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Focus: Slovenia takes the rotating EU Council presidency [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [EN](#)

Between Portugal and France, Slovenia has taken on July 1st the rotating presidency of the EU Council for the next six months, with the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe."

This new presidency has provoked some worries from the European Commission and Parliament, as Slovenia is member of the Visegrad group alongside Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic. This group is at the centre of a debate after new laws considered as contrary to the EU values and rule of law.

On defence and topics, Slovenia has identified the EU credibility and security as one of its 4 axes. It covers first the strengthening of the transatlantic relationship and the cooperation with NATO, as "the best guarantee for strengthening the position of the EU in the international community". Second, it will also work on the Western Balkans countries, "their future in Europe and the credible continuation of the EU enlargement process". A EU-Western Balkans summit will be held next autumn. Two other identified defence priorities are the energy efficiency in the defence sector and the continuation of the Strategic Compass process, aimed to be finalised during the following French presidency.

On security, the Slovenian government will also put efforts on "building a stronger, more robust Schengen area", and to make progress in the negotiations on the New Pact on Migration And Asylum.

Over the last six months, Portugal has also put forward the defence agenda, with several informal meetings on the Strategic Compass between defence stakeholders, from Member States and the EU institutions. It also planned to activate the European Defence Fund, which was achieved on June 30th.

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Switzerland selects the F35 as its new fighter jet

On June 30th, the Swiss Federal Council unveiled their choice for their new air defence equipment, with 36 Lockheed Martin F35A for the aerial component, and 5 Patriot system for the ground-to-air missile component. It now has to be voted by the Parliament.

The Defence Department has justified its choice by the fact that these two systems "won the evaluation by offering the highest global utility while presenting the lowest costs". In particular, The F-35A was 2 billion Swiss francs cheaper than the next lowest bidder. However, many critics have been expressed since the announce, either because of the regularly pointed out cons of the F35: low maturity, high side costs or loss of sovereignty as the system is able to send some data to Lockheed Martin. It is also not recognised as the best-suited aircraft for air police missions, the Swiss Army priority. In addition, the American interference in the choice is suspected as Joe Biden came to Geneva mid-June. The left-wing parties have already expressed their intention to file a popular initiative, a legal disposition in Switzerland to submit a text to a popular vote, an action they would not have undertaken for a European fighter like the Rafale or the Eurofighter.

Germany officialises the purchase of 5 P81 Poseidon, France may quit the MAWS project

After the recent vote in the German Bundestag for the purchase of 5 Boeing P8-A Poseidon Maritime Patrol aircrafts, the German Minister for Defence Annagret Kramp-Karrenbauer visited her American counterpart Lloyd Austin on June 30th. At this occasion, the BAaINBw signed a "letter of offer acceptance" to the aircraft manufacturer to prepare the contract. While presented as a "powerful interim solution" between the aging P3C Orion and the Franco-German project MAWS, the French Minister for Armed Forces Florence Parly indicated that "there is a vision we do not share completely on the need to satisfy a interim need" and that a deepened exchange would be needed to clarify German intentions. Reports have been made that France seems ready to quit the cooperation and could find a national solution with Dassault Aviation Falcon 10X aircraft.

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European Union military cooperation and external operations EN DE EN FR DE

The EU is working on a future mission in Mozambique

The organization of the EU Training Mission in Mozambique is going forward. The mission EUTM Mozambique has been approved on July 12th by the Foreign Affairs Council. In addition, the Portuguese General Numo Lemos Pires has been designated to command the future EU forces, as the Portugal is expected to send half of the contingent in its former colony. The mission aims to train the Mozambique rapid intervention units, after the ISCAP (Islamic State Central Africa Province) took several infrastructures and cities like Palma and degrades the country's security environment. The SADC (Southern African Development Community) also agreed to contribute and send troops.

German and British Air Forces works cooperating for enhanced Air Policing in Romania

The German Luftwaffe and the British Royal Air Force have been both deployed in Romania over the last weeks in the framework of the enhanced Air Policing, a NATO mission introduced after the Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Its tactical command is ensured by the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Torrejon, Spain.

From June 24th to July 9th, the German squadron has been integrated to its British counterpart in a "plug and flight" concept. Both countries are equipped with Eurofighter fighter jets, but have however different national regulations. This has therefore been an opportunity to increase their interoperability, with the objective to deploy a common unit in future NATO air surveillance missions, among other domains. The RAF is deployed from May 1st for all summer.

French and Holland Navies cooperate with a new tactical data sharing experiment

End of May, the French and Dutch Navies have conducted a joint experiment on cooperative naval watch, with a new radar data transfer protocol developed by the French Procurement Agency and Naval Group. The equipment has been installed on a French Forbin frigate and a De Zeven Provinciën Dutch frigate. It allows to exchange in real-time all their radar detections, and get the superiority via tactical information. Used between two allied forces, it could open the path to a new interoperability NATO standard in naval combat.

Austria joins the Eurocorps as associate member

Austria has announced on July 12th its decision to join the [European Quick Reaction Corps](#) as an associated Nation. The European Corps is a multinational military corps, not included in any of the European frameworks such as CDSP. Austria sees however its contribution as a step further in the European Defence framework, alongside CSDP, EDF and the Strategic Compass discussions.

The Corps has been funded in 1992 to intensify interoperability among its nations, and acts mainly as support to NATO. It is ruled by a Common Committee consisting of the five framework countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain) and deciding support missions unanimously. Associate countries (Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, Turkey, now Austria) contribute with personnel.

International relations NL

Tensions between Russia and the Netherlands in the Black Sea and Poutine's reaction

The Netherlands have reported on June 29th that a few days earlier, on June 24th, Russian aircrafts have harassed the HNLMS Evertsen frigate in the Black Sea. During many hours, the aircrafts have performed low altitude feigned attacks with bombs and missiles on the ship, and some perturbations of its electronic equipment have also been identified. The Ministry for Defence ensured that they were in the international waters at that time and that there were no reasons for such attacks. The Russian President, Vladimir Poutine, reacted to this events and the previous ones on a British frigate by stating that the ships' presence so close to Crimea was a "provocation" and that "even if we had sunk this ship, it would have been difficult to imagine the world taking the path to a Third World War".