

## Press Release

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Florence, 28.11.2024

### **The European Commission does not tolerate any other views: Weapons financing must be considered 'sustainable'**

Yesterday, the "EU Defence Industrial Investment Forum" took place in Brussels and online. The aim was to discuss how ESG barriers hinder the financing of defence companies and how these can be removed to encourage banks and investors to invest more in the defence industry.

A representative of the Shareholders for Change network, **Tommy Piemonte**, Head of Sustainable Investment Research at Bank für Kirche und Caritas (BKC), **was excluded from the discussion during the meeting.**

"I attended the meeting online and **asked questions** in writing during the Q&A session in the designated chat," said Piemonte. "My two questions were essentially about why the defence industry and the EU Commission bodies present are so keen to label weapons as sustainable and what measures they intend to take to put the defence industry on a more sustainable path in its activities and behaviour. Then **I was kicked out of the event**".

**Andrea Baranes** of Fondazione Finanza, another member of SfC who took part in the online meeting and called for Piemonte's reinstatement in the chat, is still shocked: "The **European Commission** does **not** seem to **tolerate voices critical of the single doctrine** now in force: that arms must be financed at all costs, even with socially responsible funds".

After more than an hour and an additional email exchange with the organisers of the event (the EU Defence Industrial Investments Team), Tommy Piemonte was allowed back in on the grounds that he had been temporarily removed for "disrupting the meeting" and that he should bear in mind that the purpose of the forum was to engage with the defence sector.

This is all the more surprising given that the whole event was about listening to the perspectives of the financial and defence industries, e.g. one panel was entitled "Supporting the Defence Industry: Banking and Investor Perspectives on Priorities and Challenges". However, the aim seemed to be only to listen to questions and demands that went in a certain direction.

For example, **it was discussed what hurdles need to be removed so that defence companies with only a small share of sales in controversial weapons** such as cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines **are no longer excluded on ESG grounds.**

**"All of this is unacceptable** and, in our view, is not in line with existing EU transparency rules, but reflects the current ESG backlash in the EU", says Baranes, "we are now considering **filing an official complaint with the EU Commission.**"

**About SfC – Shareholders for Change**

The SfC - Shareholders for Change network is a group of institutional investors involved in active engagement with corporations with the aim of motivating companies and countries to increasingly assert sustainability aspects in their area of responsibility.

It currently has 19 members from seven European countries which, together, represents over 45 billion euros in assets under management.

Engagement activities are mainly conducted with European companies, both through the exercise of voting rights and through dialogues with companies.

SfC's engagement activities focus on labor and human rights, tax justice and climate change.

More information on [www.shareholdersforchange.eu](http://www.shareholdersforchange.eu)

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