



Church and Peace

International Office

Church and Peace - the ecumenical peace church network of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies in Europe

Today's vote of the European Parliament on the Defence Fund: Parliament's majority focuses on arms investment instead of strengthening civilian conflict management

WETHEN, 12 December 2018 - Church and Peace's Board comments on today's vote on the European Parliament's negotiating mandate for the European Defence Fund:

"Budgetary decisions are an indication of a change of political direction. We therefore consider as wrong today's decision by the European Parliament to invest heavily in the military sector as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027). According to the EU Commission, the €13 billion European Defence Fund will make the European Union the fourth largest investor in arms research among the EU states. Together with other European NGOs, we have already issued an urgent warning against this in a statement by the European Network against Arms Trade.¹

Various motions in Parliament, as well as current reports², also point to the fact that the Defence Fund is legally questionable. We regret that the majority of MEPs have spoken out against the fact that the technology to be promoted by the Fund can only take place in strict compliance with the EU's own rules on arms exports. The only positive aspect is that MEPs exclude the promotion of lethal autonomous weapons systems such as drones and, at the request of the Greens/EFA, nuclear weapons and their means of delivery.

In addition to the decision for a €13 billion Defence Fund, Parliament today also approved a further €6.5 billion EU budget for 'Military Mobility'³, which we also reject. With this decision, the EU is serving NATO by agreeing to take on NATO's original tasks.

These decisions by the European Parliament reinforce our concern that the very rapidly growing EU military budget will be financed by a massive cut in civilian spending. This is in line with the fact that the new foreign policy instrument (NDICI) will not increase the funds for civilian conflict prevention and management, but reduce them by more than half to €1 billion for the period 2021-2027. Together with partners at the national level such as Bread for the World and the Peace Commissioner of the EKD, we as a European ecumenical network of peace churches, peace organisations and communities are deeply concerned by the decisions of the European Union to increase spending on military instruments and invest less instead of more resources in civilian peacebuilding.

In a world marked by injustice and violence, security - the central keyword of the EU - is not achieved through more weapons, but through a decisive commitment to justice and civilian conflict prevention and management.

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¹Joint Letter of the European Network against Arms Trade, www.enaat.org, 15.11.2018

² See: legal opinion Fischer-Lescano, december 2018, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/ruestung-eu-verteidigungsfonds-laut-gutachten-illegal-a-1242792.htm>

³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2018-0409+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>