

Press Release

Today the European Parliament will take a decisive vote for the future of Europe, a vote that will bury or endorse the European Defence Fund. The European Network Against the Arms Trade (ENAAAT) calls upon MEPs to stop EU militarisation and save the EU peace project.

WILL EU PARLIAMENTARIANS SAVE OR END THE EUROPEAN PEACE PROJECT?

Brussels, 29 April 2021

Today, Members of the European Parliament will hold final vote on the European Defence Fund (EDF), which will divert €8 billion of the EU budget (2021-2027) to fund the Research and Development (R&D) of new or enhanced weaponry and military technology. It is the first time that EU money will be used for military purposes, although this is prohibited by European treaties.

EU funding for military R&D has been agreed after concerted lobbying by the arms industry, to be the main beneficiary from these multi-billion subsidies. Two pilot programmes are already under way¹ and diverting half a billion euros from the last EU budget (2014-2020) to subsidise armament companies and military research centres across the EU, at the expense of civilian programmes.

"According to our findings, the four major military powers in Europe (France, Italy, Spain and Germany) and the eight companies that advised the EC to create this funding are now the major beneficiaries of it", says Wendela de Vries, coordinator at Stop Wapenhandel (NL).

The EU Defence Fund will exacerbate military spending and the global arms race

In 2020 the world military expenditure reached almost US\$2 trillion, and EU is third in the world: "the EU 27 increased their military spending by 4.6% over 2019, to €204.2 billion. The EDF is an add-on to these expenditures, and Member States committed to further increase their national spending under PESCO" continues **Jordi Calvo, senior researcher and coordinator at Centre Delas (SP).**

Moreover, *"creating new market opportunities across the Union and beyond"* forms part of the EDF award criteria. *"In other words, it will subsidise arms dealers to develop new weapons and military technology for EU use and export, in a context of weakening export control practices"* explains **Francesco Vignarca, Campaigns coordinator at Rete Pace & Disarmo (IT).**

The EU Defence Fund is a threat to a democratic Union

Under exemption rules, the EDF will be carried through 'implementing acts' instead of 'delegated acts'. *"This means that the EP will hardly have a say as to how the Fund will be implemented by the Commission and Member States in the next seven years. And the security interest argument is regularly used to bypass EU transparency rules. It is a dangerous precedent which undermines EU democratic control"* states **Laëticia Sédou, Project officer at ENAAAT.**

The EU Defence Fund is a threat to peace and International Law

Projects funded under the EDF will focus on unmanned systems, artificial intelligence and other disruptive technologies 'that will radically change the way to conduct war'. The impact on the field of such 'enhanced weaponry' is a matter of concern for International Law experts. *"Yet current ethical reviews¹, when they exist at all, do not comply with the international obligation to consider how these technologies could undermine International Law. And the European Ombudsman recently [expressed concern about the lack of transparency of the Commission in this matter](#)",* according to **Bram Vranken, researcher at Vredesactie (BE).**

It is claimed that turning the EU into a 'hard power' would strengthen its 'soft power'. *"The reality is that with the EDF, Europe is preparing for war; developing the EU 'hard power' will rather marginalise peaceful alternatives and discredit its peace work in the field"* concludes **Tony Fortin, researcher at l'Observatoire des armements (FR).**

The EU should remain as an alternative to the global military power hegemonies; instead, it should invest its resources into promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and addressing their root-causes, such as climate change and unequal distribution of wealth and power.

ENAAAT calls on Euro-parliamentarians to save the European peace project and reject the Defence Fund.

¹ The Preparatory Action for Defence Research (PADR) and the EU Defence industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) diverted 590 million from the EU budget in 2017-2020

For more information:

ENAAT 2020 fact-sheet (updated 16.04.21) '[Who profits from of the EU Defence Fund?](#)' Also available in [French](#)

ENAAT 2019 fact-sheet '[What is the EU Defence Fund](#)', also available in [Dutch](#), [French](#), [German](#) and [Spanish](#).

[Ombudsman decision](#) on case [1839/2020/OAM](#) about transparency of EC procedure to check EDIDP compliance with International law

'Unethical and amoral. How the EU weapons programme neglects human rights', Bram Vranken, 21.09.2021

'Securing profits. How the arms industry is hijacking Europe's defence policy', Bram Vranken, published by Vredesactie, October 2017

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