

'Defence Readiness Omnibus': Civil society calls on policymakers to prevent the weakening of arms exports control

Open letter to: MEPs members of the EP negotiating team
Commissioner Kubilius & cabinet, DG DEFIS
Cyprus Presidency of the Council & EUCO Secretariat
COARM working group
National ministries responsible for arms export licences

Brussels, 8/05/2026

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

The negotiations on the EU omnibus package relating to defence are well advanced and about to conclude, including on the proposals modifying the Transfer directive regulating intra-EU arms exports.

The undersigned civil society organisations urge you, in your respective capacities, to prevent arms export control systems from being weakened under the pretext of 'simplification' and 'efficiency'. Weapons and military technology cannot be sold like toys or cans of beans, and EU governments are the ones responsible for ensuring compliance with European and international law, in particular the EU Common position on arms exports, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention on the prevention of genocide.

However, if the initial proposals and many of the parliamentary amendments were to be adopted, national authorities would de facto be unable to monitor the final destination of a significant portion of their transfers, including exports outside the EU, in particular regarding components and military technology. To prevent this to happen, the following proposals should be rejected (see detailed argumentation in the referenced papers):

- Proposals to extend the concept of cross-border partnerships and cooperation beyond EU countries, as this would allow facilitated transfers to countries not bound by the EU Common position, and further blur the line between intra-EU transfers and overseas exports.
- Proposals to expand or impose the use of General Transfers Licences (GTLs):
general licences already limit arms export controls as they authorise unlimited amounts and quantities of the listed goods to be actually transferred to (a) given recipient(s) over several years; expanding their use to a wider range of actors and situations would have a significant impact on Member States' capacity to monitor where their military goods and technology actually end. GTLs under EU-funded projects should remain optional and limited to EU countries, while the possibility to expand GTLs for disruptive technologies, innovative processes and critical readiness, as well as for transfers *by* certified companies (and not only *to*), should be discarded altogether.
- The proposal to ban end-user certificates under GTLs for EU-funded projects should also be rejected: despite their limitations, these certificates remain one of the few tools for Member States to monitor, in some way, the destination and end-users of their military products under GTLs.
- Proposals to expand or impose the use of exemptions are of particular concern:
generally speaking, exempting military goods or technologies from any prior authorisation runs counter to international commitments, and any proposal to make such an exemption mandatory should therefore be rejected outright. Any extension of the scope for exemptions beyond existing cases should also be rejected, including for EU-funded projects, as Member States remain responsible for compliance with arms export restrictions even if their share in the final weaponry is limited. Proposals to authorise exemptions within the framework of broader European partnerships, in 'crisis' situations or in the context

of EU missions amount to exempting arms exports outside the EU from any authorisation and will facilitate arms deliveries to conflict zones or fragile states. Exempting transfers to suppliers and recipients belonging to the same company or group also opens a dangerous Pandora's box at a time when the arms industry is becoming increasingly globalised.

- Proposals to give delegated power to the EC on matters related to arms transfers are also problematic and should all be rejected: this would go far beyond the original purpose of delegated acts and would grant the European Commission the power to define key elements of national export control systems, even though it has no such competence according to EU treaties. Moreover, the Commission considers these issues mainly from the perspective of the arms industry interests and does not include critical civil society, and peace movements in particular, in its stakeholders' dialogues.
- Other problematic proposals should be rejected, such as the one aimed at limiting the preconditions imposed on suppliers applying for licences, as this would apply to non-EU and perhaps even non-European entities, given the current globalisation of the arms industry; or the one limiting transparency for transfers of non-tangible goods and software, as those transfers can be very sensitive in particular considering the massive development of unmanned and autonomous systems. If a Member States Working Group was to be set-up, it should also assess the interaction between intra-EU transfers and exports outside the EU, and engage proactively with civil society, in particular with European and national peace and human rights groups monitoring the arms trade.

In many other omnibus bills, ranging from agriculture to the digital sector, the argument of simplification is misused to push through major policy decisions under the guise of technical adjustments, and civil society concerns have been largely ignored. The Omnibus for defence is no exception: it has already narrowed the definition of controversial weapons to four categories of prohibited weapons, thereby allowing sustainable finance to invest not only in nuclear weapons but also in disruptive technologies such as drones and autonomous weapons (potentially contributing to the development of lethal autonomous weapons). It is now up to you to prevent this bill from facilitating arms sales worldwide, as well as from weakening environmental and safety standards under the defence readiness proposals, primarily to the benefit of the arms industry.

We thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal should you want to meet or have further questions.

Sincerely yours,

Adéquations (France)

Attac France (France)

Campaign Against Arms Trade (UK)

Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau (Spain)

Coordination Nationale d'Action pour la Paix et la Démocratie (Belgium)

Corporate Europe Observatory

Die Bürokratiemonster (Germany)

European Network Against Arms Trade

Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice

EgyptWide for Human Rights

Friends of the Earth Sweden (Sweden)
Inštitút ľudských práv -Human Rights Institute (Slovakia)
International Peace Bureau
PAX (Netherlands)
Pax Christi Flanders (Belgium)
Peace Union of Finland (Finland)
Rete Pace & Disarmo (Italy)
Saferworld
Stop Fuelling War, Cessez d'Alimenter la guerre (France)
The Good Lobby
Observatoire des armements (France)
Ohne Rüstung Leben (Germany)
Palombar - Associação de Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural (Portugal)
Petites Singularités (Belgium)
Stop Wapenhandel (Netherlands)
Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (Sweden)

Supporting documents:

Sédou Laëtitia, "[L'Omnibus défense de la Commission européenne: ajustements mineurs ou choix politiques majeurs?](#)", Éclairage du GRIP, 17/04/2026.

ENAAT [Letter to EP and Council negotiators](#), 06/02/2026

ENAAT Briefing note "[Weakening Arms Trade Rules, or how to sell principles & ethics for the sake of arms dealers](#)", 07/01/2026

ENAAT Position paper "[Will the Parliament sell off fundamental principles of arms exports control in the name of profit and competitiveness?](#)", 04/12/2026