

Romania's Contribution to the Military Capabilities Developed through the Projects of the European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation

Maj. Assoc. Prof. Marius PRICOPI, PhD*

*"Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania

e-mail: pricopi.marius@armyacademy.ro

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1869-7084>

Abstract

The Permanent Structured Cooperation is a successful initiative through which the European Union develops military capabilities necessary for strengthening the European dimension of security and defence. Using the case study as a scientific method, the present paper examines Romania's level of involvement in the projects conducted within the institutional framework provided by this Permanent Structured Cooperation. By contributing to a significant number of such projects, Romania clearly demonstrates its capacity to operate in a complex international format and to actively collaborate with a large number of participating states, supporting in this manner the strengthening of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy. The active participation and, in some cases, even the coordination of such projects, highlight both the cumulated level of professionalism and the expertise of the Romanian state, which, through involvement in these initiatives, contributes directly to generating added value in the area of European defence and security.

Keywords:

Permanent Structured Cooperation; Common Security and Defence Policy;
Project; Romania; European Union.

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In an international context marked by significant changes, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) represents one of the main instruments of cooperation available to the European Union (EU) for strengthening its Common Security and Defence Policy. Based on the provisions of Article 42(6) and Article 46 of the Treaty on European Union ([European Union 2025](#)), PESCO is actually one of the initiatives undertaken in the process of strengthening the strategic autonomy of the European Union, alongside the European Defence Fund, the Capability Development Plan and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence ([European Defence Agency 2025](#)).

In this institutional framework, there are currently in conduct no less than 75 projects to develop European military capabilities, with the voluntary participation of 26 out of the 27 EU member states (Malta being the only exception) ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025a](#)). The most popular projects even benefit from the involvement of third states, such as Canada, Norway, and the United States ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#)).

Although PESCO receives considerable attention in the academic literature, the dimension of Romania's involvement should also be explored. Consequently, the present paper aims to bring additional knowledge on how Romania contributes to the acquisition of military capabilities through the Permanent Structured Cooperation.

Scientific Literature Review

Ever since its formal establishment in December 2017, the Permanent Structured Cooperation has benefited from a significant scientific interest. The academic literature reflects two main research directions: the first focuses on the institutional and regulatory framework of PESCO; the second examines the significantly different involvement of member states in PESCO projects (depending on their availability, possibilities, interests, and priorities).

Thus, regarding the first research direction, it is worth mentioning Sven Biscop's paper ([Biscop 2020](#)), as it analyzes how the legal framework and implementation means of PESCO prove sufficient for achieving its initial goals; at the same time, Biscop offers recommendations for optimizing PESCO, such as: focusing on a more specific objective, prioritizing strategically relevant projects, or establishing clear procedures for fulfilling the commitments taken on by participating states. Then, a paper published by Lorenzo Giuglietti at the College of Europe ([Giuglietti 2021](#)) makes the case for the potential of PESCO to facilitate transatlantic cooperation, to strengthen the European defence industry, and to promote improved relations with the North Atlantic Alliance. In a scientific paper written by Benjamin Martill and Carmen Gebhard ([Martill and Gebhard 2023](#)), the authors demonstrate how the concept of "combined differentiation" has basically become a response to the particularities of the European defence environment; furthermore, they analyze how this differentiation has evolved over time.

Regarding the second research direction, the work of Karolina Gawron-Tabor and Rafal Willa ([Gawron-Tabor and Willa 2023](#)) stands out, making a comparative analysis of the involvement of EU member states in PESCO projects; also, the authors identify a series of factors that influence the level of involvement of the countries (such as the regional situation of each state or other political, historical or geographical factors) and analyse some of the issues that could hinder a more significant military cooperation between these countries. In a scientific paper written by Eva Michaels and Monika Sus ([Michaels and Sus 2024](#)), it is argued that, although significant progress has been made, there are still some differences between the national perceptions, approaches, and objectives of the member states concerning the security and defence of the European Union.

Regarding the national academic literature, it is worth mentioning the paper published by Ion Anghel ([Anghel 2019](#)), which also addresses Romania's involvement in PESCO projects; according to the author, this involvement in relevant projects, within a multiannual financial framework, will contribute to the development of a national vision in the area of international cooperation. The topic of PESCO is also discussed in a scientific paper by Dragoş Ilinca ([Ilinca 2022](#)); the author highlights the evolution of PESCO towards a cooperation platform for the development of defence capabilities that thus supports the improvement of the European Union's security and defence profile.

Scientific Methodology

In writing this paper, the scientific methodology of the case study was used, as detailed in the book titled "Doing Case Study Research" ([Hancock, Algozzine, and Lim 2021](#)). Relevant quantitative data have been processed and utilised, and afterwards, these were analyzed through the statistical method (minimum value, maximum value, average, median, distributions, and variations).

Thus, the research question is the following: What is Romania's involvement in the development of the European Union's military capabilities (through the framework provided by the Permanent Structured Cooperation)?

Linked with the research question, the scientific hypothesis is as follows: There is a positive correlation between the level of Romania's specialized and significant military contribution to the development of European military capabilities and the strengthening of its national profile within the Common Security and Defence Policy.

Results and Discussion

According to data published on the official PESCO website ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#)), Romania is currently involved in 18 PESCO projects, out of a total of 75 (Table no. 1). It is indeed a performance, considering that some EU member states are involved in only 3 PESCO projects (as is the case with Denmark

or Slovakia); on the other hand, the biggest contributors to these initiatives are France (49 projects), Italy (40 projects) and Germany (33 projects).

TABLE NO. 1

The involvement of Romania and the other EU member states in PESCO projects

Indicator	Value	Observations
The minimum number of PESCO projects in which some EU member states are involved	3	Denmark, Slovakia
The maximum number of PESCO projects in which a certain EU member state is involved	49	France
The number of PESCO projects in which Romania is involved	18	Position 7 out of 26 EU member states participating in PESCO
The average of EU member states involvement in the PESCO projects	14,76	The value obtained by Romania is 21,95% higher than the average
The median of EU member states involvement in the PESCO projects	12	The value obtained by Romania is 50% higher than the median

Source: Analysis conducted by the author, based on data available on the official PESCO website ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#))

As shown in Table no. 1, on average, EU member states are involved in approximately 14,76 PESCO projects; but considering the major differences that exist in this matter between participating countries, more useful than the average is the median of these involvements, whose value is 12. Thus, the value obtained by Romania is higher than both the average (by 21,95%) and the median (by 50%).

Another observation is that among the 18 projects in which Romania is involved, there are also the 2 that benefit from the highest recognition and support within PESCO; the first is the project "Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations", which benefits from the participation of 20 states, including Canada, and is coordinated by Cyprus, France, and Germany; the second is the project "Military Mobility", in which no less than 28 states participate, including Canada, Norway and the United States, and which is coordinated by the Netherlands ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#)).

Other observations also emerge from the classification by areas of cooperation of the 18 PESCO projects in which Romania is involved (Figure 1). To respect coherence and methodological rigor, the 7 areas used in the classification are those mentioned on the official PESCO website ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#)). Likewise, alongside Romania's involvement, the figure also highlights a balanced involvement, understood as a hypothetical equal distribution of the 18 projects across the 7 areas (with a resulting average of 2,57 projects per area).

Thus, out of the 18 projects, Romania is involved in 6 projects that belong to the "Strategic Enablers and Force Multipliers" area. The presence in these initiatives

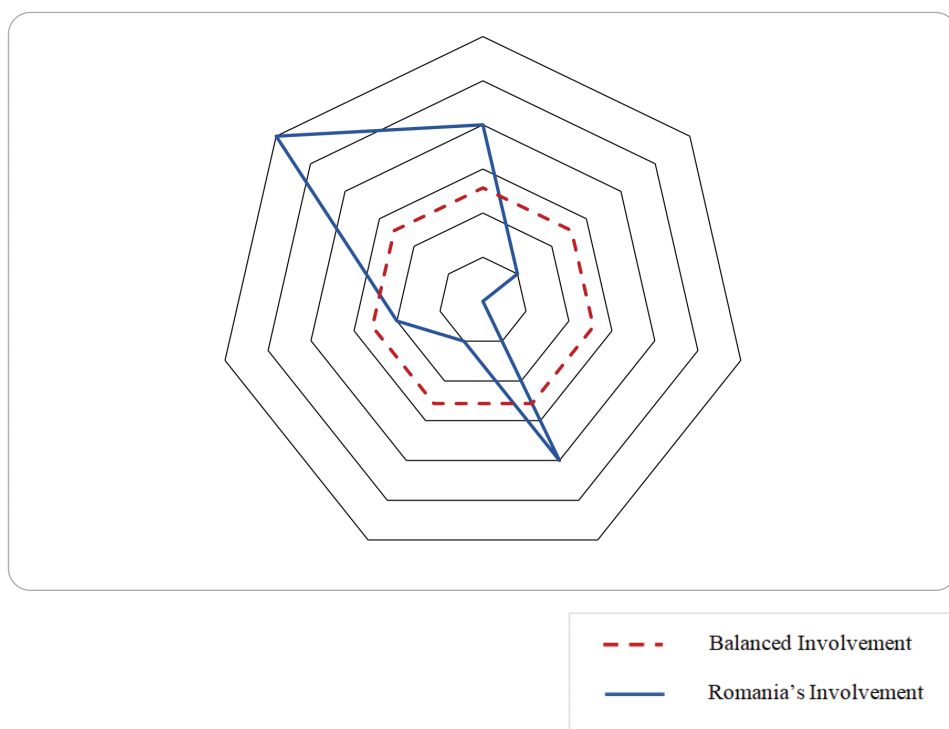


Figure 1 Classification by areas of cooperation of the PESCO projects in which Romania is involved

Source: Analysis conducted by the author, based on data available on the official PESCO website ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#))

(aimed to support and enhance already existing military capabilities) reflects the significant role held by Romania, as a state located on the Eastern border of the European Union (and the North Atlantic Alliance); the Romanian state thus demonstrates that it actively takes on both the opportunities and the challenges that result from its geostrategic position.

Another priority for Romania is the “Training, Facilities” area, in which it is involved in 4 projects. Thus, the Romanian state contributes to various initiatives for the common training of the armed forces belonging to the participating states, enhancing their level of interoperability; at the same time, Romania participates in the development of military facilities that enable training at high standards.

The “Maritime” area also receives a similar attention, with Romania contributing to 4 projects as well; the country’s geostrategic position at the Black Sea, important for the regional and European security, is thus reflected.

Also, Romania’s involvement in the 2 projects regarding the “Space” area (an emerging area for the Romanian state) is commendable and should be encouraged. But Romania’s performance is unbalanced by the reduced participation in the other 3 areas, marking a single presence in the “Cyber”, respectively “Air” areas, and no presence in the “Land” area.

Then, as shown in Table 2, Romania coordinates only 2 of the 18 PESCO projects in which it is involved. It is a relative performance, considering the fact that a group of 7 EU member states do not coordinate any projects; on the other hand, France coordinates 17 projects, and Germany and Italy each coordinate 14 projects ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#)).

TABLE NO. 2

The coordination by Romania and the other EU member states of PESCO projects

Indicator	Value	Observations
The minimum number of PESCO projects coordinated by some EU member states	0	Croatia, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia
The maximum number of PESCO projects coordinated by a certain EU member state	17	France
The number of PESCO projects coordinated by Romania	2	Position 7 (alongside Finland) out of 26 EU member states participating in PESCO.
The average coordination by EU member states of PESCO projects	2.96	The value obtained by Romania is 32.43% lower than the average
The median of coordinations by EU member states of PESCO projects	1	The value obtained by Romania is 100% higher than the median

Source: Analysis conducted by the author, based on data available on the official PESCO website ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025b](#))

According to Table No. 2, on average, EU member states coordinate approximately 2.96 PESCO projects; the value of 2 obtained by Romania is 32.43% lower than the average; again, though, the significant differences among countries make it more useful to highlight the median of these coordinations, whose value is 1. Thus, the value obtained by Romania is 100% higher than the median value.

For example, the first project coordinated by Romania is called “CBRN Defence Training Range”, in the “Training, Facilities” area. The project aims to increase the level of interoperability between participating countries with regard to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence, through individual and collective training ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025c](#)).

The second project coordinated by Romania is called “European Union Network of Diving Centres”, belonging to the same “Training, Facilities” area. This project aims to facilitate the training and certification of divers from participating states, thereby improving the interoperability, deployability, and flexibility of these types of structures ([Permanent Structured Cooperation 2025d](#)).

Conclusions

The Permanent Structured Cooperation remains one of the pillars of the European Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy. Through PESCO, participating states work together to develop European military capabilities.

The portfolio of PESCO projects of the Romanian state is a diversified one, practically covering 6 out of the 7 specific cooperation areas. This fact indicates a comprehensive approach to defence and Romania's interest in contributing to the development of military capabilities across multiple levels. Moreover, through active involvement in PESCO projects, Romania contributes to increasing interoperability between the armed forces of participating states, at the same time enhancing both the European Union's strategic autonomy and its deterrence and defence capacity.

Additionally, the high degree of specialization existing in the 2 projects coordinated by Romania is also noteworthy. By participating in such niche projects, Romania proves itself capable of bringing added value in those areas where it holds a proven expertise. Such an approach allows Romania to maximize its contribution and its positive impact within the European cooperation in the defence area.

In order to maintain its profile visible and relevant within the Common Security and Defence Policy, Romania has to maintain an active and collaborative approach within the institutional framework established through the Permanent Structured Cooperation. Yet, this fact involves not only participation in existing projects for developing military capabilities, but also the coordination by Romania of a larger number of such projects.

Finally, considering all the data and arguments presented, it can be concluded that the scientific hypothesis of this paper has been validated, and the answer to the research question initially formulated has been provided.

In perspective, the following directions of scientific research could prove useful for future efforts to deepen the understanding of this topic: identifying new PESCO projects in which the Romanian state could get involved (as a participant, or preferably as a coordinator); analyzing the correlation between a more balanced distribution across areas of cooperation of the PESCO projects in which Romania could get involved at the European Union level, on the one hand, and the national interests and strategic priorities of the Romanian state, on the other.

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