



European Centre for Workers' Questions

EZA 2026 Brussels Conference

Social Justice in a Rearming Europe

Tuesday, 3 March 2026

Renaissance Hotel - Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels

Conference languages: EN, ES, FR, DE, IT, SR

Programme

As Europe accelerates its rearmament amid renewed geopolitical confrontation, a key question arises: how can this security turn be reconciled with the European Union's commitment to peace, solidarity, and respect for human dignity? The EZA 2026 Brussels Conference addresses this question by examining Europe's current security and defence agenda from the perspective of workers and their organisations.

The conference will explore the role of trade unions in advancing a comprehensive understanding of security—one that goes beyond the military dimension to include diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, social justice, and the protection of human dignity.

It will also discuss the social and economic consequences of rising military expenditure, focusing on how increased defence budgets are financed, the trade-offs they entail, and their effects on growth, employment, and inequality.

Finally, the conference will turn to the Defence Readiness Omnibus, assessing how this new package aimed at accelerating defence preparedness may affect employment conditions and labour standards, and how workers' organisations can engage constructively in the forthcoming policy debate.

- 09:00 Registration and coffee
- 09:30 Welcoming Address: **Luc van den Brande**, President, EZA
- 09:45 **Keynote Speech: The Challenge of Peace**
Rethinking International Organisations in an Age of Power Politics
Anne-Cécile Robert, Deputy Director, Le Monde Diplomatique
- 10:45 Coffee break



11:15 **PANEL I - Beyond military power: A comprehensive approach to security**
Multilateralism, diplomacy and social justice in the EU's security strategy

General Christophe Gomart

MEP, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Security and Defence

Orry Van de Wauwer

Director, Pax Christi Flanders

Irene Wintermayr

Policy Officer, ILO Office for the EU and the Benelux countries

Ludovic Voet

Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

12:45 Lunch

14:00 **PANEL II - The Social and Economic impact of military expenditure**
Military spending, growth, employment and social trade-offs

Dr. Nan Tian

Senior Researcher and Programme Director, Stockholm International
Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Dennis Radtke

Member of the European Parliament, EPP EMPL Coordinator

Dr. Patrick Kaczmarczyk (online)

Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Economics, Universität Mannheim

15:30 Coffee break

16:00 **PANEL III - Spotlight on the Defense Readiness Omnibus**
Speed, Simplification and Workers' Rights

Paraskevi Papantoniou

Head of Unit A3, DG DEFIS, European Commission

Isabelle Barthès

Deputy General Secretary, industrial European Trade Union

Dr. Ionela Maria Ciolan

Research Officer, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

17:30 Conclusions: **Pier Giorgio Sciacqua**, Co-President, EZA

17:45 Participants' evaluation

18:00 End of the conference