

## Defence: Big ambitions, modest results

By Eric Bonse

### The Europe of defence stagnates - despite repeated crises

The crises in Ukraine and Syria have done little to prompt progress in defence matters since the decisions taken at the European Council in December 2013. Starting from this gloomy conclusion, the SecDef14 conference (Security and Defence Day, in partnership with *Euro-politics*) on 4 December in Brussels, attempted to find some solutions. However, the views of the French, German and British experts differed widely - even more so than one year ago.

The European Council of December 2013 identified four industrial priorities, including the acquisition of refuelling aircraft and a European drone project. However, meeting in Brussels in November, the defence ministers were unable to point to any tangible progress. In order to accelerate these projects, they decided to

launch a new policy framework, which was supposed to stimulate more systematic cooperation.

However, things are not moving forward. "The situation now completely contradicts the initial intentions," said Claude-France Arnould, executive director of the

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European Defence Agency (EDA), at the opening of the conference on 4 December. Cooperation in the defence sector is much weaker than intended - at political as well as industrial level. Meanwhile, said Pierre Vimont, secretary-general of the European External Action Service, "resistance and blockages persist and there has

not been much change". Opinions differ as to how this untenable situation can be resolved in the light of the crises in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine. According to Eduardo Rihan Cypel, a member of the Defence Committee in the French National Assembly, Europe needs the necessary means, which means "removing defence spending from the calculation of the budget deficit" - an old request from France.

According to Germany, however, it is necessary to focus on export markets. If this does not happen, warned Christian Mölling from the German think tank SWP, it will be difficult to keep Berlin on board. There was no support from the British side either: "It would be quite stupid to go back into competition with the United States," said Trevor Taylor from the British think tank RUSI. Translation: neither London nor Berlin wants 'European strategic autonomy' as called for by France. This is another explanation for the stagnation of industrial projects. ■

## In brief

### Guaranteeing gas supplies to Eastern Europe important: Cañete

The cancellation of the South Stream project will raise questions about how to guarantee the security of gas supply in Southern, Eastern and Central Europe, the Commissioner for climate action and energy, Miguel Arias Cañete, told MEPs during a meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) on 3 December. This development also enables the EU to accelerate work on the integration of these regions into the EU's energy market, he said. Completing the interconnectors between Romania and Bulgaria or Bulgaria and Greece are some examples. "What we have to do is roll up our sleeves and get these projects running to guarantee supplies to these areas," Cañete said. If the Russian government and Gazprom would accept EU legislation, there would be no

problem to continue with South Stream, but Moscow challenged the third energy package at the World Trade Organisation, he pointed out. In light of Vladimir Putin's surprising announcement ([bit.ly/1rTkTOH](http://bit.ly/1rTkTOH)) on 1 December, many MEPs asked Cañete about the consequences of the controversial project's cancellation.

### MEPs endorse agreement on ship emissions

After being approved by the member states (Coreper) on 26 November, the deal worked out, on 18 November, by the Council and European Parliament was given the green light, on 3 December, by the EP Committee on the Environment (ENVI). The Council is expected to adopt it formally very soon. The regulation requires the owners of large ships using European Union ports to report their polluting emissions. The

new rules will cover carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from ships of more than 5,000 gross tonnes, regardless of where they are registered. The regulation marks a first step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime transport and including the sector in the drive to tackle climate change.