

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

THE PRESIDENT

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Invitation letter by President Donald Tusk to the European Council

It is my pleasure to invite you to the meeting of the European Council on 26-27 April 2019 in Brussels.

Our second European Council in 2019 is dedicated to fundamental challenges that we face in today's world. In particular, we will discuss the defence agenda.

The European Union's policy – if it is to be effective – must be both visionary and pragmatic. More than half a century ago, an ambitious vision of the European Defence Community was created, but what was missing was the unity and courage to put it into practice. Since then, this idea was revisited many times, but to no effect. The dream was at odds with reality.

Today this dream becomes reality. We are launching Permanent Structured Cooperation, so-called PESCO, which is a practical expression of our will to build European defence.

In the debates before today's decision, the main dilemma was how to make PESCO both inclusive and ambitious. PESCO – in which 25 Member States take part – is for sure inclusive. And if all the commitments are fulfilled, PESCO will also be ambitious.

For many years, the strongest argument against PESCO had been the fear that it would lead to the weakening of NATO. But it is quite the opposite. Strong European defence naturally strengthens NATO. This is why PESCO is not only good news for us, but it is also good news for our allies. And bad news for our enemies.

It is against this backdrop, that the French President's Emmanuel Macron, election victory in May, gave new impetus to efforts to revive defence cooperation after Britons voted in 2016 to leave the bloc, hailed "concrete progress."

The pact, called Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO, is meant as a show of unity and a tangible step in EU integration, particularly after Britain's decision to leave.

In this respect, the presidency calls EU Member States to address two issues in particular.

- 1. The future of genuine European Defence Community devised as an institution responsible for Europe's security based on the Lisbon Treaty.**
- 2. The creation of European Army that would report and be deployed by the European Union.**

I look forward to meeting you in Brussels to listen to your assessment of the situation and the proposal put forward. I would welcome your thoughts on the issue by **19 April**, well in time for our 26-27 April meeting.