E.L.E.C. - European League for Economic Cooperation

Europe's defense amid today's foreign policy challenges: between Strategic autonomy and global security

Brussels, 1st October 2026

European Economic and Social Committee (Room JDE63)

RATIONALE

This Conference, promoted by a group of European research institutions and think tanks, including the European League for Economic Cooperation, Eurispes, Association Jean Monnet, the Triffin International Foundation, and the Martens Centre, aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on the future of European defense by proposing a **strategic, institutional, and value-based framework** for a European Defense Policy.

Recent geopolitical developments have highlighted both the **growing external pressures on the European Union** and its **internal structural vulnerabilities**, particularly in the areas of decision-making, coordination, and global influence. While Member States have increased national defense efforts, the persistence of fragmentation and duplication risks undermining the effectiveness and credibility of Europe as a global actor.

The initiative presented at this Conference is based on a different premise: European defense should not be conceived as a process of rearmament, but as a **policy for peace**, consistent with the founding values of the European project. Its objectives are to strengthen Europe's capacity to act **with one voice** combining defense capabilities with diplomacy, international cooperation, and the promotion of a rules-based global order.

In this perspective, the Conference will address three key priorities:

- the **rationalization of national defense expenditures** and the reduction of inefficiencies through greater integration;
- the development of **common standards and a coordinated industrial base**, capable of ensuring both operational effectiveness and economies of scale;
- the launch of a **new institutional process**, inspired by the experience of the "Delors Committee", aimed at defining a roadmap for a European Defense and Foreign Policy Union.

Beyond its technical and institutional dimensions, this initiative is also grounded in a broader reflection on Europe's role in the world. Drawing on the legacy of Aldo Moro and the "Spirit of Helsinki", recently recalled in contemporary debates on peace and security, European defense must remain anchored in **human rights, dialogue, and international cooperation**, avoiding the risks of an exclusively deterrence-based approach.

The Conference intends to foster an open dialogue among policymakers, experts, industry representatives, and civil society, with the aim of building a **shared and forward-looking European vision** for peace, security, and global responsibility

Agenda

09:30 – 10:00	**Welcome Session**
	Chair: • **Sergio Arzeni,** ELEC Board member, former OECD Director **Speakers:** • **Sandra Parthie**, President European Economic and Social Committee • **Javier Arias**, International president ELEC, European League for Economic Co-operation • **Umberto Triulzi** Spokesman for the promoters of the Think-Tanks Initiative, president, Eurispes' Europa Lab, Rome and member of the Steering Committee of the Jean Monnet Association Keynote address on **European Integration for Peace, the teaching of Pope Leo and Magnifica Humanitas** by:

	• **H.E. Mgr Luc Terlinden,** Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels, President of the Belgian Episcopal Conference **Purpose:** • Frame the Conference as a **civil society-driven initiative** • Emphasize that European policies, including Defense (EDP) is **peace-oriented**, not rearmament-driven • Recall the political urgency highlighted in the **Draghi** report
10:00 – 11:30	**Session I**
	From Rearmament to Peacebuilding and Global Security: A Strategic Vision of European Defense and Foreign Policy **Core Theme:** Reframing European defense as a **peace and cooperation policy**, rooted in European values, multilateralism and international law. **Key Issues:** • EDP as an instrument for **peace, stability, and rules-based order** • Overcoming the logic of **national rearmament and fragmentation** in the name of a common European strategic framework • Link with EU Treaty obligations (Art. 42.7 – mutual assistance clause) to be operationalized • Defense as a pillar of a **future EU foreign policy**, and foreign policy as a pillar of European Defense and Global Security • Europe as a global actor for peace security and cooperation • European defense as a **gateway to a unified foreign policy to promote a new world order** • Europe's global role: diplomacy, mediation, development and cooperation • Inclusion of necessary and like-minded partners: Ukraine, UK, Norway, and possibly others • Strategic autonomy, transatlantic relations and a new world order • Building a **coalition of willing countries** (avant-garde approach)

	Moderator: • **Paul Taylor,** European Policy Centre (EPC), Brussels **Speakers:** • **Pier Virgilio Dastoli,** President, The European Movement, Italy • **Marcin Nowacki,** President TEN Section, EESC former vice president of the Polish Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers • **Penny Naas,** Senior vice president GMF, German Marshall Fund of the USA and Head of Brussels Office • **Jim Cloos**, Trans European Policy Studies Association, Brussels Discussion with participants **Purpose of the Session:** • Establish the **normative foundation**: Europe is **not at war**, but must be capable of defending peace • Clarify that **defense integration strengthens diplomacy** and investment, not militarization • Link EDP to **European identity and values**
11:30 – 13:00	**Session II**
	Efficiency, Scale, and Integration: Reforming European Defense Capabilities **Core Theme:** How to transform fragmented national spending into a **cost-effective and efficient European defense system** **Key Issues:** • Reducing duplications in national defense expenditures • Standardization: munitions, datalinks, cybersecurity, logistics • Economies of scale in strategic sectors (drones, missiles, air/naval defense) • Industrial policy dimension: toward a **European defense industry**

	• Lessons from existing cooperation (e.g., PESCO, joint procurement) **Moderator:** • **Paul Adamson,** Encompass Europe **Speakers:** • **Camille Grand**, Secretary General of the European Aerospace, Security and Defense Industries (ASD), Brussels • **Ilana Bet-El,** Dept. War Studies, King's College, London • **Jean-Marc Vigilant,** General, Euro Defense, France Discussion with participants **Purpose of the Session:** • Demonstrate concretely how **integration reduces costs and increases capability** • Show that **efficiency is tantamount to political credibility** • Build consensus on **binding common standards**
13:00 – 14:00	**Lunch Break**
14:00 – 15:30	**Session III**
	Governance and Strategy: A "Delors Committee" for European Defense **Core Theme:** Designing the institutional architecture for a **European Defense and Foreign Policy Union** **Key Issues:** • Proposal for a "Delors Defense Committee" inspired by Jacques Delors • Mandate: 10-month roadmap for reform, 10-years for medium-long timeframe • Governance: majority voting in place of unanimity (veto power) • Sharing of sovereignty in defense and foreign policy and corresponding transfer of prerogatives

	• Role of Ukraine in the new architecture **Moderator :** • **Laurent Cohen-Tanugi,** Board Member, Institut Jacques Delors and the Insitut Jean Monnet **Speakers :** • **Giles Merritt,** founder Friends of Europe, former FT correspondent • **Daniel Fiott,** Diplomacy and Strategy, VUB, Brussels • **Bernard Snoy et d'Oppuers**, Chairman, Robert Triffin International (RTI) Association, Honorary President International of ELEC • **Federico Reho,** Wilfried Martens Centre, Brussels Discussion with participants **Purpose of the Session** • Translating vision into **institutional feasibility** • Launch debate on a **new Treaty framework** • Build political support for a **structured, time-bound reform process**
15:30 – 17:00	**Session IV**
	From Defense and Foreign Policy to Economic Social and Financial Reforms and Investment: How to Create a Security Environment for the European Citizens **Core Theme:** • Defense integration as a prerequisite for a **single EU foreign policy** **Key Issues:** • Defense integration as a prerequisite for a **single EU foreign policy** • How to support defense and foreign policy through structural reforms and integration in industrial policies, research, technology, space, education and training, savings

	investment and capital market. **Keynote address:** • **Pooling private savings for investment in European Security** by **Giuseppe Fusilli**, Founder Partner Director, Azimut Holding S.p.A and **Rodolfo Errore**, Investment Committee Member Azimut Fund Secure Europe Technologies **Moderator:** • **Yves Leterme,** Former Belgian PM and DSG at the OECD **Speakers:** • **Paolo Garonna,** President, Foundation Centesimus Annus Pro Pontefice (FCAPP) • **Malgorzata Bonikowska,** President, Centre for International relations**,** Warsaw • **Olivier Vedrine,** Director, Association Jean Monnet • **Jan Figel,** former EU Commissioner for Education, Culture and Innovation Discussion with participants **Purpose of the Session:** • Position the EDP within a **broader geopolitical vision** • Highlight Europe's role as a **peacebuilding global actor, a vibrant liberal democracy and an efficient and prosperous social market economy** • Generate political momentum toward a **Foreign Policy Union** through investment and reforms
17:00 – 17:30	**Closing Session**
	Conclusions and Next Steps **A message from Patrick Collison, Co-Chair the Rhine Group Think-Tank, CEO, Stripe (TBC)** By **Javier Arias and Paolo Garonna, ELEC**

	• Launch of: - A **joint declaration of participating institutions** - Proposal to establish the **"Delors Defense Committee"** - Roadmap and follow-up meetings

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