
News from the Brussels' Bubble

#2022-6, December 2022

● EU AGENDA 2023

Unless indicated otherwise, EU official meetings take place in Brussels

01/01/23: [Swedish presidency of the EU](#)

30-31/01: EU Conference on Security and Defence (Uppsala)

14-15/02: EU Conference on 'Preventing and combating the smuggling of weapons in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine – strengthen customs cooperation (Stockholm)

01-03/03: Informal meeting of Defence and of Foreign affairs (Gymnich) ministers (Stockholm)

23-24/03: European Council

23/05: Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

29-30/06: European Council

01/07: Spanish Presidency of the EU

● ENAAT EU project publications

- Read the ENAAT latest fact-sheet in 7 languages and its video summary in 1'20":
["How the EU is funding arms dealers and corrupt corporations"](#)

● EU funding for the arms industry

- **EP to start examining draft legislation on funding joint procurement (EDIRPA)**

After weeks of internal discussions, the EP reached a solution about which Committee should be in charge of examining the draft regulation to fund the joint procurement of military equipments (EDIRPA), reports B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)): the Industry committee and the Security and Defence sub-committee will be co-responsible on the matter. Rumours speak of an EP position on the proposal by June 2023, which is considered far too late for a number of Member States (the EU Council agreed its position in November, see previous Newsletter [NBB #2022-5](#)).

Interesting to note that this legislative proposal is presented under the topic 'A Europe fit for digital age' in the [legislative priorities for 2023-2024](#), and the related [joint declaration \(EC, EP & Council\)](#) claims that the reinforcement of the defence industry is necessary to "achieve the digital transition and enhance the EU's resilience".

- **Ombudsman concerned about ethics rules under EDF**

The Ombudsman [opened a case about how the European Commission intends to ensure that experts evaluating projects proposals under the EU Defence Fund \(EDF\) do not have conflicts of interest](#). The Ombudsman express concerns that "Contrary to the general practice for the evaluation of proposals meant to receive EU funds, the Commission is not required to publish the list of experts it intends to consult. The outcome of the ethics screenings of Defence Fund project proposals will also not be made public."

The Ombudsman is asking the Commission "to explain what measures it has in place to ensure that the use of external experts does not lead to risks conflicts of interest" and which "code of conduct will be applied to the experts, who come from the public and private sector, as well as from academia and research institutes." The Commission has to reply to the Ombudsman by 31 March 2023.

- **intense arms industry lobbying for access to public, private and sustainable finance**

[B2pro \(N. Gros-Verheyde\) made public](#) two documents: a letter of the French Defence Industries Council (CIDEF) to the French Defence minister, Sébastien Lecornu (the letter starts with “*dear Sébastien*”), and the recommendations of the main European arms industry lobby group (ASD) about the arms industry access to public and private finance: both documents complain about increasing difficulties in accessing finance because of European rules on sustainable finance like the ESG criteria, eco-labels, financial information and taxonomy. In short, the main recommendations tend to offer a form of impunity to the armament sector, calling for it to be considered as inherently compatible with sustainable finance and for excluding any form of assessment of the risks of corruption or bribery, or of possible negative impacts on the environment, climate or human rights. The ASD also insists that all arms exports should be considered as legitimate as “*they are approved in accordance with the export control policies of EU member States*” and “*satisfy rigorous criteria*”.

- **EDA Annual conference: access to sustainable finance and military spending figures**

This sustainable finance issue was also a leitmotiv during the European Defence Agency (EDA) annual conference (08/12), which for once was accessible online to civil society. Industry representatives, national and EU officials alike complained over again about the alleged difficulties of the armament sector in accessing finance. Another major takeaway was about the evolution of the narrative: a decade or so ago, we already had a narrative shift where security became a prerequisite to development, understood as hard security and leading to dedicating external aid funds to “train and equip” security and military forces in fragile states. During this conference another step was taken when one speaker claimed that the military was a prerequisite to security, and the other panellists seemed happy with that statement.

[In his introductory speech](#), the EU high representative Josep Borrell presented the [latest figures about EU countries military spending](#), confirming what we already knew: military expenditure of the 26 EU countries part of the EDA continued growing in 2021 for the seventh year in a row, amounting to €214 billion, a 6% increase in real terms compared to 2020. “*Defence expenditure resisted the economic impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic*” says the EDA report.

● other aspects of EU militarisation

- **EP supports EU militarisation in revision of the EU long-term budget (MFF 2021-2027)**

The final vote of the EP report on ‘Upscaling the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework’ (see [NBB 2022-5](#)) was held on 14 December.

An amendment calling for a specific increase of “*EU defence instruments such as the European Defence Fund, military mobility and future joint procurement mechanisms for EU defence [...] provided that they reinforce the EU’s Defence Technological and Industrial Base and ensure European added value*” was adopted with a wide majority: 366 votes in favour, 46 abstentions and 138 against (most of the Greens, a majority of the far right and The left, and few S&Ds, centre right and liberals). The final text goes a step further in supporting EU militarisation than the compromise text tabled to vote. The amendment was initiated by two French liberal MEPs Nathalie Loiseau (head the Security and Defence subcommittee) and Valérie Hayer (member of the Budgets and the Industry Committees), reports B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)). See the [final Report here](#).

Still according to B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)), the Parliament relies more on the Spanish presidency than on the Swedish one to move the file forward. In practice it is getting prepared to work on it during the second semester, as the Commission’s proposal is expected in June.

- **35 new military mobility projects, budget doubled under Russian’s invasion argument**

On 21 December the Commission presented [35 new military mobility projects](#) to be funded by the EU civilian transport programme ‘Connecting Europe Facility’. It is the second row of projects under the military mobility calls for proposals. The projects will be supervised by the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) which will now start the preparation of the individual grant

agreements with project beneficiaries. It is another form of diversion of EU civilian resources towards military purposes, in that case staff and administrative resources.

“Examples of projects selected for funding include the upgrade of railway infrastructure to allow for an increase of capacity for freight, the upgrade of road and rail on EU-Ukraine Solidarity lines and the enhancement of dual-use capacity of ports and airports. Given Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the Commission decided to increase significantly the indicative budget that was made available for this call from EUR 330 million to over EUR 616 million” says the [EC press release](#).

According to B2pro analysis ([Aurélie Pugnet](#)), the projects cover 17 countries, with 5 in Poland; there is a strong focus on Eastern and Northern Europe, which account for three quarters of the projects. Eight projects cover the Atlantic and Southern shores of the continent (Portugal and Spain launched three projects each, France and Italy only one). The leading project is definitely for EU-Ukraine Solidarity lines with the related German project for *“improving the infrastructure for 740m trains on Corridor Rhine-Danube and Orient/East-Med”*, which gets close to 100 million Euros.

● EU Council conclusions on defence: more of the same

The last European summit of the year was held in Brussels on 15 December. The fact that there was hardly any debate on security and defence issues should not be seen as a sign of disinterest, on the contrary: It is very significant that the topic was considered important enough to be kept in one-day summit amid crisis topics like energy, inflation and Ukraine. As well as that the draft conclusions could be agreed in advance on a policy area that for decades has been very sensitive with regard to national sovereignty. These are rather proof of the progress of EU militarisation. [The Conclusions \(see p.6-8 on security & defence\)](#) put aside touchy issues like the relations with NATO or divergent geostrategic visions and focus, again, on the easy common denominator:

EU leaders call for an acceleration of the work carried out so far, and in particular for concrete outcomes regarding joint procurement, military mobility and critical infrastructures, investments and *“support to its partners”* through the Peace Facility and CSDP missions.

● Canada and Israël could join PESCO projects

After military mobility, Canada may soon be eligible to participate in a second PESCO project, the NetLogHubs project, reports B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)): it is led by Germany and includes 15 other countries, from Belgium to Slovakia, with the aim of using a network of existing logistics facilities, particularly for operations. Berlin took the first formal step by sending a notification to the Council and the EU High Representative. Two other applications are pending: Turkey on military mobility, and Israel on cyber. Indeed Tel Aviv has officially applied to participate in the Cyber project led by Greece. A precedent which could open the door to further cooperation, according to B2pro ([N. Gros-Verheyde](#)).

● Security & Defence among the four priorities of the Swedish presidency of the EU

On 14 December, [Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson presented the Swedish Presidency’s priorities to the Riksdag](#). As regards security and defence, the *“common action to counter Russia’s aggression towards Ukraine”* comes first, but [the Swedish presidency also intends to continue the on-going work to implement the Strategic Compass and other initiatives](#), in particular as regards EU-NATO cooperation, military missions and use of the Peace Facility, and joint procurement proposals. The [detailed programme](#) specifically mentions working on a space strategy for security and defence as well as the EU cyber defence policy.

● EU Peace Facility

● EU missions in Somalia extended and redefined

the EU has two missions in Somalia, one civilian ([EUCAP-Somalia](#)) and one military([EUTM-Somalia](#)). [They’ve been extended for two years till end 2024](#), and redefined with a strong focus on *“strengthening the Somali security forces whether at the level of the armed forces or the Somali police, particularly the Darwish (semi-military police force), in particular to face the repeated attacks by the Al Shebab”* Reports B2pro ([N. Gros-Verheyde](#)).

- **Council agrees significant increase of the Peace facility budget**

On 12 December, [EU members states reached a political agreement to increase the EU Peace Facility budget](#): + €2 billion in 2023, and “if needed” another increase, up to 5,5 billion in total, by 2027. If so the total EPF budget for 2021-2027 could reach €10,5 billion (in 2018 prices), that is the initial budget proposal made in... 2018, reports B2pro ([N. Gros-Verheyde](#)). The decision still needs to be formalised early 2023 with an amendment to the legal text ([Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2021/509](#)) creating the EPF.

- **5 assistance measures under the EPF amounting to €68 million**

EU Ministers approved on 1st December, without debate, five assistance measures under the Peace Facility for a total amount of €68 million, reports B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)): €20 million for Rwanda-Mozambique ([decision](#)), €6 million for Lebanon ([decision](#)), €12 million for Mauritania ([decision](#)), €10 million for Bosnia-Herzegovina ([decision](#)) and €20 million for Georgia ([decision](#)).

● Interesting links

- [EU Decision to renew support for the South Eastern and Eastern Europe clearinghouse for the control of Small Arms and Light Weapons \(SEESAC\)](#). Budget support amounts to €4 million over 36 months and the action has been extended to cover arms trafficking in Moldova and Ukraine, reports B2pro ([E. Stroesser](#)).
- [Transparency International EU finds patchy publication of lobby meetings among MEPs](#) (05/12/22)
- [‘Commission is ignoring ‘revolving door’ conflicts of interest, experts say’](#), Euractiv (07/12/22)
- [‘Niger: EU establishes a military partnership mission to support the country in its fight against terrorism’](#), Press release (12/12/22)
- [Council approves conclusions on Yemen](#), Press release (12/12/22)
- [‘Finland may end arms embargo on Turkey for NATO’s sake’](#), Euractiv (13/12/22)
- [EU 24th Annual report on arms exports published for the year 2021](#) (19/12/22)
This publication suffers from the same shortcomings as previous editions. Only the amount of licences granted is regularly provided while actual deliveries are often not provided. A new Category F appears, covering weapons supplied under the European Peace Facility, reports B2pro ([N. Gros-Verheyde](#)).
Check also the [ENAAT browser](#) for an easy access to the official data since 1998
- [‘Transformation in the poly-crisis age: From permacrisis to positive peace’](#) by the Transformation in Crisis Task Force of [ESIR](#) (Expert group on the economic and societal impact of research and innovation), Euractiv, 25/12/22