

THE EESC AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE POLICY

Recent geopolitical events have prompted the European Institutions to place the issue of European defence at the top of the political agenda. The European Union is faced with the urgent need to respond swiftly and cohesively to a multitude of challenges and potential threats in the military, commercial, technological and supply sectors. During the meeting of the INT Section (Single Market, Production and Consumption) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), held in Brussels on the 2nd of September, an Opinion on European defence policy was approved, with the aim of contributing to the European debate, based on the assumption that the geopolitical context requires decisive action to strengthen a common defence system, but at the same time the challenge is how to invest in common defence, completing the single market, without compromising social cohesion and investment in the well-being of European

citizens, while ensuring compliance with the Treaties. The political debates and divisions within the European Union, linked to the Commission's recent proposals on defence, show that the balance between defence spending and social investment is crucial. A stronger Union from a military point of view must also be a fairer, more cohesive and resilient Union for its citizens. In times of crisis, support for Institutions from the European population and civil society is essential. «We need to monitor the perception of European decisions in the territories - said Councillor Ulgiati - as well as promote a concept of common European defence that integrates social, economic and health dimensions. Transparency, democratic accountability and civic engagement are essential conditions for building citizens' trust in European Institutions, without which - Ulgiati concluded - even the most advanced security policies risk losing their effectiveness and legitimacy».



EU, APPROVES NEW AID PACKAGE FOR KIEV

On the eve of and on the occasion of the 34th Anniversary of Ukraine's Independence from the former Soviet Union, celebrated on the 24th of August, the European Union approved a new aid package worth over €4.05 billion for Kiev. This is an important contribution to supporting the Country's macro-financial stability, strengthening public administration and the functioning of the State, and accompanying internal reforms and economic recovery in a context still marked by war. The largest part of the intervention, amounting to €3 billion, comes from the "Ukraine Facility", the European Union's financial assistance programme for Ukrai-

ne, which came into force on the 1st of March 2024 and will provide up to €50 billion in stable financing, in the form of grants and loans, to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation for the period 2024-2027. Payments under the "Ukraine Facility" are closely linked to the "Ukraine Plan", which outlines the Country's strategy for recovery, reconstruction and modernisation, as well as a roadmap for implementing reforms in line with EU accession objectives over the next four years. The funds were therefore released after Ukraine demonstrated progress in various areas, including public administration, education, the environment and digital

transformation. Another billion was then granted in the form of a soft loan under Ukraine's exceptional macro-financial assistance (MFA), which will be repaid from the proceeds of Russian assets frozen in Europe. This is the first time that these funds have been used directly to help rebuild a Country affected by war, demonstrating the European Union's unwavering commitment and solidarity with Ukraine, not only for its immediate recovery, but also for its future as a sovereign and democratic Country because, as stated by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, «when Ukraine is strong, Europe is stronger too».