

## EUROMIL Wednesday Q&A series

Did the Strategic [Com]pass muster?



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### **What has been for you the biggest success of the Compass so far?**

The ambition of the Strategic Compass is welcome: it represents an important step for European defence integration and should ultimately help lead to a fully-fledged European Defence Union. We commend the plan of creating a 5,000-strong “EU Rapid Deployment Capability” by 2025 and the possibility to form mini-coalitions of the willing. We also strongly support the need to strengthen the NATO alliance, as the US “remains the EU’s staunchest and most important strategic partner”. The EU can be the European pillar of NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members.

**In today’s world, challenges and threats are interconnected, climate change, defence, health, crisis management, cyber, space – just to mention a few. Hence, civil society has become much more involved in defence discussions as previously and can effectively contribute into building a more secure world. However, the Strategic Compass lacks the element of the civil society participation, how do you think this can be strengthened?**

To achieve changes in the often-controversial domain of security and foreign policy, the EU needs democratic support and the input of civil society and social partners. We believe that the European Parliament should invite organised civil society to monitor the progress made by the European Union on the path of European security and defence. Policies and actions in this framework should also establish a direct link with citizens so that the EU is better able to act on their concerns. Drawing on the success of the Conference on the Future of Europe, we recommend strengthening the role of transnational citizen panels in the EU decision making process as well as citizen consultations at local, regional and national levels. These inclusive and innovative panels play a crucial role in improving the democratic functioning of the EU, as well as enhancing legitimacy, trust and accountability of the democratic process.

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**How would you like to see the Strategic Compass evolve and what do you wish to be the outcome of the closer defence cooperation between the Member States?**

The EU needs to show the necessary political will to advance its defence capabilities: for the EU to become a credible actor, the implementation of the actions listed in the Strategic Compass are of crucial importance. To enhance its autonomy, the EU must develop a fully integrated Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) guided by PESCO and the Strategic Compass and feature integrated armed forces overseen by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Even though PESCO and the Strategic Compass are the right steps forward, decision-making procedures remain extremely slow. The war and the necessity to swiftly impose sanctions on Russia have shown the need for the EU to react faster and more effectively. It is crucial to reinforce European Security and Defence Policy through changes in the decision-making procedures and the launch of a Third Convention to reform EU's Treaties. As was pointed out during the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), changes are needed in the decision making procedure in instances of emergency. There can be no further postponement of urgently needed reforms of the way the EU takes decisions. That's why we advocate for all actions in the area of foreign affairs and security and defence to be co-decided by the European Parliament and the Council based on qualified majority voting (QMV), effectively overcoming the veto powers of single Member States.