

## **EU Defence Fund provisional agreement sets dangerous precedent against democratic functioning of the EU**

Brussels, 26 March 2019

Yesterday the Industry & Research Committee (ITRE) of the European parliament (EP) adopted the provisional agreement reached with the EU Council on a European Defence Fund for 2021-2027. **The final vote in Plenary session is planned on April 17.**

As it currently stands, this compromise text **sets a dangerous precedent against the democratic functioning of the EU and in particular against the oversight role of the Parliament:** under derogatory rules, the Commission will adopt the work programmes of this Fund through 'implementing acts' (art.27), thus excluding the European Parliament while Member States are given a de facto veto power through the Programme Committee (art. 28.2).

What was supposed to be an exception for the 2-years pilot programme preceding the Defence Fund\*, in order to respond to a specific time constrain, is to become the norm for the following 7 years, and not only for a new sensitive area of work: the same derogation is now being proposed for the Connecting Europe Facility, (funding instrument for trans-European networks), raising the risk of Member States systematically bypassing the European Parliament and undermining EU democratic procedures.

The Conference of Presidents, consisting of the EP president and political groups chairs, had given a clear mandate to the EP negotiators NOT to accept a compromise on the Defence Fund that would undermine EP's traditional involvement in programming. This was ultimately ignored under political and national considerations.

*"It is without precedent that a Parliament with legislative and budgetary power gives up its scrutiny role over a 7-years €13 billion fund. Such a compromise will pave the way for the EU to become merely a cash cow for an agglomerate of national short-term interests, and the Parliament reduced to a rubber-stamping body"* alerts **Ann Feltham, Parliamentary co-ordinator for CAAT (UK).**

The provisional agreement still raises a number of serious concerns ENAAT has regularly alerted on. In particular, **the ethical review falls short of being transparent and credible** (art 7).

Ethical screenings will happen only before the signature of the grant contract and on the basis of prior ethical self-assessments by the industry itself; the list of independent experts to assist the EC in evaluation and monitoring tasks will not be made public, making it impossible to double-check possible conflicts of interest; and the possibility to carry out ethical checks during a project implementation or to terminate it on ethical grounds have been removed.

*"Presented as a response to civil society concerns, this ethical review rather looks like a farce, giving a central role to the industry and using 'national security' as an excuse for blanket secrecy"* says **Bram Vranken, Spokesperson for Vredesactie (B).**

**The EU Defence Fund will also exacerbate the global arms race, despite official denials.**

Contributing to the industry competitiveness is one of the stated objectives of the Fund, and *"creating new market opportunities across the Union and beyond"* is part of the award criteria. On the other hand the EU will have no say on the export of EU-funded military goods as Member States, with divergent practices, will keep full control of the licensing of EU-funded arms exports. The compromise even rejects the EP proposal not to support the research and development of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) when mainly for export purposes.

*"As the European military industry makes a large share of its sales outside Europe, subsidizing arms industry R&D to boost its global competitiveness will inevitably increase EU arms exports to areas where there is tension or conflict; in turn weapons proliferation encourages the use of force rather than peaceful solutions"* adds **Wendela de Vries, Co-ordinator at Stop Wapenhandel (NL).**

\* the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) will dedicate €500 million to the development phase of military technologies in 2019-2020

## The EU Defence Fund will still contribute to the development of controversial weapons.

While the exclusion of lethal autonomous weapons without the possibility of human control over critical functions, won by the EP, is to be welcomed, R&D for other autonomous or unmanned systems is allowed, including armed drones or fully autonomous systems “for “defensive purpose only”.

*“Also, not all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear technology or white phosphorus, are excluded. In a context where ‘obvious’ international treaties can suddenly be put into question by superpowers, it is a concern that the EU avoids defining reliable standards when it comes to developing new weaponry”* concludes **Francesco Vignarca, Coordinator of the Italian Disarmament Network.**

The [European Network Against Arms Trade](#) (ENAAT) is an informal network of peace groups and individuals who see the arms trade as a threat to peace, security and development, and the arms industry as a driving force behind the global arms race.

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### More information:

[Progress report reflecting the common understanding reached on the European Defence Fund](#), 01.03.2019

Joint statement: [44 non-profit organisations across Europe alert on 4 major risks the European Defence Fund entails](#), 15.11.2018 (CZ, EN, FR, NL, SP, SW)

press release: [EP allows EU militarisation and the development of controversial weapons](#), 03.07.2018 (EN, FR, IT, NL)

Open Statement to MEPs: [“stop EU funding to military R&D”](#), 29.06.2018

Press release: [Over 700 researchers call on colleagues to speak out against EU military research programme](#) 27.06.2018 (EN, ES, FR, IT)

Press release: [The European Defence Fund will merely benefit the industry and trigger arms race in autonomous weapons, says ENAAT](#) 13.06.2018 (DE, EN, FR, IT)

Opinion article: [Support for the arms industry will not make the world a safer place](#)

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

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

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[ENAAT Online Information Tool on the European Defence Fund](#)