

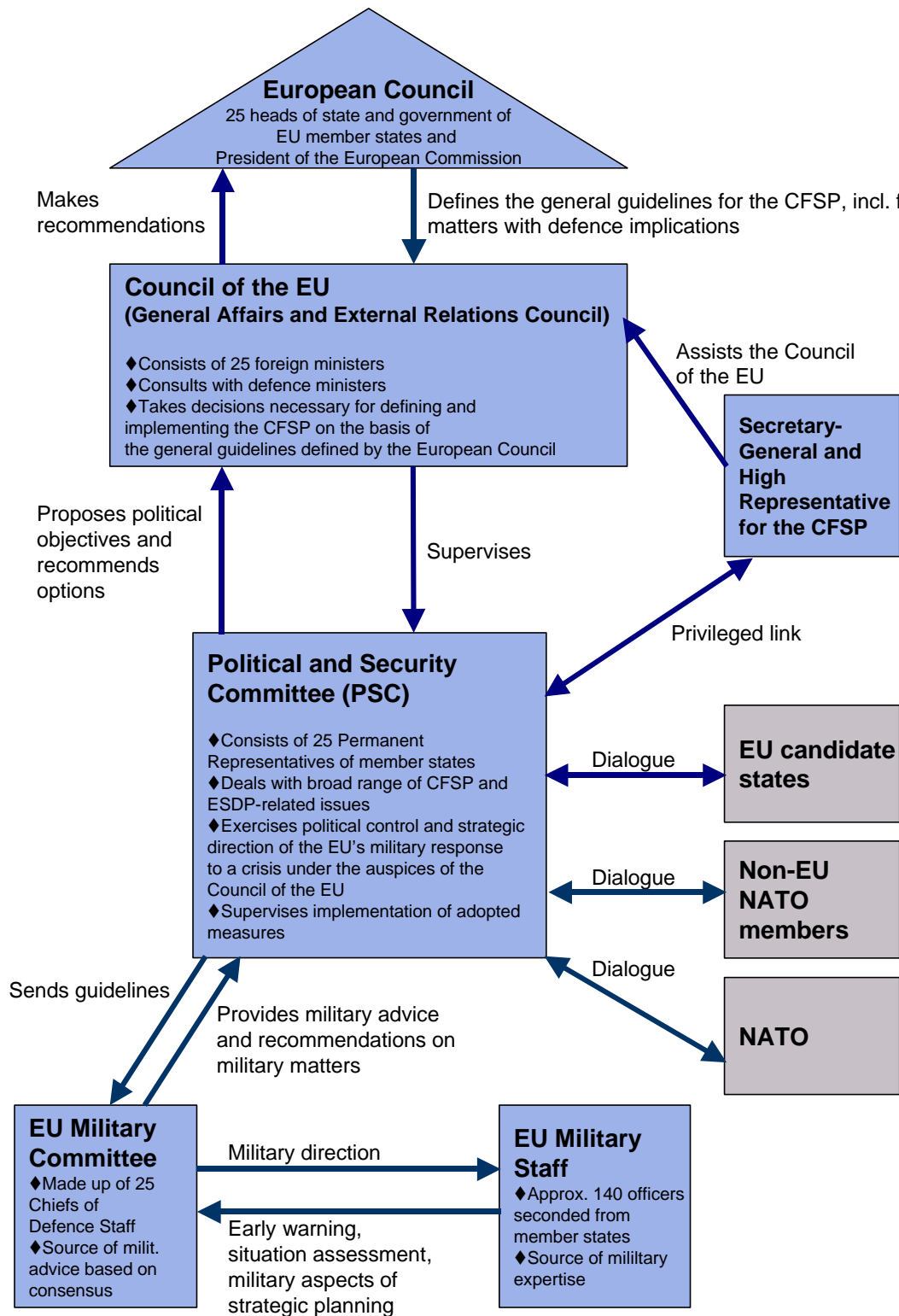
# The ESDP Decision-Making Structure

The framework of the European Union (EU) consists of three pillars - the community pillar, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) pillar, and the pillar that deals with Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters. Even though the EU consists of a single institutional framework, the roles of institutions involved in the decision-making process differ considerably according to the pillar and policy area. In the last two pillars, the intergovernmental approach to policy making prevails.



ESDP seeks to provide the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy with additional substance and a clear profile. Accordingly, all political and military ESDP bodies are firmly placed within the second intergovernmental pillar of the EU, in which the Council of the EU is the main decision-making body. In this context, the role of another institution needs to be emphasized, namely that of the European Council. The European Council brings together the heads of state and government of the EU member states and the president of the European Commission at least four times a year and makes major political decisions on the institutional and policy development of the EU. The consensus-based political direction from the highest government levels has proven to be an essential part of the CFSP pillar, which covers a policy area characterized by national prerogatives. While the European Council may not be involved in ESDP decision-making processes on a day-to-day basis, it defines the general guidelines for CFSP and ESDP matters that the Council of the EU then implements.

This figure shows the autonomous bodies the EU has established to provide the political control and strategic direction of a crisis management mission and to conduct situation and intelligence assessment and strategic planning. The functions of and interaction between the bodies are explained in more detail below.



## **Council of the European Union**

The Council of the EU meets in the form of the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC; formerly known as the General Affairs Council) and is made up of the foreign ministers of EU member states. Its decisions cover all CFSP and ESDP-related matters and are made on the basis of the general guidelines defined by the European Council. The GAERC consults with the ministers of defence, and it exercises political control over all EU-led operations. The Council of the EU is supported by its Secretary-General and High Representative for the CFSP (SG/HR), who formulates, prepares, and implements political decisions and plays a central role in enhancing the EU's foreign relations. The Council of the EU's decisions relating to crisis management tasks are made in accordance with Article 23 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), requiring unanimity in the Council of the EU for decisions with military or defence implications. Member states may abstain from a vote and are then not obliged to apply the ensuing decision. They also retain the right to decide if and when their national forces will be deployed.

## **Political and Security Committee (PSC)**

The PSC (also referred to by its French abbreviation, COPS) is the key element of ESDP. It consists of the Permanent Representatives of the member states, who perform the day-to-day duties and meet two to three times a week in Brussels. The PSC operates under the auspices of the Council of the EU (which alone is able to make legally binding decisions) and is usually chaired by the Permanent Representative of the member state holding the EU presidency. The PSC deals with a broad range of CFSP and ESDP-related issues and defines the EU's response to a crisis. It monitors international developments and the implementation of agreed policies. When it comes to a military response to a crisis, the PSC, under the responsibility of the Council of the EU, exercises political control and defines the strategic direction of the operation. It functions as a coordination agency and consultation forum on ESDP for a number of EU bodies, NATO institutions, and third-party states. It maintains a privileged link with the SG/HR and interacts with the Military Committee of the European Union (see below).

## **European Union Military Committee (EUMC)**

The EUMC is the EU's most senior military body and a forum for military consultation and cooperation between EU member states. It is made up of the 25 Chiefs of

Defence Staff. Its main task is to provide the PSC with consensus-based advice on military matters and to direct all military activities within the EU framework. A four-star flag officer from an EU member state, elected by the 25 Chiefs of Defence and appointed by the Council of the EU for a period of three years, chairs the committee and attends sessions of the Council of the EU when defence-related decisions have to be made.

### **European Union Military Staff (EUMS)**

Under the direction of the EUMC, the EUMS provides military expertise, particularly with regard to the execution of military crisis management operations. It is composed of some 140 officers seconded from EU member states, and it performs three main functions: early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning. It also oversees the process of delivering the military capacity identified in the Helsinki Headline Goal.