



32nd Annual conference on Alternative Economic Policy in Europe

Europe in a Fragmented World: Rearmament, Geopolitical shifts and the Struggle for Socio-Economic Alternatives

**10-12 September 2026,
Co-organised by Oxford Brookes University, Oxford (UK)**

The renewed militarisation of Europe is unfolding amid a convergence of deepening financialisation, global economic fragmentation, resurgent fiscal austerity, and intensifying climate-pressure forces that collectively strain the European Union's social fabric and socio-ecological ambitions. Russia's war in Ukraine and the war in the Middle East, alongside other long-standing and newly erupted conflicts, new trade barriers and rearmament drives, have subordinated social, industrial, and macroeconomic priorities to geopolitical competition and battles, sidelining climate justice and sustainable development.

The prevailing EU mantra of "simplifying regulation" and "boosting competitiveness" seems unable to deal with persistent structural challenges: high energy costs, fragile supply chains in strategic sectors, and chronically weak domestic demand. The recent proliferation of European Commission initiatives — frameworks, plans, strategies, deals, and packages — reveals not coherence but the absence of a bold, long-term economic vision. The reliance of the Union's dynamism on the current account surpluses with the rest of the world now exposes its limitations amid growing trade instability and multipolar fragmentation.

Meanwhile, tokenised finance — from crypto-assets to stablecoins — is being promoted as a lever to mobilise private savings, while new financial actors, notably asset managers and investment funds, are gaining greater influence in EU investment policy. This shift risks fuelling speculative bubbles, including those linked to the rearmament wave. In parallel, friend-shoring and the regionalisation of global value chains (GVCs) deepen technological rivalries and input dependencies, while energy vulnerabilities, critical

material shortages, and the ecological costs of militarisation undermine the already faltering Green Deal transition.

This conference seeks to examine how these overlapping trends are reshaping Europe's political economy and social acquis against a background of major geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts, entrenching extractive and militarised capitalism at the expense of social and democratic resilience and the fight against climate change. By charting these fault lines, we aim at identifying pathways towards socio-ecological alternatives and emancipatory strategies towards peace and social justice in an era of multipolar disorder. We welcome contributions addressing recent developments related to:

A. Reconfiguring the Global Political Economy

- The EU's position in an era of friendshoring and regionalization of GVCs
- EU's strategic autonomy and input dependence patterns
- The new geopolitics of trade, industrial policy, "security" and technological competition
- Trump's tariffs war, international trade and global competition: implications for the global and EU economy, its social and ecological consequences

B. The New Wave of Financialization

- "New" financial actors: asset managers, investment and pension funds, creators of crypto currencies
- Savings and Investments Union
- The financial deregulation agenda and the unification of capital markets
- The financial bubble around the militarisation of the economy
- Crypto assets and the surge of stablecoins

C. Rearmament, "Security", and the militarisation of industry

- The Multiannual Financial Framework: military spending and its economic, social, and environmental trade-offs
- The political economy of the European Defence Readiness (or RearmEU)
- Digital militarisation, surveillance capitalism and the expansion of "dual-use" infrastructures (cloud, platforms, data brokers) into defence and security policy
- The industrial conversion to defence and the key role of multinationals (both arms producers and digital players)

D. Socio-ecological transformation

- The challenges of climate change and environmental degradation
- Achieving the needed transformation while taking into account the current deregulation thrust
- The challenges of green conversion of strategic sectors (e.g. automotive)

- The environmental dimension of militarisation
- Energy and critical raw materials dependencies in a multipolar world

E. Labour, Inequality, Welfare

- Labour market reforms, gig work, and the erosion of collective bargaining
- Labour shortages, working conditions, and migration policy
- The marketisation of public services and care
- Reimagining welfare states for digital, aging, and precarious societies
- Universal basic services and income as tools for a needs-based economy

F. Industrial Policy and strategic sectors

- Innovation and the role of Public Governance
- Energy transition and strategic autonomy
- InvestEU and the new European Competitiveness Fund
- New technologies and the assessment of their consequences

G. Macro and Monetary dynamics

- Fiscal and monetary policies within the global disorder
- The role of Central Banks in a contested world: how independent?
- Global financial dynamics and the relative role of currencies
- Macroeconomic implications of the new financial deregulation agenda

H. Alternatives

- Alternative modes of thinking
- Alternative agencies
- Alternative economies

Proposals for papers together with a short abstract (maximum 250 words) should be submitted by **31 May 2026** to info@euromemo.eu. If possible, please indicate the topic which the proposal is intended for.

Applications from young scientists, CEE and Balkan countries as from EU neighbourhood, and heterodox economists' networks are highly welcomed.

Submitted abstracts will be reviewed by the EuroMemo Group's Steering Committee. Acceptance decisions will be announced **by mid-June**. **Full papers should be submitted to info@euromemo.eu by 1 September 2026 and will be posted on the conference webpage**. There is the possibility of publishing selected papers in the EuroMemo Group Discussion Paper Series.

We strongly encourage participants to submit short papers (5000 – 6000 words) and to explicitly address policy implications.