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Finland / Campaigning on Arms and Arms Trade Issues – report

In Finland arms trade issues are monitored basically by NGOs: the Peace Union of Finland, Committee of 100, Union of Conscientious Objectors and KATU's working group on small arms (KATU is a conflict prevention network and member of EPLO), which also in principle includes Amnesty International's Finnish section. In 2008 also development co-operation organisations have been interested in arms trade in the context of incoherence and in the framework of Disarmament & development issues. Development aid organisations and the peace movement in Finland wrote a common text on security and development in April 2008.

In Finland we are worried about the EU Commission's proposal to agree on a directive on European internal market on arms trade, which has already been discussed and shown some green light by Finnish parliament. Finnish NGOs feel this will weaken the national control of license granting and end-users, and thus the political responsibility. In countries like Finland with quite restrictive policy at the moment, it would be difficult to make the case of accountability if the components or arms are re-sold from countries with weaker controls outside EU area.

There is also a clear pressure from the EU side to make member states to invest more in the development of arms and defence spending (Lisbon treaty commitment). In principle, we also think that it is a big problem that all these are seen as a matter of competitiveness in the EU, and we have always argued that arms trade issues are to be seen as part of foreign and security policy, not as business.

There has been a public discussion on civilian possession of guns, as there was a horrific school shooting in a Finnish school with an 18 year-old boy shooting 9 people to death himself included. He had a shooting licence and a legal weapon, which he had purchased some weeks before with almost no evidence asked by licence-officials of having any practicing history in shooting. In Finland we have a lot of arms in peoples homes – Finland ranks 4th in the world, compared to population. Finland was also against the EU regulations to raising the age-limit from 15 up to 18, before you can get a license to own a gun. In the end, after this incident, Finland voted blank on the issue.

Finnish arms trade and - business and industry

In Finland, the biggest arms producing company is Patria Finnish Aerospace and Defence Group <http://www.patria.fi/index2.htm> (although they have a big amount of civilian production, too). Patria is owned by the state of Finland (73,2%) and the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company EADS N.V. (26,8%).

The ammunition producer Nammo (www.nammo.com) was founded in 1998 by three major Nordic defence companies; Celsius AB, Patria Industries Oyj and Raufoss ASA. Nammo's shareholders are the Norwegian State represented by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) and the Finnish Aerospace and Defence Group, Patria Oyj, with 50/50 shared ownership. The Nammo

Group has subsidiaries in Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. Nammo's name has been in discussion as they could produce also cluster munitions.

As there is no research in Finland at this moment into arms trade licensing decisions and the developments in the industry and the market, the Finnish NGOs try to cover this as much as possible with small resources.

Patria and its leadership has this year been accused in media and investigated by the police about corruption concerning especially deals with Slovenia and Egypt. In June 5 Patria officials were arrested under suspicion of bribery. http://www.patria.fi/modules/release/show_release.asp?

<http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/krp/home.nsf/pebd/F0290ADD1A585F85C225744F003DA000?opendocument>

<http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3531626&c=EUR&s=POL>
<http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3529230&c=EUR&s=POL>

Probably the Egypt deal is also from other perspectives one of the more controversial arms trade deals Finland has made these last years, as most of the arms exports goes to other EU countries, or peace keeping operations and only a quite small part to "difficult" areas.

Of course also all arms trade with the USA is quite problematic as the USA is a country in war. Last years Finland has sold less to Israel but instead imported some weaponry from there, which can be seen as problematic.

International processes and Finland

There will be UN Small Arms conference this summer in New York again (Biennial meeting of state parties). Although the process can be criticised to be slow and weak, it has been giving a push to several regional control and regulation processes. Also thematic issues such as brokering and ammunition control have been in focus. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has invited and will pay an NGO representative to the Finnish delegation in this conference.

ATT (arms trade treaty). Finland has been very active on promoting the ATT, a legally binding, treaty concerning conventional arms, not only small arms. Finland has also followed closely on the work on transfer controls (TCI transfer control initiative), which would be politically, not legally binding, and concerning only small arms. There has been a discussion that it should be a complementary process, not a competing process with the ATT.

The Foreign Ministry frequently calls NGOs to information sharing meetings, called National platform on small arms issues, where also business, industry, representatives from other ministries discuss developments in the area.

NGO activities

On the week of action on arms violence the Committee of 100 and the Finnish AEPF network arranged a seminar on arms trade in Europe and Asia on June 4. There was some media coverage, but mostly the media was interested in the Patria case.

There has also emerged (from the Conscientious Objectors Union) an activist group of people that has arranged already two demonstrations against Patria and arms trade. This group also follows upon Patria's doings and spreads out news around it. <http://patriakampanja.blogspot.com/>

The Finnish NGOs have participated on a regular basis not only in ENAATs meetings and networks activities, but also in the NGO meetings connected to the EU chairmanship, next probably in Paris. We also have contacts with Saferworld on the EU code of conduct issues for instance and IANSA on the civilian possession questions etc.

The Committee of 100 has had the ENAAT report on ECAs translated into Finnish and is planning also to do a report and a publication on the Finnish arms exports and policies this autumn.

Legislation practises and Transparency

In Finland transparency is still one of the best in the world. Citizens can ask for information on all decisions made on arms trade licence applications. And its possible to get also information on application, where the decision is not made, or the application is refused. Those decisions made by the government (concerning weapons, weapon systems, or the is export seen as having foreign policy impacts) as a whole are reported in public minutes and also in the webb like other government decisions. On decisions made by the Ministry of Defence (such as components licenses) the information is given if asked for. There has been pressure to make the applications secret (so they wouldn't be misused for undercutting etc) but as very few in Finland are actually interested, and also the NGOs have not tried to misuse the transparency practice, the legislation has not been changed. In practise, the companies / arms dealers ask unofficially advise "green or red light" by phone from the officials and this unofficial contact is not documented in any way. And this means that a refusal in practise will not end up in files.

There is a big question how the Finnish transparency would work in the European internal market proposal. Could we get all information on re-export, export in the third countries, in the future as we would get if it would be Finnish export?

On Nordic level there has already been some kind of an internal market for co-operation in production. (Nordic defence industry co-operation framework NORDAC) The licence applicant can decide in which of the production countries they apply for the export license.

The Finnish Code of conduct reports have been published in the internet, the latest now being from 2006. <http://www.defmin.fi/index.phtml?s=148>