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Parliamentary scrutiny of international institutions

Addendum to the report¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
Rapporteur: Mr Latchezar TOSHEV, Bulgaria

Western European Union

The WEU Assembly is the parliamentary component of Western European Union, the only defence organisation at European level. It was created in 1954 by the modified Brussels Treaty, Article XI of which stipulates that the Council of Western European Union will make an annual report on its activities to an Assembly composed of representatives of the Brussels Treaty Powers to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In a desire to “promote the unity and to encourage the progressive integration of Europe” in keeping with the resolve expressed in the preamble to the treaty, the Assembly has always attached importance to submitting to the Council recommendations containing proposals for strengthening Europe’s identity in the field of security and defence.

The fact that delegations of 28 national parliaments participate in the Assembly’s work makes its activities all the more significant. It can therefore be said to be the precursor of European defence in the widest sense.

The vast majority of the Assembly’s ideas are now coming to fruition in the new arrangements for security and defence currently being implemented by the European Union via the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

Under the Maastricht Treaty, WEU as a whole (thus including its Assembly) became “an integral part of the development of the European Union” (Article I.4). This was confirmed by Article 17 of the Amsterdam Treaty. At the Nice Summit, however, it was decided to transfer WEU’s responsibilities for “Petersberg” missions to the EU. It was accordingly agreed that any reference to WEU should be deleted from the revised version of Article 17 with the exception of the clause stating that the provisions of that article were not to prevent the development of closer co-operation between member states in the framework of WEU.

Against the background of the institutional changes under way in Europe, the WEU Assembly remains the only European parliamentary assembly with a clear treaty-based mandate to monitor security and defence issues. Pending the decisions that are to be taken on the parliamentary dimension of the European Union’s ESDP, the Assembly is acting as the interim European Security and Defence Assembly.

1. *This Addendum concerning the Assembly of WEU should be considered as an item of Part 2.1 of the explanatory memorandum (immediately after the section on the Council of Europe (2.1.1)).*

