

‘The Future of the European Defense and Industrial Cooperation’
- February 9th -

2017 was the year when the European Union initiated a process towards a common defense. The European Council meeting, held on December 17th, decided to launch PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) and the future EU budget will also have a line of consistent funding for research and military capabilities development. There are clear signals from the European Commission that there is the necessary determination for substantial investments in defense, primarily in the research/ development sector.

Starting from 2020, the EU will invest 500 million euro annually in research and one billion euro in the development of prototype capabilities. The European Defense Fund is meant to boost the cooperation between specialized companies in the EU, incentivize states to buy products resulted from the cooperation between several European companies. Considering that some of the EU states announced that they will gradually increase their defense budgets, there is an increasingly visible interest that much of the combat technology intended for future acquisitions to be manufactured in the EU. Romania shows that it politically supports the idea of a strong European Union, including in the field of defense, which should not lead to duplicating NATO efforts, nor to a competition on defense between the two organizations.

In 2017, Romania spent 1.85% of GDP on defense and has a budget of 2% of GDP on military expenditures in 2018. There are several endowment programs approved by CSAT [Romania’s Supreme Defense Council] and by the Parliament, which will increase our country’s anti-missile defense and anti-aircraft defense capabilities on several levels, will increase the combat capacity of the ground forces, air forces and naval forces through the procurement of armored carriers, F16 fighter planes, attack helicopters and corvettes.

The Romanian government’s investments in military research were modest, and cooperation between state-owned and privately-owned companies is completely absent. The European Defense Fund will be a challenge for Romania, because it will have to prepare research & development programs that can be financed by this fund and which would increase the collaboration between Western weapons manufacturers and the Romanian industry. We believe that the negotiations for procuring combat technology must also include opening new lines of cooperation between European groups and Romanian companies. The Romanian private industry, which has often invested more than the Romanian government in some areas of research, must be supported to become part of the future research programs, alongside academia. At the same time, the question is also raised as to whether Romania is able to strengthen not only its Army’s capabilities, but also the strategic political, economic and military partnerships that it has across Europe and develop its national defense research over the next few years.