

Press release: EU, don't invest in weapons! say +117'800 EU citizens

22-06-2017, Brussels

EU Heads of State and Government are meeting today in Brussels for the June European Summit, and discussions will include the EC proposals for a European Defence Fund.

In a dedicated [online petition](#), +117'800 EU citizens have so far expressed their opposition to the use of EU public money for the research and development of new weaponry. *"Tens of thousands of European citizens, mostly from France, the UK, Germany, Spain, and Italy, have quickly mobilised to send a clear message to their heads of State and Government, that while they want to live in a safe EU, they do not believe this can be achieved by spending billions in weapons - in what amounts to subsidies to the arms industry. They believe there are better ways to spend their tax money to ensure the EU is a safe place."* says Virginia López Calvo, Senior Campaigner at We Move Europe (WeMove.EU).

The EU at a crossroad: supporting under-funded peace or contributing to the global arms race?

On June 7, The EC proposed to add €500 million in 2019 and 2020 for the development phase of new products on top of the €90 million Preparatory Action for defence research covering 2017-2019. From 2021 this figures would go up to €1,5 billion every year for both research and development of new military technology and products.

The EC plans will necessarily mean drastic cuts to the detriment of other -civilian- actions¹ as the current EU budget is fixed, and as it is very unlikely that Member States will increase their contributions to it after 2020, not to mention the loss of the UK contribution after the Brexit.

The main stated objective of these measures is to strengthen the arms industry competitiveness including its capacity to export. *"In the current context of fierce competition in the armament sector and lack of common political guidance, the most probable result of this Defence fund will be to have EU-paid military technology being sold abroad and exacerbating the global arms race. This has little to do with EU citizens' protection"* adds Laëticia Sédou, EU programme officer at the European Network Against Arms Trade.

There is also a high risk that most of the EU funds will go to the big players of the arms industry, which are mainly based in the 5 biggest EU arms exporters (France, UK, Germany, Spain, Italy). The latter are in turn strong supporters of the increased funding.

The jobs and growth argument is not well founded: as the arms industry is dependent on public funds, it creates fewer jobs at a higher cost than other economic sectors²; and R&D investments rather shifts jobs from the civil to the military sector because of skills scarcity³. There are more efficient ways to create jobs and support growth without the negative impact linked to the production of arms.

A much better use of tax payers' money would be to focus on renewables and the environmental sector in general; this would also help tackling major root-causes of instability like climate change and access to resources.

One signatory says "The EU has helped lead the world in showing how working together in cooperation is the best way to create a peaceful world. This is not done by even more arms in the world."

¹ For 2019-2020 it will be taken mainly from the Connecting Europe Facility (internal energy market and security of supply, sustainable development and environment protection), the European satellite navigation programmes and unallocated margin

² R. Pollin & H. Garret-Peltier, "The US Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities", 2011 update (Amherst, MA: Political Economic Research Institute, University of Massachusetts 2011) and [2017 update](#)

³ Dunne & Braddon: Economic Impact of Military R&D, Flemish Peace Institute 2008

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More information

[Peace groups denounce new EC initiatives favouring the arms industry and triggering global arms race](#)

[EU should give more funds to peace, not subsidise the arms industry \(Opinion\)](#)

[How the arms industry is staging a European coup \(Opinion\)](#)

[EU defence policy ready for psychiatric treatment \(Opinion\)](#)