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Consultative Committee

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Future cooperation of the European Political Community

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Resolution
on
Future cooperation of the European Political Community

1. Key points and recommendations

The Consultative Committee of the European Economic Area (EEA CC):

1. Welcomes the first important steps of the European Political Community (EPC) in Prague.
2. Stresses that European countries must rally around shared values such as democracy, rule of law and respect for territorial sovereignty, and work closely together to counter threats from anti-democratic, authoritarian regimes which attempt to erode unity and cohesion in Europe.
3. Expects the EPC to send a clear message to anti-democratic regimes that violations of human rights, freedom of speech, democracy, rule of law and legal certainty and aggression against neighbouring countries are unacceptable, and violators will face a common European response.
4. Underlines that the European nations together with other UN members are currently facing a grave political challenge regarding how to treat the unacceptable political behaviour of military aggression.
5. Emphasises the serious **economic, social, and climate impacts** following the Russian war against Ukraine, first and foremost on Ukraine, yet also impacting European countries and the world as such.
6. Recognises that the EU and EEA countries and the European Commission have done well to ensure unity and cohesion when facing the Russian illegal invasion of Ukraine. This Committee supports sanctions and condemnation of the Russian aggression, which all EEA countries support.

7. Encourages all EPC participants – both EU and EFTA states - to be active in the proceedings and continue the rally around the common values in Europe which it promotes to face threats and challenges from autocratic and anti-democratic regimes.
 8. Is of the view that **EPC is less likely to fundamentally change the European political landscape** and will not replace any of the already existing European institutions or any of their sub-organs but will assist in a better coordination, and contribute to closer co-operation on the European continent.
 9. Believes that future bilateral, regional meetings and EPC discussions should focus on how to better solve problems between the members and to **maintain a continent of stability and peace** and welcomes the EPC as a good arena for talks and discussions between heads of government on an equal footing.
 10. Recognizes the EPC's importance in maintaining lasting peace and strong stability on the continent, which are necessary for our nations, economies, wellbeing and a safe future.
 11. Stresses that **European economies must remain globally competitive** and be able to flourish exclusively in terms of peace and stability. The EPC is able to set up and guarantee frameworks and criteria of maintaining these intentions on our continent.
 12. Supports increased security cooperation and a regular high-level dialogue between the continent's nations. Highlighting, discussing and tangibly solving major problems between the countries of the European continent must be implemented.
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Report
on
Future cooperation of the European Political Community

Background

Proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron on 9 May 2022 during the closing ceremony of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the **European Political Community (EPC)** “aims to strengthen cohesion, co-operation, and dialogue between all countries on the European continent.” The European Political Community meeting was organised in Prague in October 2022 at an inaugural Summit of 44 European Heads of State and Government.

From the very beginning President E. Macron was of the view that this Community will enable: “convergence and the development of tangible co-operation projects in many fields of shared interest: protecting critical infrastructure, fighting cyber threats and disinformation, building energy resilience, fostering closer relations between young people across the continent, closely cooperating on migration, coordinating on major regional issues and supporting Ukraine’s reconstruction.”¹

First Summit of the EPC (6 October 2022)

As set out above this new European Political Community met for the first time in Prague on October 6, 2022, under the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, at the European Political Community Summit of 44 European Heads of State and Government.

Participants²

The following countries were invited to take part in the first meeting of the EPC (thus, likely having in mind establishment of the framework of a closer inter-governmental cooperation on specific policies):

• the 27 EU member states	• Montenegro
• Albania	• North Macedonia
• Armenia	• Norway
• Azerbaijan	• Serbia
• Bosnia and Herzegovina	• Switzerland
• Georgia	• Turkey
• Iceland	• Ukraine

¹ Remarks by President Charles Michel following the informal meeting of the EU heads of state or government in Prague, [press release](#). European Council.

² Meeting of the European Political Community, 6 October 2022, [information](#). European Council.

• Kosovo ³	• the United Kingdom
• Liechtenstein	• the President of the European Commission
• Moldova	• the President of the European Council

Some major lessons of the EPC Prague Summit⁴

1. **Political views on key issues shall be regularly discussed and a European agreement has to be reached on the top level:** The Prague meeting and discussions sent a clear signal of the continental political unity in the context of the **Russian war of aggression against Ukraine**. Participants confirmed a unanimous support for Ukraine and discussed the need to build a new space for political dialogue and co-operation in Europe.
2. **Establishing joint focus on four areas of co-operation:** The commitment to addressing shared concerns was illustrated during four round tables focused on two key themes: **peace and security, climate, energy and the economy**.
3. **Steps for a likely institutionalization in the future:** An agreement was reached that the Community's Summits would take place every six months in order to ensure the regularity of high-level discussions and to follow up on the initiatives launched. The next meetings of the European Political Community will take place in Chisinau, Moldova, in spring 2023 followed by Spain and the United Kingdom.⁵ So far, consecutive host nation leaders have undertaken to prepare the agenda and organise the relevant meeting(s), accordingly. However, if and when the EPC shows to be a real on-going success *its institutionalization cannot be ruled out*.

Key ideas by French President and some other stakeholders about an "improved" continental co-operation

1. **A meeting of and joint views expressed by heads of 44 sovereign European states**
 - Independently from already existing political and economic structures – if a war in Europe is apparently prepared or emerging – continental Summit of 44 nations is to be convened. (This should be seen as a key point of permanent attention for which reason we need to regularly share relevant political and military intelligence.) Special focus is to be devoted to aggression undertaken *on behalf of any Permanent Member of the UN Security Council*⁶.

³ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁴ Sources: International stakeholders who prepared and attended the Summit later summarizing views of the EPC and its expected future.

⁵ Meeting of the European Political Community, 6 October 2022, [information](#). European Council.

⁶ A dangerous game over Taiwan, [article](#). Dexter Filkins in the New Yorker.

2. European disputes in urgent need of settlement are expanding over present EU borders

- The EU is and shall be a very important political, economic and social community of EU Member States.
- Following Brexit and prior to EU's enlargement processes⁷ already in the pipeline the European Union remains a highly important **centre** of co-operation and debates on a number of key political, economic, social and migration issues. (The *EU wants to integrate new members through the **enlargement process*** once they meet a number of political, economic, legal and social conditions. This process encourages democratic and economic reforms in countries that want to become EU members and promotes greater stability and prosperity in Europe.)

3. Continental coalition against any war on the continent is a must (message of political unity)

- A collective, joint vision on peace and security between countries of the European continent should reflect a **high level of political unity**.
- Prevention of any military conflict(s) and maintenance of stability in Europe remain of utmost priority.
- **Regular top-level, personal encounters** between heads of nations having sharp disputes between each other remain extremely important. (Like in recent cases of *post-Soviet conflicts* between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh, political problems between Georgia and break-away regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - the latter two supported by military means of Russia -, issues of Moldova with Transnistria aided by Russia, issues of illegal occupation by Russian military forces of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and, of Crimea.)
- Any war(s) in Europe might result in encouraging other nation(s) to carefully study and copy military experiences, buy new military technics and launch its (their) own military aggression(s) thus undermining global safety and security (see: Chinese military "strike drills close to Taiwan."⁸)

4. Europe wants to remain a global political and economic competitor which is also able to defend itself

- Independently from COVID-19 aftermath and grave impacts of the Russian war against Ukraine the European Union intends to remain a strong global economic player exerting forces "*hand in hand*" with other states in Europe.
- Continental countries agree about their intention in building up and developing a strong European defence.

⁷ EU enlargement policy, [information](#). Council of the EU and the European Council.

⁸ China stages 'strike drills' around Taiwan, citing provocation, [news article](#). Reuters.

5. Atlantic alliance is the key framework for Euro-Atlantic security

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) remains the cornerstone of collective European defence.
- **Transatlantic ties and unwavering solidarity** between Atlantic allies are central to the Alliance. They are essential in overcoming the threats and challenges facing us.
- NATO's **renewed investment in collective defence**: Whether combining firmness and dialogue with Russia or adapting its deterrence and defence posture, NATO has successfully established a balanced, deterring but predictable approach.
- Firstly, successive troop deployments, under NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in the **Baltics and Poland**, have enhanced security in Eastern and Northern Europe.
- Secondly, NATO strengthens security in Europe's Southern approaches, and takes part (in particular by contributing naval assets) in the fight against terrorism and other risks in the **Mediterranean region**.
- Recent application of accession by **Sweden and Finland** to NATO is another important confirmation that NATO without a doubt remains the most suitable organisation for ensuring the interoperability of Allied forces, and consistency in their equipment efforts.

Major continental projects listed for EPC in order to meet on-going challenges

a) To jointly protect European infrastructures and effectively counter cyber attacks

- Attacks on **Nord Stream 1** showed that **our infrastructures make Europe vulnerable**. A joint European strategy is needed to protect our essential infrastructures (gas pipelines, cables and satellites).
- Many European countries have suffered **cyber-crime attacks**: some from Iran and some from PRC but majority coming from Russia. Having a strategy between nations of our continent, an intergovernmental co-operation on the fight against cybercrime is strongly needed. (See: Joint Communication on an EU Cyber Defence policy and an Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0).⁹
- Joining continental forces in fighting harmful propaganda and disinformation policies (chiefly by Russia and partly by PRC) is a very important action to move forward.

⁹ Cyber Defence: EU boost action against cyber threats, [press release](#). European Commission.

b) Improving regional co-operation between countries of the European continent

- Co-operation on **major regional issues of development** specifically in **areas of Black Sea, Baltic Sea, North Sea and Caucasus** should be some of the main focal points of our continental interaction.
- Helping **Ukraine**: European countries must contribute to a **resilience fund** helping Ukraine to emerge stronger for its army, its civil society, when war ends. (A **post-war** plan to **re-build infrastructure** is an important subject to be discussed and agreed for how to proceed in helping Ukraine.)

c) A better co-operation on and elaboration of a more integrated energy strategy

- A **more integrated energy strategy**: the European continent must reduce its current heavy dependencies on neighbouring countries that do not share our values. At the same time, Europe has to improve electricity connections and introduce a renewable and stronger future energy strategy.
- Some of the European countries and some regional alliances (like the V4¹⁰) have been forced to shift their attention to dealing with **energy-linked issues**, supporting ideas related to and increasing the use of renewables. No doubt, there is a need to show a much stronger energy responsibility of the EPC nations and shape a better continental co-operation.
- Any steps improving our **connectivity** in Europe remains an important topic for the continent and development of the European economic operators in supporting their role in global competition.

d) Better co-operation on youth policy in Europe

- Many participants highlighted the need for a **common youth policy**. At the first EPC Summit Albania, Serbia and Ireland underlined the idea of having a much more integrated policy in terms of universities and university policy.
- European Union's successful "**Erasmus+ Program**" should be further widened to other countries of the continent adding that funding of this joint Program shall involve affected non-EU countries, as well.
- **Erasmus+** currently helps organising student and doctoral candidate exchanges within the Erasmus+ Programme countries and to and from partner countries.

¹⁰ V4 = Visegrad 4 countries

- By studying abroad with Erasmus+, young persons can improve their communication, language and inter-cultural skills and gain soft skills valued by future employers.
- A students' period spent studying abroad could be combined with a traineeship to gain work experience.
- For the youth of Europe, we need to strengthen a professional co-operation between our universities, our educational policies to allow our youth to enjoy a **European culture beyond borders**.
- European Economic Area countries are expected to offer further financial, organisational and training support to domestic organised civil societies and youth organisations on the continent.
- Co-operation programs involving youth organisations undoubtedly will strengthen civil society organisations in Europe and help their smooth involvement into democratic life.

e) A joint co-operation policy on migrations is needed¹¹

- Political and economic turbulence from regional military conflicts and major phenomena of global climate change near or even far away from the European continent have triggered extensive waves of migration to Europe in the past few decades.
- A strong need among European countries emerged to **regulate these migratory processes**, to discuss and co-operate on how to better solve complex issues of integration, education, medical services, housing, employment etc. Social dialogue in diverse countries started to focus on these issues, as well.
- A close and regular discussion and cooperation between EPC stakeholders on these key issues is a must. It is the only way to prevent local disasters and help other non-European nations to build and develop their economy, prevent climate change and help nations in training and adapting to new challenges.
- Though accompanied by political, cultural and social discussions, there is a wide agreement that Europe needs to have, from the Western Balkans via the European Union to the United Kingdom, an **integrated policy** to allow the reception of those fleeing conflicts and also on the fight against trafficking networks.

¹¹ EU migration policy, [information](#). Council of the EU and the European Council.

- **Issue of migrants** coming to Europe - in the context of negative demographic tendencies on the continent - raised some key points (among others) of proper integration, training and maintaining competitiveness of the European economy.
- Since the height of the migration crisis in 2015, the European Union has introduced measures to **control external borders and migration flows** better. As a result, irregular arrivals to the EU have been reduced by more than 90%.¹²
- Intensive efforts to establish an **effective, humanitarian and safe European migration policy** have been undertaken by the European member states.

f) Refugee inflow from Ukraine

- After February 2022 when Russia launched a military aggression against Ukraine millions of people have fled the war, seeking refuge in EU countries and Moldova.
- In March 2022, the EU introduced a **temporary protection scheme** to alleviate pressure on national asylum systems and to allow displaced persons to enjoy harmonised rights across the EU. These rights include among others right to
 - residence,
 - access to the labour market and housing,
 - medical assistance and access to education for children.

Saving lives at sea and targeting criminal networks

- Migrants and refugees trying to reach Europe have embarked on life-threatening journeys, whilst smugglers have used increasingly dangerous tactics to cross the Mediterranean. The EU has deployed:
 - three Frontex operations in the Mediterranean to rescue migrants at risk and combat migrant smuggling,
 - a naval military operation to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks.

Smuggling centre set up at Europol

- The EU also created the European migrants smuggling centre at Europol in 2016 to help member states crack down on migrant smuggling.

¹² The EU's work on migration and asylum, [information](#). Council of the EU and the European Council.

Integration of third-country nationals

- Relocation and resettlement measures adopted in response to the refugee and migrant crisis have highlighted the need to support member states which have less experience with integration.

 - A closer cooperation between countries of the European continent is needed to recognize national priorities, join efforts and learn lessons in building up a stable continent able to meet on-going and future challenges.
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