic partner of the EU. The development of a strong and enduring partnership between the EU and the UN is critical in the face of ongoing, increasing and more complex global crises requiring a multifaceted response. Alongside the increasing EU/UN institutional engagement, EU Member States are also increasing their contributions to UN Missions.

On 18 September 2018, the European Council adopted conclusions endorsing the “Priorities of the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management for the period 2019-2021”. Ireland was instrumental in the adoption of these Council Conclusions, including recognition of the mutually beneficial nature of the longstanding UN-EU cooperation on peacekeeping and civilian, police and military crisis management. Ireland particularly welcomed the significant inclusion of women, peace and security as an overarching priority.

As of 2020, the EU and UN work together in over 170 countries. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU launched a ‘Team Europe’ package to assist those most in need with in excess of €21 billion in financial support mobilised to address the humanitarian, health, social and economic consequences of the crisis. By supporting the response plans of the World Health Organisation and the United Nations as well as promoting a coordinated multilateral response in partnership with the United Nations, the EU has further contributed to dealing with the consequences of the crisis. In April, a letter from the 27 EU Ambassadors was sent to the UN Secretary General reiterating the EU’s support for UN Peacekeeping missions and underlining a collective commitment to keeping UN Peacekeeping personnel in place despite the coronavirus

pandemic. An EU-sponsored resolution at the World Health Assembly for the globally coordinated response to COVID-19 has gained the support of the international community on global solidarity, safe and affordable medicines and vaccines, and better preparedness for future pandemics.

In July 2020, the European Council adopted conclusions on the EU's priorities at the 75<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly (September 2020 - September 2021). Under the title of "Championing multilateralism and a strong and effective UN that delivers for all", these Council Conclusions outlined the priorities which the EU and its Member States will focus on for the duration of the 75<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The conclusions were detailed under the headings of; Advancing human rights and gender equality, Promoting peace and security, Building a fair globalisation, Accelerating the global transition towards sustainable and climate-neutral future and Leading the transition to a new digital world.

In September 2020, in the margins of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, The EU and the UN signed an agreement to enhance cooperation and strengthen collective response in peace operations and crisis management. The purpose of this agreement is to facilitate operational alignment and enhance complementarity between EU and UN field missions in areas such as logistics, medical and security support.

In his address to the UN General Assembly, President of the European Council, Charles Michel, reiterated the EU's commitment to working with the UN and WHO to defeat COVID-19.

## **F. EU NATO COOPERATION**

EU cooperation with NATO is focused on ensuring complementarity and avoiding duplication across both organisations in terms of structures, systems and standards across the military forces of Member States, given the extensive common European membership of both organisations. Moreover, both organisations have deployed operations in the same theatre of operations and in support of the UN. The members of both organisations also face similar new, emerging and complex security threats which require coordinated and complementary responses, not least in the face of cyber and hybrid threats. Coordination of organisational responses is important across all these dimensions.

Areas benefitting from EU and NATO cooperation include; Countering Hybrid Threats, Operational Cooperation (including Maritime issues and on migration), Cyber Security and Defence, Defence Capabilities, and Defence industry and research, Exercises and Defence capacity building. Work in these areas is ongoing via the implementation of the common set of proposals which cover 74 actions.

The fifth Progress Report on EU-NATO Cooperation was issued jointly by the EU and NATO in June, 2020. It was positive regarding progress to date, detailing a number of areas of mutual interest such as operational cooperation including maritime issues, defence industry and research, countering hybrid threats and defence and security capacity building.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU and NATO have been coordinating their respective efforts in full respect of the agreed guiding principles enshrined in the Warsaw and Brussels Joint Declarations on EU-NATO cooperation, in overlapping areas of competence at both political and working level. Within the framework of the common set of proposals, a number of elements have emerged as relevant in the context of the pandemic, including for example: countering disinformation and hostile propaganda; potential logistics support in facilitating the delivery of assistance; responding to cyber threats and exploring the implications of the crisis on respective operational engagements in theatres.

Political dialogue remains a core element of EU - NATO cooperation. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attended the August 2020 informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers to participate in discussions on Missions and Operations and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. He also took part in a bilateral meeting with EU HRVP Josep Borrell to discuss the importance of EU-NATO cooperation in dealing with common challenges.

## **G. Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)**

Working under the political control and strategic guidance of the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the MPCC works in parallel to and in a coordinated way with the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, supported by the Joint Support Coordination Cell (JSCC). The JSCC brings together the civilian and military expertise in key mission support areas. The Director of the MPCC holds the same command authority as those attributed to an EU Military Operation Commander. This command authority is for non-

executive military missions only, including the current three EU Training Missions deployed in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia. Non-executive military missions are capacity building, training and advisory missions. The MPCC, with the JSCC, will further strengthen and enable effective civilian/military coordination and cooperation at the strategic level in the operational planning and conduct of CSDP civilian and non-executive military missions.

The MPCC commenced initial operations in June 2017 and was expected to reach Full Operational Capability in the second half of 2020; however, by end of year, manning shortfalls still remained. At the time of the FAC Defence in late November 2020, 75% of MPCC posts were filled. At this meeting, HRVP Borrell called on Member States to provide the additional staff required in order to reach full capacity and progress to the next phase of implementation.

As part of the steps taken by the EU to implement the Global Strategy in the area of security and defence, scenario based table top exercises are conducted with the intention of enhancing the EU's ability to respond, within the EU's Integrated Approach, to external conflicts and crises. Elements of EU Integrated Resolve 2020, an enhanced Multilayer Exercise which had been planned to take place in 2020 were either modified or delayed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Following completion of the first part of the conduct phase in October 2020, it was agreed to postpone the second part until the first half of 2021.

## **H. European Defence Agency**

During the German Presidency, the European Defence Agency (EDA) continued in its mission to support the efforts of the Council and the Member States to improve the European Union's defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The Agency has three Ministerial endorsed objectives:

- i. support the development of capabilities;
- ii. serve as the preferred cooperation forum and management support structure at EU level for participating Member States to engage in technology and capability development activities;
- iii. act as facilitator and interface between Member States MoDs and the European Commission and EU Agencies in exploiting wider EU policies to the benefit of Defence, as well as acting as a central operator with regard to EU funded defence-related activities.

Ireland has participated in the framework of the Agency since its establishment in 2004. Ireland's participation in specific projects undertaken by the Agency is considered on a case-by-case basis, and is subject to Government and Dáil approval, in accordance with the Defence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.

### **Capability Development**

During the course of the German Presidency, the EDA continued to initiate, establish and mature cooperative projects and programmes in order to deliver capabilities efficiently and cost effectively and thereby improve Member States defence capabilities in the area of Crisis Management and in support of CSDP.

As part of the PESCO secretariat, the EDA has supported the assessment of the third wave of project proposals, resulting in the approval of 13 new PESCO projects by the Council in November 2019, bringing a total of 47 PESCO projects. In addition, the EDA continued to provide direct support to Member States in respect of 4 of these projects. Ireland is currently a Participant on one PESCO Project "Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance" and Observer on nine projects. During the Croatian Presidency in the first half of 2020, a PESCO Strategic Review process commenced and in July Ireland participated in a dedicated workshop where the PESCO timelines and cycle of projects was reviewed.

Work continued during the German Presidency on the implementation of the EU Capability Development Priorities, which were approved by EDA Member States in June 2018, through the first edition of the Strategic Context Cases (SCC). The SCC will guide the practical implementation of the 11 EU Capability Development Priorities and should ensure the priorities are implemented in a way that improves the coherence of the European capability landscape and leads to cooperative projects, which contribute to closing identified capability shortfalls.

Ireland continues to support the EDA work and currently participates on a number of collaborative capability development projects: Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) – European Centre of Manual Neutralisation Capabilities; a Joint Procurement Arrangement for EU SatCom Market; a Maritime Surveillance project; Cooperation on Cyber Ranges project; and a Military Search capability development project. Ireland also continues to participate in the Naval Manoeuvrability Training Project Teams. In September 2020, a Naval Officer was seconded to the EDA which provides the Officer

a unique experience to work in the Agency and provide advice and input to the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces in relation to existing and future projects in the EDA.

The Defence Forces have been actively involved in the EDA Energy & Environment Working Group since 2014. The Working Group met once during the German Presidency. In October 2019 Phase III of the Consultation Forum was launched with a more ambitious structure and agenda scheduled to run until 2023. Under the new structure of four Working Groups, Ireland has provided a Team Leader to coordinate the work of Working Group 2 on Renewable Energy Systems.

The EDA continues to work proactively with the European Commission (DEFIS) and engage with NATO on relevant defence matters. It also has secretariat/administrative functions in relation to PESCO and the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD).

## **I. EU Action Plan on Military Mobility**

In March 2018, the HRVP and the Commission adopted a joint communication on the Action Plan on Military Mobility which aims to facilitate rapid and seamless military movements within and beyond the EU. The Action Plan contributes to the Common Security and Defence Policy, by enabling EU Member States to act faster and more effectively, while fully respecting their national sovereignty and decision-making. The Action Plan covers a number of areas including; military requirements, infrastructure, dangerous goods, customs and VAT, as well as cross border movement permission. These actions are not restricted to the Defence area alone but affect many more ministries such as Departments of Transport, Foreign Affairs and Trade and Customs. Therefore, any national discussions in relation to military mobility requires a whole of Government approach. There is, also, a Dutch-led PESCO project on military mobility where Ireland has Observer Status but is not a participant.

The HRVP's first progress report on military mobility titled 'Joint Report to the European Council and Parliament on the implementation of the Action Plan on Military Mobility' was published in June 2019. An annual progress report on military mobility was circulated by the EDA in March 2020. In the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework, in July 2020 a Military Mobility budget of €1.5 Billion for the period 2021-27 was agreed.

In October 2020, the European Commission and the EU HR/VP presented the second Joint Report on the implementation of the Action Plan on Military Mobility. The Joint Report recognises the continued commitment by the EU Heads of State and Government to invest in transport infrastructure to adapt it to the military needs in instances where this can benefit the civilian movements as well. It also reflects the update of the military requirements and the updated gap analysis between the military and the civilian requirements as well significant progress in regulatory issues, such as the adoption of an EU Form (302) to streamline and simplify customs processes. Ireland, in its approach to military mobility, has acknowledged the importance of military mobility as a concern for a number of Member States.

## **J. Strategic Compass**

The June 2019 Foreign Affairs Council in Defence configuration called for a "strategic reflection" on Europe's current and future security and defence needs, including the EU's capacity to act as a security provider within the parameters of the current EU Global Strategy and the level of ambition contained within it with the aim of creating a 'Strategic Compass'. In January 2020, the EEAS issued a paper on the topic to help initiate discussions.

The purpose of the Strategic Compass is to guide and enhance the implementation of the Level of Ambition in security and defence, across the three strategic priorities derived from the EU Global Strategy; responding to external crises, capacity building of partners and protection of the Union and its citizens. The Strategic Compass will define policy orientations and specific goals and objectives in four clusters; crisis management, resilience, capability development, and partnerships.

A key element has been the establishment of a common "threat assessment," compiled by the EU IntCen (European Union Intelligence and Situation Centre), on the basis of information submitted by member states.

Following ministerial discussion at the November 2020 FAC Defence, the intention is to produce a skeleton / structure of the strategic compass by early 2021. Under the current roadmap, the Strategic Compass will be further elaborated during the EU Council presidencies of Portugal and Slovenia in 2021, with a view to adoption during the French Presidency in 2022.

## **K. European Peace Facility**

The European Peace Facility (EPF) proposal was published by High Representative Mogherini, with Commission support, on 13 June 2018. The aim of the EPF is to provide the EU with a single off-budget fund for the period 2021 to 2027, to run alongside the MFF, to finance all Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) actions having military or defence implications.

The proposal called for the EPF to draw together and expand existing mechanisms devoted to security and defence in three key areas:

1. EU military operations and the ATHENA funding mechanism (for the financing of EU military Common Security and Defence Policy [CSDP] missions);
2. Support to partners' military peace support operations, building on the African Peace Facility (financing capacity building and peace support operations in Africa) ;
3. Broader actions of a military/defence nature in support of CFSP objectives, also known as 'Capacity Building for Security and Development' (CBSD), where currently support is limited to the Commission's development-focused instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP+).

The text of a decision on the proposal was advanced during the Austrian, Romanian, Finnish and Croatian Presidencies since November 2018. Discussions continued throughout the German Presidency, as Member States worked towards shaping the ultimate form of the EPF. In July 2020, the European Council agreed the EPF would have a financial ceiling of €5bn (€5.7bn in current prices) over the seven years of the next MFF, to finance EU activities in this area. During negotiations to establish the EPF, Ireland, together with a number of like-minded States, ensured the inclusion of a provision allowing a member state to exercise constructive abstention from an assistance measure involving lethal equipment. Such constructive abstention removes from the member state concerned any obligation to pay for such equipment. This ensures that the EPF respects the programme for Government commitment that 'Ireland will not be part of decision making or funding for lethal force weapons for non-peacekeeping purposes'. Ireland can avail of this abstention mechanism in respect of any assistance measures which provide funding for military equipment platforms designed to deliver lethal force.

The text of the Council decision establishing the Facility was agreed at Coreper in December 2020 and the Facility will become operational following the adoption of the decision by the Foreign Affairs Council, most likely in March 2021 with this decision limited to the establishment of the Facility.

## **L. Crisis Management Operations**

A key priority for the EU in the CSDP arena is the continued successful conduct of EU peacekeeping and crisis management operations and the preparation of new missions. During the German Presidency, the EU continued the implementation of mandates for a total of seventeen (17) operations - eleven (11) civilian missions and six (6) military operations and missions, nine missions in Africa, two in Europe, two in the Western Balkans, three in the Middle East and one in the South Caucasus. The COVID-19 pandemic affected several CSDP missions, notably the EU Training Missions (EUTMs). At the EU Foreign Affairs Council in June 2020, Defence Ministers decided to focus on CSDP redeployment and to enhance operational engagement by EUTMs, based on a step-by-step approach as public health conditions allow. The reporting period June to December 2020 covers the renewal of the mandates of both EUTM Somalia and EUNAVFOR Op Atalanta which took place in December of 2020. In light of the holistic and coordinated strategic review of CSDP engagement in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, the Council extended both mandates to 31 December 2022. The mandate for EUTM RCA was also extended during the reporting period.

A full list of missions and operations is detailed in Annex 1, attached. The main military operations and missions are as follows:

### **EU EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS (MILITARY CSDP)**

#### **OPERATION ALTHEA**

The main objectives of Operation ALTHEA, launched in December 2004, are to support efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to maintain the safe and secure environment and to provide capacity-building and training support to the BiH Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces.

The Operation is the only EU executive military presence in the Western Balkans. Its continuation and credible executive mandate remain essential in the current sensitive

phase of the region's EU integration path. Also, it remains the only EU operation conducted in cooperation with NATO under the Berlin Plus Arrangements, providing a concrete and practical example of a successful EU-NATO cooperation for almost sixteen years.

EUFOR ALTHEA continues to monitor and advise BiH authorities within activities related to ammunition and weapons storage sites, the civilian and military movement of weapons and military equipment, the disposal of surplus weapons and ammunition and defence industry factories. EUFOR ALTHEA also works with international partners to try and increase the disposal rate of surplus ammunition.

In operational terms, EUFOR ALTHEA has introduced a reserve concept that has enabled the number of troops in BiH to be reduced. EUFOR ALTHEA retains its capacity to react throughout the country to any possible security challenges. Through its presence in the country and its support to the local authorities, EUFOR ALTHEA remains an important and visible contribution to the EU's efforts in assisting BiH on its path towards EU membership.

One of the primary concerns highlighted in the 2019 Strategic Review was the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and the ensuing withdrawal of the UK from Op Althea at the end of 2020. The UK has made a significant contribution in terms of man-power over the lifetime of the operation.

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, political factors such as divisive rhetoric and political tensions, the processing of returning foreign terrorist fighters, irregular migration and organised crime and corruption were highlighted as potential drivers of instability. A rise in tensions in the run up to the end of year elections was also identified as a potential threat to the security situation.

In October 2020 the Council adopted conclusions on EUFOR Operation Althea. These conclusions included; (1) welcoming the continued presence of Op. Althea in the country, (2) welcoming the local elections due to take place in November and December (including elections in the city of Mostar for the first time since 2008), (3) looking forward to the presentation of the next Strategic Review of the Operation (expected by mid-2021), (4) noting the challenges posed by COVID-19 (and commending the Operation for remaining fully operational) and (5) recognising the importance of continued coordination between Op. Althea and other international actors on the ground.

The Bosnian local elections passed off without major incident in November and December.

As of 31 December 2020, five Irish personnel were deployed on this mission.

### **OPERATION EU NAVFOR ATALANTA**

On 22 December 2020, the European Council extended the mandate of EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA, to deter, disrupt and repress acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia until 31 December 2022.

The Operation which has been in place since 2008, is embedded in the EU's Strategic Approach to the Horn of Africa and continues to liaise closely with the two other CSDP missions (EUTM Somalia<sup>1</sup> and EU CAP NESTOR<sup>2</sup>) to enhance cross-mission synergies and identify future opportunities to engage with the Somali Federal Government. The mission contributes to (1) the protection of vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia and the resupply of vessels for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM); (2) the protection of vulnerable vessels sailing in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast; and (3) the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast.

Operational output was not impacted by the March 2019 relocations of the Operational Headquarters from Northwood, London, to Rota in Spain and the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) to Brest in France.

The EU currently has transfer agreements in place with Kenya, the Seychelles, Tanzania and Mauritius to bring those charged with piracy to trial.

A memorandum of understanding to enhance collaboration between EU NAVFOR and the World Food Programme was signed in March 2020. Between July and December 2020, Operation Atalanta continued to maintain a 100% success rate in protecting WFP shipments.

The renewed and extended mandate for Operation Atalanta, approved on 22 December, comes into force on 1 January 2021. This mandate extends the Area of Operations further North in the Red Sea and Gulf of Oman, adds new non-executive secondary

tasks, allowing the Operation to collect and share information in the fields of arms and drug trafficking, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the illicit charcoal trade and adds new secondary executive tasks on drug and weapons trafficking (to be activated where appropriate by PSC) alongside a number of other adjustments.

No Irish personnel are deployed on this mission.

### **EUNAVFOR MED (Operation IRINI)**

The new EUNAVFOR mission in the Mediterranean, Operation IRINI was launched on 31 March 2020. The launch of Op IRINI signals a change in focus from the previous mission, Operation Sophia with the implementation of the UN arms embargo (through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets) designated as its core task. The mission will be able to carry out inspections of vessels off the coast of Libya which are suspected of carrying arms to or from the country in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016).

As secondary tasks, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI will also monitor and gather information on illicit oil exports from Libya, contribute to the capacity building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy and contribute to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks through information gathering and aerial patrols.

IRINI is currently led by Rear Admiral Fabio Agostini, as EU Operation Commander, with Operation Headquarters (OHQ) located in Rome, Italy. The initial mandate of Operation IRINI is set to run to 31 March 2021. A mandate extension to 31 March 2023 was recommended by the EEAS in December 2020 in advance of discussions at PSC.

As of 31 December 2020, Ireland has three Defence Force personnel deployed to the mission's OHQ in Rome.

## **EU TRAINING MISSIONS**

### **EUTM SOMALIA**

This mission, launched on 7 April 2010 to train the security forces of the Somali Transitional Federal Government is part of the EU's long-term strategy for the Horn of Africa. EUTM Somalia aims to strengthen the Somali National Government as a

functioning government and to empower the institutions to serve the Somali citizens, by providing military training to members of the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF).

EUTM Somalia is now established as a highly regarded international partner in Mogadishu. It is further recognised as having the potential to make a meaningful contribution towards the creation of improved security in Somalia as part of the EU Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa.

EUTM Somalia's mandate follows a three-pillar approach of advisory, mentoring and training activities in Somalia. The mission commenced its 6th Mandate on 1 January, 2019.

Frequent violent incidents in the mission area mean that careful force protection planning is necessary. During recent reporting periods, EUTM Somalia has suffered a number of attacks without casualties, indicating that EU personnel are considered a target by militants groups such as al Shabaab. While still tenable to operate in the current threat environment, at times freedom of movement has to be limited in order to ensure the safety of EUTM Somalia personnel.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, manning remained an issue for the mission with a number of gaps in personnel limiting progress towards operational objectives. The outbreak of the pandemic saw the temporary reduction of personnel on the ground as non-essential staff were redeployed.

All physically provided training and education activities in support of the Somali National Army were suspended, selected leadership related training activities continued by video teleconference. Some limited EUTM advisory activities were maintained without physical contact utilising phone, mail etc.

COVID continued to impact the mission in the early part of the July to December 2020 reporting period. Following direction from the MPCC, the mission recovery plan was activated in late July, with EUTM Somalia returning to pre-COVID-19 strength in mid-October. This enabled a return to full Training, Mentoring and Advising activities.

Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire was removed from his position in July, drawing criticism both internally and from the international community. Mohammed Hussein Roble was subsequently appointed Prime Minister by President Farmajo in September.

Parliamentary elections, planned for December 2020 did not take place and may now instead be held in 2021.

The security situation in Somalia remains volatile, with Al Shabaab continuing to carry out attacks targeting Somali officials, the SNAF and AMISOM. Militia and clan based disputes further add to instability nationally. While there have been no recorded mortar or IED attacks on EUTM-S in the reporting period, this still remains the most likely and greatest threat to the Mission.

A transfer of authority in EUTM Somalia took place in August, with Brig Gen Fabiano Zinzone taking over as Mission Force Commander from Brig Gen Antonello de Sio.

No Irish Defence Force personnel are deployed on this mission.

### **EUTM MALI**

On 18 February 2013 the EU launched the EU Military Training Mission (EUTM) Mali, a CSDP mission to train and mentor the Malian Armed Forces (MaAF) to improve their military capacity and their effectiveness in guaranteeing the country's territorial integrity. The mission has two aims: (1) to reform the chain of command in areas of training, logistics and military policy to ensure obedience with civilian authority and (2) to re-structure and train MAF units.

The most recent extension of the EUTM Mali mission mandate took place on 23 March 2020. This saw the scope of the mission expanded to provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the national armed forces of the G5 Sahel countries<sup>1</sup>. The new mandate is set to expire on 18 May 2024.

An upturn in attacks against Malian security and defence forces has become evident across recent reporting periods and continued throughout 2020. Attacks by terrorist armed groups (TAGs) on the Malian Armed Forces (MaAF) in January, April and June resulted in the loss of a number of soldiers, with further TAG activity including attacks on the MaAF reported in July, September and October.

The operation of EUTM Mali was severely impacted by COVID-19, mission capacity was reduced to 50% from March with only essential posts remaining manned and support

<sup>1</sup> The G5 Sahel Countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

activities to the MaAF halted. The Irish contribution to the mission reduced from 20 to 13.

Instability in the Malian political situation came to a head in the July – December 2020 reporting period, culminating in the August Coup d'Etat which took place following an extended period of anti-Government demonstrations. This further stalled attempts to restore the EUTM to pre COVID capabilities, as negotiations took place between political parties, civil groups and the Malian military eventually resulting in an agreement on the formation of a civilian led transitional government.

Following the resolution of the political situation and delays due to further COVID outbreaks, EUTM Mali initiated its restoration plan for the resumption of training activities on 13 October 2020 with the intention of reaching full operational capacity in mid-December. Following this decision, the Irish deployment was reinstated to twenty personnel in November, 2020.

As of 31 December 2020, a total of 20 Irish Defence Forces personnel are assigned to EUTM Mali as tactical instructors and headquarter staff.

A further 14 personnel are deployed to MINUSMA, the UN's mission in Mali, as part of an Irish Defence Forces Task Unit.

### **EUTM RCA (Central African Republic)**

This mission, based in Bangui was launched on 16 July 2016 and was set an initial operating period of two years. It replaced the EU Military Assistance Mission, EUMAM RCA, which was launched in March 2015. A detachment of EUTM RCA has been located at the Instruction and Training Centre in Bouar, since June 2019. In close coordination and complementarity with the MINUSCA, (the UN Mission in the Central African Republic), EUTM RCA supports the Central African Republic (CAR) Government in the implementation of the Security Sector Reform by assisting the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic - *Forces Armées Centrafricaines* (FACA). The goal is to support the build-up of a modernised, effective, ethnically balanced and democratically accountable FACA. The mission headquarters relocated to the new M'poko MOANA camp in Bangui in August 2020. EUTM RCA contributes to the restructuring of the defence sector in three domains: strategic advice, operational training, and education.

Following a Strategic Review of EUTM RCA, the most recent mandate extension took place on 30 July 2020, when an extension of two years until 19 September 2022 was approved by the Council of Ministers. This saw the mission transition from Phase 2 of Mandate 2 to Phase 1 of Mandate 3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as a potential threat to the security situation in the country, due to a perceived slowdown in the RCA government's decision making process. In June 2020, armed groups carried out simultaneous attacks on the government camp in Bouar and a FACA / MINUSCA checkpoint in Paoua resulting in a number of injuries.

During the reporting period, in line with CAR Government requests, the EUTM temporarily reduced its presence in the Mission Area and focused on the provision of strategic advice to the CAR MoD and the FACA general staff. Operational capacity was restored to pre COVID-19 levels following the implementation of the Mission's Recovery Plan in October 2020.

General elections to elect both the President and National Assembly took place on 27 December 2020 with preliminary results due early in the New Year. The incumbent, President Touadéra is considered the frontrunner for re-election. Former President Bozizé, who was considered the main opposition candidate was disqualified by the Constitutional Court in early December.

There are no Irish Defence Force personnel deployed to this mission.

## **M. Main Priorities for the Portuguese Presidency**

Under the post-Lisbon Treaty arrangements, the High Representative and European External Action Service drives the agenda in the areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The overall theme for the Portuguese Presidency is "Time to deliver: for a fair, green and digital recovery". The guiding principles for Portugal's Presidency of the Council of the European Union are set out under three priorities and five lines of action.

### **Priorities:**

- To promote Europe's recovery, leveraged by the climate and digital transitions

- To implement the Social Pillar of the European Union as a key element for ensuring a fair and inclusive climate and digital transition
- To strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy keeping it open to the world

**Lines of Action:**

- Resilient Europe - Promote Europe's recovery, cohesion and values
- Green Europe - Promoting the EU as a leader in climate action
- Digital Europe - Accelerate digital transformation in the service of citizens and enterprises
- Social Europe - Promote and strengthen the European social model
- Global Europe - Promote Europe's openness to the world

The Portuguese presidency of the Council of the EU intends to ensure that their six-month presidency marks the start of a new cycle in Europe. Portugal will confront the difficult and significant challenges to the EU posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by strengthening Europe's resilience and its citizens' confidence in the European social model, promoting a Union based on shared values of solidarity, convergence and cohesion to build a Union capable of coordinated action to recover from the crisis.

Important elements of the High Representative's CSDP work programme in the area of security and defence during the Portuguese Presidency from January to June 2021 include:

- Coherence among defence and security initiatives, e.g. in PESCO and CARD, and embedding the EU security and defence planning and capability development initiatives in national processes.
- An active strategic debate on security and defence within the EU.
- Progressing the development of the Strategic Compass
- European security and defence in the post COVID-19 environment.
- Implementation of the European Peace Facility.
- Discussion of CSDP operational engagement with partners such as the UN and NATO

**Meetings and Seminars**

The Portuguese Presidency will hold specific events to complement the efforts of the HRVP and the EEAS in the area of CFSP and CSDP. Key meetings to be held during

Portugal's Presidency, in the Defence space, include the Formal and Informal meetings of EU Defence Ministers and EU Defence Policy Directors. Portugal will open the defence and security calendar of events for their Presidency of the EU with a Defence Policy Directors informal meeting on 15 February 2021.

### **Additional Information**

Further information on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) can be found on the European Union website [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) and on the Council of the European Union website [www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu). Information on the European Defence Agency can be found on their website [www.eda.europa.eu](http://www.eda.europa.eu).

## **Part 2**

### **Update on Proposals/Measures submitted for review by the Oireachtas**

Nil.

## **ANNEX 1**

### **Operations conducted during the German Presidency**

#### **Europe**

EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (**EUAM Ukraine**)\*

European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean - Operation IRINI (**EUNAVFOR Med**) \*^

#### **South Caucasus**

European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (**EUMM Georgia**)\*

#### **Western Balkans**

EU Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (**EUFOR-Althea**)\* ^

European Union rule of law mission in Kosovo (**EULEX KOSOVO**)\*

#### **Middle East**

EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (**EUPOL COPPS**)\*

EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah Crossing Point in the Palestinian Territories (**EU BAM Rafah**)

EU Advisory Mission in Iraq (**EUAM Iraq**)

#### **Africa**

EU Naval Anti-Piracy Mission off the Somali coast (**EU NAVFOR Atalanta**)^

EU Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity Building in the Horn of Africa (**EUCAP SOMALIA**)\*

EU Military Mission to contribute to the training of Somali security forces (**EUTM Somalia**)  
^

EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger (**EUCAP SAHEL NIGER**)\*

EU Military Mission to contribute to the training of Mali security forces (**EUTM Mali**) \* ^

EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (**EUCAP SAHEL MALI**)\*

EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (**EUAM RCA**)

EU Military Mission to contribute to the training of CAR Security Forces (**EUTM RCA**) ^

EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (**EUBAM LIBYA**)\*

\* Irish Participation

^ Denotes a Military Operation – the remainder are Civilian Missions