



PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION - PESCO

DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION AMONG EU MEMBER STATES



“The most efficient way of developing the capabilities needed, reduce fragmentation and thereby get most out of the money invested, is by working together. In light of a worsening security environment, PESCO enables Member States to act autonomously by combining expertise and developing skills, equipment and new technologies to the benefit of the Union.”

JOSEP BORRELL

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/
Vice-President of the European Commission

A CRUCIAL INSTRUMENT IN TIMES OF INCREASING SECURITY CHALLENGES

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was launched on 11 December 2017.

Its main objective is to step up the defence cooperation among the participating Member States, on the basis of the 20 binding commitments they undertook to each other. There are currently 60 ongoing collaborative projects.

Since its launch, and in light of the changing geopolitical context, PESCO has become a valuable instrument for defence cooperation and to enhance the defence capabilities of its members. This has been further underscored in the Strategic Compass.

The PESCO framework contributes to:

- Increase **defence cooperation** to enhance the Union's security through the fulfilment of 20 binding commitments, from increasing defence spending, to improving interoperability of forces and developing defence capabilities together.
- Provide a **framework to collaborate and deliver concrete results**, with 60 PESCO projects aimed at developing new capabilities (e.g. in the air and maritime domain), providing training and support to military forces (e.g. medical command) or pooling expertise in certain areas (e.g. in the cyber domain).
- **Build synergies with other defence initiatives**, such as the EU Capability Development Priorities, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and the European Defence Fund (EDF).
- Enable **cooperation with third countries** within individual PESCO projects on concrete issues, also facilitating transatlantic and EU-NATO cooperation.

DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION THROUGH BINDING COMMITMENTS

PESCO is a Treaty-based framework to deepen defence cooperation among the EU Member States who are capable and willing to do so. It enhances the EU's capacity as an international security actor and maximises the effectiveness of defence spending.

The difference between PESCO and other forms of cooperation is the **legally binding** nature of the commitments undertaken voluntarily by the participating Member States. Decision-making remains in the hands of the participating Member States in the Council without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain EU Member States.



STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

PESCO has a two-layer structure:



Council level

Responsible for the overall policy direction and decision-making, including the assessment on whether participating Member States are fulfilling their commitments. Legal acts are adopted by unanimity (except decisions regarding the suspension of membership and entry of new members, which are taken by qualified majority). Only PESCO members can take part in the vote.



Projects level

PESCO's output is measured also by the projects developed in its framework. Each project is managed by the group of Member States that take part in it, under the oversight of the Council that is annually informed on progress achieved. To structure the work, a decision on governance rules for projects was adopted by the Council on 25 June 2018. The PESCO projects also contribute to the fulfilment of the more binding commitments.

PESCO Secretariat: The EEAS, including the **EU Military Staff**, and the **European Defence Agency (EDA)**, jointly provide secretariat functions for all PESCO matters and a single point of contact for the participating Member States and institutions.

The first **PESCO Strategic Review** was conducted in 2020 and as a result, the Council provided guidance for the **next PESCO phase (2021-2025)** in terms of overall aim, key policy goals, processes, as well as incentives to improve the fulfilment of the **more binding commitments**. A next review is foreseen by 2025.

Assessing the fulfilment of the more binding commitments



- > The assessment process is described in the Council Decision establishing PESCO.
- > PESCO commitments are binding on the participating Member States. They need to be fulfilled by 2025.
- > Each participating Member State submits every year its National Implementation Plan (NIP), informing about its progress on the fulfilment of the more binding commitments.
- > Every second year, the NIP is accompanied by a high-level political statement, where participating Member States outline their main achievements and specific national priorities and contributions. The first such political statements were submitted in 2022.
- > Every year, the High Representative presents to the Council an annual report on the status of PESCO implementation, based on an assessment of the NIPs, done by the PESCO secretariat.
- > On this basis, the Council reviews annually whether the participating Member States continue to fulfil the more binding commitments. The outcomes of this assessment are formulated in a Council Recommendation.

PESCO projects: A Member State owned process



- > PESCO projects must have a clear European added value in addressing the Union's capability and operational needs.
- > Projects are generated every two years and must be adopted by the Council, following a recommendation by the High Representative. The call for project proposals for the fifth wave was issued in July 2022, and new projects are to be approved by the Council in May 2023.
- > There are in total 60 projects put forward since March 2018. They cover a range of different domains, such as Training, Facilities, Land, Maritime, Air, Cyber, C4ISR, Joint, Enabling and Space. A list of all current projects and participating Member States can be found here: <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/>



Third States participation in PESCO projects



> While membership of the Permanent Structured Cooperation is only for those Member States who have made more binding commitments to one another, third States may exceptionally be invited to participate in PESCO projects upon meeting certain conditions.

> These general conditions and related procedures are set out in a Council Decision adopted in November 2020, which encompasses a set of political, substantial and legal requirements in line with the nature and goals of PESCO, while acknowledging the added-value that partners can bring to PESCO projects.

> It is first up to members of individual projects to consider inviting a third State to participate in a specific project. If they agree, then the project coordinator submits the request to the Council. Decisions regarding third States participation are taken by unanimity by the 25 PESCO participating Member States, in accordance with Article 46(6) of the Treaty on the European Union.

> In May 2021 the Council authorised the participation of US, Canada and Norway to join the PESCO project on Military Mobility, followed by the United Kingdom in November 2022. This also facilitates and boosts transatlantic and EU-NATO cooperation.

