

THE EARL OF MINTO
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

4/8/1/4/ap

12 April 2024

Dear William,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) on 28th February 2024 as part of the Inquiry into PESCO and UK-EU Defence Cooperation. My apologies for the time it has taken to write to you since that appearance.

As touched upon in Committee and set out in our written evidence, it is the Government's view that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underlined the importance of addressing any impediments to moving military personnel and assets across Europe at pace. Joining the Military Mobility project would better enable the UK to shape the rules and requirements, including for cross-border military transport procedures and transport infrastructure, which impact the movement of forces across the EU and to reinforce NATO's flanks if required. It would also support our broader drive for NATO-EU coherence and cooperation.

Joining the project would not in any way affect the UK's sovereign control over defence. The Government's position remains that we would not support any measures which undermine our sovereignty over our own armed forces, or that leads to competition or duplication with NATO.

As I said during the evidence session, the UK remains unwavering in its commitment to NATO as the foremost institution governing European security and defence. We continue to stress to European partners that PESCO projects and other EU defence capability and industrial initiatives should respond to NATO capability requirements, support cooperation with non-EU NATO Allies, and promote an open and competitive European defence industry.

As outlined previously, unlike many PESCO projects, the Military Mobility project does not involve procurement, research and capability development, or funding from the EU or EU member states. In addition, the project is designed to coordinate and align NATO and EU military mobility requirements, national activity and EU regulations. It is directed

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by participating states rather than the EU. It is not supported by the European Defence Agency (EDA), therefore the UK will not be required to agree a separate agreement with the EDA, as would be the case for third countries involved in certain other PESCO projects. As it does not develop technology, the Military Mobility project does not raise concerns about third country control of intellectual property or exports.

On the specific questions the Committee raised and on which I pledged to respond in writing, I am happy to provide further clarity.

The Committee asked **(Q158)** for a definition of the scope of the project with regards to the military components involved and what military means in the context of the project. The project, as discussed, is principally focused on moving military personnel and equipment efficiently when required. This means focusing on identifying transport corridors and establishing and streamlining the required customs formalities, permissions and procedures and removing bureaucracy. The project will principally focus on the movement of assets through or over EU Member States, be it via rail, road, air or sea. This project would not alter or impact checks at the UK's Border.

The project does not specifically define the military assets which are to be captured by these enhanced processes. This is to allow for flexibility on the composition of any military deployment should there be an operational requirement for the movement of materiel or personnel across Europe.

Secondly, the Committee asked **(Q186)** if the European Council would have to sign-off the Administrative Arrangement. I can confirm that the Administrative Arrangement is between the project members, and not with the European Union, nor with the European Defence Agency, so the European Council does not have any role in signing off this document. Similarly, the European Court of Justice has no role in the Administrative Arrangement.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. I look forward to receiving the Committee's findings.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothée Minto', written in a cursive style.

THE EARL OF MINTO