



# NEWS

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Security has a social dimension

## EUROMIL ON A CROSSROAD OF CHANGES!

Founded in September 1972 in Bergisch-Gladbach (Germany), EUROMIL was joined for the first time by an association from the former Warsaw Pact in May 1990. At the same time, the Irish association PDFORRA was admitted as a new member. At that time it was remarkable, not only because PDFORRA was another association from a non-NATO country, but also because Irish soldiers never had the opportunity to be represented in terms of their interests.

In the first years of the 90s, other associations from the East - such as Russia, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary - joined EUROMIL. But EUROMIL also expanded to the Southern part of Europe. The Portuguese association ANS joined EUROMIL in 1993 and a year later, in 1994, the Presidium convened for the first time in Lisbon.

After more than 20 years of existence, EUROMIL faced drastic changes in the Mid-90s. This period was marked by a decision to relocate the EUROMIL Office from Bonn to Brussels. This relocation was important for the future development of EUROMIL. The same happened with the appointment of a Secretary General and the staffing of the Brussels Office as of 1 November 1995.

At the time EUROMIL was at a crossroad of changes and today, almost twenty years later, the organisation is facing again some serious changes and challenges. But today things are different! Over the last years, European armed forces have been facing severe reorganization, involving a reduction of their number of soldiers. In the past years, this process has been tightened by the financial and economic crisis which obliges European countries to reduce even more their defence budgets.

As it was repeated several times, this situation has an influence on the resources and therefore on the functioning of EUROMIL's

member associations. The associations need to make choices on national level and to take decisions regarding their international work. And this brought EUROMIL, about twenty years after the progressive changes of the 90s, once again at a crossroad of changes. Still today its functioning is inextricably linked with those of its members. In the past months, EUROMIL changed its staff composition and just a few weeks ago, moved to its new premises. Despite all these changes, EUROMIL will continue to be the only representative organisation of military associations and European soldiers.

EUROMIL will remain the voice of European soldiers and will continue to defend their rights where needed and wanted. Despite numerous positive changes, we continue to be amazed by the unacceptable way soldiers are sometimes treated. In this edition of the EUROMIL News you can read about the recent attacks on the freedom of expression in Spain. For the third time within the last years, the Chairman of our Spanish association, AUME, was detained

in a disciplinary center for having expressed himself publicly.

Let me conclude this editorial on a positive note. We notice that the fundamental rights and freedoms of soldiers are more and more on the agenda (see our article in this issue about the FRP). Let's continue to keep these discussions alive and reach step by step our goals for the benefit of our soldiers and their relatives!

Meanwhile I wish you all nice holidays and safe journeys.

Emmanuel Jacob,  
President of EUROMIL



**Emmanuel Jacob, EUROMIL's President,**  
**Photo: EUROMIL**

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# THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

## THE VISEGRAD GROUP MEETING IN KRAKOW

BY MARIAN BABUŠKA, KONWENT, POLAND

The 15th meeting of the military associations of the Visegrad Group took place in Krakow from 7 to 9 May 2013.

The event was conducted under the patronage of Czesław Mroczek, Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence. He addressed the participants by sending them a letter of appreciation in regard to their engagement in favour of their servicemates. The meeting was hosted by the Polish association KONWENT. Besides KONWENT, the following military associations of the Visegrad Group participated in the meeting: HOSZ from Hungary, SVP ACR from the Czech Republic and ZVSR from Slovakia.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of KONWENT, Marian Babuška, who welcomed all guests and participants. Afterwards, participants discussed soldiers' welfare issues in their respective countries. They particularly focused on developments in that field caused by the world financial crisis.

The first day was concluded by a wreath laying ceremony in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Krakow. The Heads of Delegations, namely Marian Babuška (KONWENT), Michal Bohunicky (ZVSR), Janos Czövek (HOSZ) and Dominik Žbànek (SVP ACR), formed a guard of honour to



salute the unknown soldiers who sacrificed their life for the liberty of their homelands.

On the second day of the meeting, the participants were informed on the trends in the development of the Polish armed forces by the Deputy Chief of Branch of the Strategic Planning Division J-5 of the General Staff. The following item on the agenda was a presentation on "social protection of soldiers in the Polish armed forces" by Anita Rzepecka, representative of the Director of the Department of Social Affairs. The information generated interest among the participants. The subsequent question and answer session was a good occasion to clarify everything. In the afternoon, the host of the meeting organised a cultural programme. Thanks to Krzysztof Radwan, Director of the Polish aviation museum in Krakow, the participants in the meeting had the opportunity to see a unique exhibition of airplanes, helicopters, gliders, motor gliders and others. Guides provided them with interesting information on the aviation history.



The third day of the meeting started with a medal ceremony. On behalf of the Minister of National Defence, Tomasz Siemoniak, the Commander of the Special Forces, Brig. Gen. Piotr Patalong, handed over the "Medal of The Polish Armed Forces" to the Presidents of the military associations of the Visegrad Group. The ceremony was assisted by a military colour guard and a signal-man.

The meeting was concluded by a joint statement and a signature ceremony. The Presidents of the different soldiers'

representative organisations of the Visegrad Group, namely Marian Babuška (KONWENT), Michal Bohunicky (ZVSR), Janos Czövek (HOSZ) and Roman Doba (SVP ACR), participated in the meeting and signed a document that underlines soldiers and military pensioners understanding of the constraints caused by the impact of the world financial crisis. But they unanimously express their hope that it is just a temporary situation which will end with the restoration of soldiers and military pensioners' previous rights. ■



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Guests,

I am very pleased to welcome you on a hospitable Polish land in the Royal city of Kraków, the city of a centuries-old tradition on the occasion of the 15th meeting of the representative bodies of the officers' corps of the Armed Forces within the Visegrad Group.

The Visegrad Group, initially came into being by the Presidents of the three countries on 15 February 1991, over the years has become a forum of a cooperation and an exchange of lessons learned among our four countries. The scope of this bond covers many areas, including widely understood the issues of defence and of the armed forces. The fact that the representative bodies of the professional soldiers have launched their cooperation is also worth underlining.

I truly believe that your presence here proves the cooperation willingness so both knowledge and experience acquired this way, will be put into practice by the fellow soldiers and the Armed Forces.

Bearing in mind the meaning of the activities taken by you to support the Armed Forces and the soldiers, I have an honour to take a patronage of this meeting. Therefore, I wish you that all shared experiences and views here will make this Forum fruitful and beneficial.

I also express my hope that you will find some time to explore the beautiful city of Kraków which entered the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. Its unique and world-class monuments in combination with the cultural diversity are really worth seeing.

Once again, I am sending you my cordial greetings and best wishes of fruitful discussions as well as my best wishes to your both professional and private lives.



  
Czesław MROZCEK

Kraków, 7 May 2013.

JOINT STATEMENT



The Leadership of Representative Organizations of soldiers of Visegrad Group V-4 bearing in mind both their charters' obligations and conclusions of the meeting held in Kraków on the 6 - 9 May 2013 state as follows:



We unanimously agree that both soldiers and military pensioners' devotion and sacrificing to military service deserve to be respectively appreciated. Therefore we oblige ourselves to intensify our efforts in order to draw more public opinion's attention to specific military service conditions and requirements, soldiers must to meet.



Our goal is to make public opinion aware of the fact that soldier's profession cannot be assessed by criteria of peace time. The Armed Forces task as soldiers' one is to keep readiness for military action. Soldiers meet the requirements. It is proved by their participation in peace keeping missions abroad.



We underline our understanding of the world financial crises effects. Professional soldiers and military pensioners feel particularly affected by the crisis side effects.



We do believe that the constrains are just temporary ones. Soldier - a citizen in uniform - needs a special protection. He needs feeling of security service and stabilization of military service conditions. Creation of such conditions belongs to state authorities.

The leadership of Svaz vojáků z povolání Armády České republiky from the Czech Republic, Honvédszakcserevezet from Hungary, Konwent Dzielanów Korpusu Oficerów Zawodowych from Poland and Zväz vojakov Slovenskej republiky from Slovak Republic appeal to the authorities of the Visegrad Group States to look at soldiers and military pensioners' needs with more respective attention to understand our expectations concerning contemporary



and future conditions of their life. All the meeting's participants unanimously agree to pursue for the best standards' of live achievement.



Delegations of the leadership of representative bodies have also found that next - 16 meeting of representative bodies of professional soldiers and pensioners of the Visegrad Group states will be held in Hungary by Honvédszakcserevezet chairmanship.



The joint statement was written in Polish and English languages in four copies, one for each of the signed parties. Both language versions are considering identical and equally binding.



LTC Roman DOBA  
*[Signature]*  
Svaz vojáků z povolání Armády České republiky

LTC János CZÓVEK  
*[Signature]*  
Honvédszakcserevezet

COL Marian BABUŠKA  
*[Signature]*  
Konwent Dzielanów Korpusu Oficerów Zawodowych

COL Michal BOHUNICKÝ  
*[Signature]*  
Zväz vojakov Slovenskej republiky



Kraków, 9 May 2013



Photos: KONWENT

## MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

### ATTACK ON THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

BY MIGUEL LOPEZ, AUME, SPAIN

The freedom of expression, a fundamental right recognized to the citizens by international treaties, conventions, directives and specifically extended to armed forces personnel in the Recommendation (2010) 4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as well as in the Spanish legal system, was ostensibly violated in the case of **Jorge Bravo**, President of the "Unified Association of the Spanish Military", AUME.

In July 2012, Jorge Bravo made a statement to the media recommending the government to cut defense budget on superfluous

spendings rather than in salaries for professional soldiers. The Spanish Army authorities considered this statement as a serious offence against the disciplinary code (Law of 1998) that forbids "to make claims through the media". In that way, they omitted the recent law on rights and duties for soldiers (Law of 2011) that recognizes and warrants the freedom of expression for all members of the armed forces with no more limits than those derived from the national defense and security and the respect to the persons and the institutions. As a result, he suffered of deprivation of freedom for 31

days in a detention centre.

Bravo is President of a professional association and, as such, he did and is doing nothing else than defending the social and professional interests of soldiers. The fact that a democratic country took disciplinary actions against someone who only fulfills his role as a representative of a legal association says a lot about its democratic quality. As **Morten Kjaerum**, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights recently said “we need to ensure that rights in books become rights in practice”.

The imprisonment of J. Bravo has had a considerable impact on the media and many civil society platforms, unions, associations and politicians showed their solidarity with him and AUME, supporting the public demonstration held on 27 April 2013, close to the Ministry of Defense (see picture). EUROMIL also supported Jorge Bravo by sending a statement to the main European bodies for human rights and by the presence of its President, Emmanuel Jacob, who gave a press conference in Madrid and paid a visit to J. Bravo at the detention centre, a relevant visit to the only prisoner of conscience in Spain. ■



Madrid, 22 April 2013

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is a politically and religiously independent, non-profit NGO of free, democratic associations representing the social and professional interests of military personnel on a European level. Founded in 1972 EUROMIL comprises at present 40 member associations from 27 European countries.

EUROMIL is a strong defender of human and fundamental rights in the armed forces. A real experience of human rights and fundamental freedoms makes soldiers also much better protectors of these rights and freedoms. EUROMIL has always advocated that soldiers must be treated as “Citizens in Uniform”.

In 2007 EUROMIL condemned the way Spanish soldiers were treated as second-hand citizens. At that point it was clear that there was no will in the mind of the majority of the Spanish political and military leaders to change this situation. EUROMIL urged that the legal right of association should be confirmed by a right of participation.

Meanwhile things changed and with the provisions in the Law 9/2011 of the Members of the Armed Forces we hoped and thought that a new wind was blowing in Spain. A wind of democracy, participation and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for military personnel. EUROMIL believed that also in Spain military associations like AUME, could play as of then their fundamental role in favor of the military personnel, their families and the Armed Forces.

EUROMIL is shocked by the third arrest of the President of the association AUME, our friend and colleague Jorge Bravo. We are deeply shocked that a democratic country is taking disciplinary and judicial actions against somebody who is doing nothing else than defending the social and moral interest of the soldiers. Is it a crime to stand up for your legal rights? Is it a crime to stand up for fundamental rights of our soldiers taking into account that these soldiers have to bring peace and reinstall these same fundamental rights and freedoms all over the world? Is it a crime to stand up for social rights of soldiers who are willing to offer their health and even live for their country and international peace? No, this is not a crime, this is a fundamental and international legal right and we are of the opinion that these kinds of reactions and radical measures taken by the Spanish authorities are out of all proportions and are to be condemned by the international community.

Therefore, EUROMIL calls on the Spanish Government and military leaders to immediately stop all further disciplinary and judicial measures against Jorge Bravo. We strongly believe and are convinced that the way Spanish leaders behave is in contradiction with several international treaties and recommendations - and we recall the most recent one that was unanimously adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, namely the Recommendation 2010(4) on Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces.

EUROMIL and its member associations from 27 European countries will not rest as long as there is still one European soldier that cannot enjoy his or her fundamental rights and freedoms. Governments and military leaders have to understand that the only thing that they cannot stop with laws and regulations is solidarity between soldiers! When they try to shut somebody's voice they will have to understand that many others will start to speak and cry for freedom. United we stand!



Emmanuel JACOB,  
President of EUROMIL

Photos: AUME

# ANY POLICY OF AUTHORITARIANISM AND SOCIAL DIVIDE WILL NOT WORK

BY EFTHIMIOS GKITERSOS, AN.E.A.E.D., GREECE

The massive and powerful demonstrations of active and retired military personnel, which mainly took place in Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, gave the clear message that any kind of blackmail will not work.

Practices of disorientation, splitting, terrorism and intimidation, coming from the Hellenic Ministry of National Defence, and which primarily affect colleagues in service, are unacceptable.

Many of the active colleagues are facing disciplinary sanctions as a result of their activity, despite the fact that their actions were legally conducted, according to the jurisprudence of the Court on the right of association.

What was their crime? They were prosecuted because they wore their military uniforms during the protests and speeches, which were broadcasted, without having requested the permission of their superiors. Such measures are obviously reminiscent of the times when the Greek society unequivocally condemned anti-democratic acts.

The boards of some military associations representing the retired military personnel in the MoD did not support the prosecutions as the active personnel wore their uniforms during the protests in Athens and Thessaloniki alongside the retired military personnel.

AN.E.A.E.D. wrote a message of support to the prosecuted personnel, which, among others, stated the following: "...such terrorist actions aimed at dividing, intimidating, obstructing and ultimately suspending our common mass mobilisation will not

work. On the contrary – it will make us stronger, arm us with greater tenacity and determination, strengthen the bonds between active and retired military personnel until this political authoritarianism comes to an end".

Another message of sympathy of AN.E.A.E.D. addressed to the affected personnel, active and retired members of the armed forces, including also the Firemen Corps and the Coast Guard, declared the following: "...We express our strong opposition to the government's attempt to intimidate and silence the active colleagues... Considering the gravity of the moment, we appeal all active and retired members of the Armed Forces and the Law Enforcement Corps to a sense of responsibility".

Do not succumb to false dilemmas and misleading prompts. Let's use our common position in order to pass a clear message: the "selling" of active personnel by few military associations, in order to please their government superiors, will not be tolerated.

Do not uncritically accept the justifications of those who, with their attitude, created the problems and who continue to create them by suppressing the legal right to protest against the impoverishing measures which will plague not only the active and retired members of the Armed Forces but also the whole Greek population.

In conclusion, coherence and solidarity are two principles that we, all of EUROMIL's associations, must demonstrate and which are of the uttermost importance to benefit all of us!



We will resist, will claim and will win.

We owe this to our motherland, to ourselves, to our families



ANEAED 2013

# COMMENCEMENT OF SINGLE PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION SCHEME IN IRELAND

BY PADDY DOHENY, PDFORRA, IRELAND

## Commencement Date of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme:

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform recently signed a commencement order for the Single Public Service Scheme for the public service including members of the Irish Defence Forces. The new scheme comes into effect from 1 January 2013 with a contribution rate of 7.5%.

## Membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme:

Membership of the Single Public Service Scheme applies to all new entrants joining the Irish Defence Forces.

## Terms of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme:

From the commencement date of 1 January 2013 onward, all new entrants joining the forces will be members of the Single Pension Scheme, which will provide for the following:

\*Pension and retirement lump sum

based on career-average pay rather than final salary;

\*Pensions will be co-ordinated with the State Pension Contributory (SPC);

\*Post-retirement pension increases linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Under the career average system being introduced, public servants will each year accrue a specific amount towards their pension and lump sum. As there will not be a fund, these “referable amounts” will be calculated and up-rated each year by reference to the CPI to inflation-proof them – the total accrued pension and lump sum amounts will be aggregated on retirement to produce the person’s pension and lump sum.

The new Single Public Service Pension Scheme provides for a ‘minimum pension age’ of 50. This means that pensions and gratuities will not normally be payable immediately on discharge/retirement unless



the person serves to age 50. Maximum retirement benefits accrue to members serving up to 56 years of age.

When leaving the Defence Forces before 50 years of age, benefits are not payable immediately but are ‘preserved’ and are payable ‘on application’ from age 60. ■

# FOCUS ON THE COMPATIBILITY OF WORK AND FAMILY

BY SILKE FLEMMING, DBWV, GERMANY

The DBwV has always been concerned with questions related to the family situation of military personnel because of the important strain the service in the armed forces causes to family life. In the last years though, the armed forces started focusing more on the issue of “compatibility of work and family” because of certain developments in Germany.

First of all, since 2001 all military careers of the German armed forces are open to women, with the result that the number of female soldiers in the armed forces is constantly increasing. Relationships and marriages between soldiers are not special anymore, that is why there is an increasing number of families where both parents are soldiers. Furthermore the armed forces are reorganized to “operational forces”, which means that military personnel are sent to international operations more often than before. For the time being, the ongoing major reform of the German armed forces still causes a lot of uncertainty for the families of military personnel. Closures of military bases and the numerous transfers of personnel have massive effects on relationships and the families of military personnel. Finally, the suspension of compulsory military service in Germany makes the recruitment of new personnel more difficult, as the armed forces have to compete with other employers for good staff. “Soft factors”, like compatibility of work and family, play a role for future personnel.

All these developments put the issue of “family-friendliness” of the armed forces as employer on the agenda of the Ministry of Defence. The MoD officially stresses the high significance of family-friendly framework conditions for the attractiveness of the armed forces as employer. The DBwV is actively participating in the negotiations. Some progress has been made: The MoD established a “commissioner for the compatibility of family and work in the armed forces”. His task is to guarantee and monitor the implementation of the regulations of the Ministry concerning the establishment of a family-friendly work environment with the aim to optimize family-related measures.

Moreover, the MoD issued a “service regulation concerning the compatibility of service in the armed forces and family (AU 1/500)”. According to the directive, the personnel management in its decisions has to take into account the family situation of the person concerned. The better compatibility of work and family life is supposed to be an essential management responsibility which has to be considered by every superior. Hence the service regulation provides that this responsibility is part of the training for superiors on all levels so that the consciousness for family-friendly working conditions is raised.

Furthermore, the service regulation contains provisions regarding flexible working time models and teleworking in a home

office which should be allowed if appropriate.

Despite this positive approach, in real life the implementation of these provisions still lags behind. For the moment, the question whether military personnel have a family-friendly working environment depends on the attitude of the superior. The DBwV criticises that the service regulation is not binding, the provisions merely have a suggesting character. We therefore demand that the provisions become binding for the superiors in the armed forces and are supported by structural and financial means so that the need for family-related measures can be applied directly in place without any bureaucratic efforts. One essential point seems to be that a “family-friendly organisational culture” has to be established in the armed forces and that can only be achieved with a change of mind.

Furthermore, in many bases there is a lack of places in child care facilities. The DBwV demands a better supply with child care facilities, as plenty of soldiers feel left alone with their child care problems. In his report of 2012, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the armed forces confirmed that the supply with places in child care facilities for children of military personnel is insufficient. In this context, the armed forces are challenged to become active and create internal solutions (e.g. inhouse child care). ■



Photo: Bundeswehr

## YOUR CAREER, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

BY KENNETH SKOV JENSEN, CS, DENMARK

*From now on it is “your career, your responsibility” for all employees of the Danish Armed Forces. 1 May 2013 marks the beginning of a new era.*

Things have changed in Denmark. On 1 May 2013, a completely new Human Resources (HR) structure was unveiled. From now on it is every man for himself.

Anyone employed in the Danish Armed Forces is now singlehandedly responsible for his or her own future. From now on, anyone interested in a job opening in the army, the air force and in the navy will go through an application and interview process, just like if he or she was applying for a job in a private company.

Open positions will be published online on a brand new HR-portal and anyone can apply if he or she has the right qualifications. The applicant must send an application to the local commander and job interviews will be held.

This means that employees can no longer rely on the fact that their superior will automatically assign them a new position because of operational needs and they will not be automatically appointed for a promotion after a certain number of years

in service as it is the case in the United States.

The new structure is part of a game-changing HR strategy from the government, aimed at restructuring the Danish defence like any other area of the public sector in the pursuit of budget cuts.

According to CS, this new HR structure has its challenges for soldiers.

Danish soldiers will as from now on be controlling their own career, through the HR-portal on the internet and by sparring with the local commander. They are now responsible for their own future. They will have to reset themselves to a new system and ask themselves some important questions.

What do I expect from my career in the army? Do I need further education or new skills to man a certain position that I aim at?

The new system is a concern especially among older employees, who feel that younger and more career-minded colleagues overtake them like whistling bullets taking

new jobs as they have invested more in education and training.

It is still possible to order employees into specific positions due to operational needs, but the main idea is that positions are filled through job applications and interviews just like the rest of the society.

The new HR-structure will be fully integrated by 1 November 2013. However, many open positions are already published on the HR-portal for any soldier to apply via the system. ■



*The Danish Central Association of Permanent Defence Personnel – colloquially referred to as CS – is the largest defence personnel organisation with about 7,500 members. CS is a member of EUROMIL and holds the collective bargaining rights for permanent personnel employed by the Danish Ministry of Defence, including the army, the air force, the navy and the rescue services.*

## EUROMIL ACTIVITIES

# EUROMIL HELD ITS 107TH PRESIDIUM MEETING AND EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

By EUROMIL

This spring, EUROMIL's three Cypriot associations, namely the "Cyprus Army Officers Association" (CAOA), "Cyprus Army Retired Officers Association" (CAROA) and the "Non-Commissioned Officers Association of the Cyprus Army" (N-COACA), hosted the 107th EUROMIL Presidium Meeting and Extraordinary Congress on 12-13 April 2013 in Nicosia.

The meeting, which brought together over 70 delegates from 17 countries, was opened by Emmanuel Jacob, President of EUROMIL, Fotis Fotiou, Minister of Defence of Cyprus, Stylianos Moustoukis, President of CAROA, and Katerina Markoullidou, President of N-COACA.

EUROMIL's President welcomed the participants in Nicosia, emphasizing that EUROMIL's presence in Cyprus was a sign towards the political and military leadership of Cyprus and to support the Cypriot colleagues serving in the armed forces. Without commenting, the President mentioned the difficulties faced by the Cypriot people as a result of the financial crisis and the occupation of the Northern part of their country. He finally highlighted the current changes within EUROMIL, namely a budget reduction of about 50%, a reduced staff, a change of Charter from German to Belgian legislation and an office move.



The Minister of Defence started by thanking the organizers for having the opportunity to discuss some significant issues such as the social and professional interests of military personnel in Europe. Despite the difficulties that European countries face due to the economic crisis and the increase of financial constraints, the need for greater cooperation among EU member states to enhance international peace, security and stability was underscored. "Pooling and Sharing" initiatives as well as the December 2013 European Council discussion on defence and military capabilities were mentioned as opportunities for reflecting on CSDP and adapt the existing security and financial challenges to the years to come. The intention of the Cypriot government to apply to the "Partnership for Peace" Program was also mentioned as a way of enhancing

international cooperation. Besides, the Minister recalled the persistent military occupation of the Northern part of Cyprus since Turkey's invasion in 1974 and therefore the specific and crucial mission of the Cyprus armed forces. Even though he recognized the importance of discipline and obedience, he highlighted the need to ensure that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the armed forces are safeguarded appropriately. In Cyprus, military personnel are represented by three military associations that are members of EUROMIL. While acknowledging that there is always room for improvement, Mr. Fotiou said that the Ministry of Defence supports and reinforces these associations aiming to create the conditions for effective dialogue that can lead to the best result, for both the Cyprus Armed Forces and its military personnel. He showed disappointment towards the fact that some European countries still continue to impose undue restrictions on the right of association as well as on other basic rights for military personnel. The Minister mentioned the Council of Europe's Recommendation 2010(4) on human rights of members of the armed forces, which gives an opportunity to the EU to achieve greater unity by adopting common rules for military personnel, and concluded that military associations and unions have a crucial role to play in promoting best practices and can be a powerful ally in raising awareness and articulating the professional interests and concerns of military personnel.



The President of CAROA thanked everyone for being present in Cyprus. His speech was followed by a presentation of Katerina Markoullidou, on behalf of CAOA and N-COACA, on the country.

Reviewing national reports issued by EUROMIL member associations, access to healthcare appears to be endangered in many European countries. The Presidium considers the right to healthcare as important as freedoms of speech, expression and other rights EUROMIL fights for.

The Lithuanian association "Soldier Rights Defense Center" (KTGC) was granted EUROMIL full membership.

On Friday afternoon, an extraordinary Congress was convened

to finalize the transfer of EUROMIL from Germany to Belgium. Presidium Members also had the opportunity to meet among regional groups as EUROMIL's Charter foresees the possibility of establishing regional partnerships within EUROMIL.

On Saturday morning, delegates listened to a presentation made by Sophocles Sophocleous, MEP and Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) of the European Parliament. Unfortunately Mr. Sophocleous could not attend the meeting and was therefore replaced by his Parliamentary Assistant, Mrs. Helena Stavrou. The presentation focused on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the developments brought by the Lisbon Treaty in the field of defence and security and the role of the SEDE Subcommittee, particularly in conducting parliamentary scrutiny over CSDP. The negative impact of the financial crisis on defence budgets across Europe, as well as the need for greater cooperation among member states and EU-NATO relationship were also highlighted.



**Fotis Fotiou, Minister of Defence of Cyprus, and Lt Gen Stylianos Nasis, Chief of the National Guard of Cyprus**



Discussing future EUROMIL activities, the President gave a presentation on social dialogue at European level and concluded the meeting. CH

**Photos: EUROMIL**



**From left to right: Ioannis Malliotis, President of CAO, Constantinos Yiorkadjis, Mayor of Nicosia, Katerina Markoullidou, President of N-COACA, Emmanuel Jacob, President of EUROMIL, and Stylianos Moustoukis, President of CAROA**

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF ZVSR

**By EUROMIL**

On 22 May 2013, the “Association of Soldiers of the Slovak Republic” (ZVSR) celebrated its 20th anniversary. ZVSR joined EUROMIL on 11 March 1993 at the EUROMIL Presidium Meeting in Sofia, only two months after the association was officially established.

On the day of the celebration in Trencin, Col. Michal Bohunicky explained in his opening speech that organisations of soldiers were already established 95 years ago in the Slovak Republic. In the past soldiers actively participated, on several occasions and sometimes very difficult circumstances, in building a democratic country and an army in a democratic society. EUROMIL's President, Emmanuel Jacob, stated in his speech that it is regrettable that these efforts were not recognized by granting the associations a place in the armed forces as a social partner and representative of military personnel. “This is truly a missed



**Photo: ZVSR**

opportunity!” Jacob said.

Until today, representatives of Slovak military personnel have not been accepted by the Government as social partners and ZVSR is therefore only represented by retired officers. It is strange to notice that soldiers are the only ones among the armed components of the Slovak Republic that are not allowed to have professional organisations to represent their economic and social interests. In this regard, Chairman Bohunicky noted the following: “Is 20 years without professional organisations to represent the professional Slovak soldiers not enough? Isn't it time that Slovakia is no longer amongst the European countries that don't grant the right of association to their military personnel?” EJ

# HUMAN RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES DISCUSSED AT THE 6TH FRP MEETING

By EUROMIL



The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) hosted the 6th Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) meeting, FRA's network for cooperation and dialogue with civil society, on 25-26 April 2013 in Vienna.

Over 200 representatives from civil society organisations across Europe gathered “to encourage a European debate on fundamental rights among different civil society organisations; to facilitate knowledge and exchange of good practices among FRP participants; to provide information on the work of FRA about challenges and promising initiatives on the ground; and to create opportunities for networking and further cooperation between civil society, FRA and others”. *Please visit [fra.europa.eu](http://fra.europa.eu)*

In the opening session, Maija Sakslin, Chairperson of the FRA's Management Board, welcomed all participants. “You represent real concerns and different interests, you have direct links to the people in Europe, so you can give us valuable input for our work at FRA”, she said. Morten Kjaerum, FRA's Director, added: “We deal with issues that are not in the mainstream, and bring these up with EU bodies, member states and stakeholders. (...) We address the issue of how we reach out, so that the right issues reach the right table. We have built up credibility over 5 years now, so that our interlocutors now use and rely on our research.”

The two main topics discussed this year were equality and non-discrimination as well as hate crime. Several high-level speakers active on national or EU level, as well as representatives of other international organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), presented their work and exchanged best practices.

Although the new FRA's Multi-annual Framework 2013-2017, adopted in March 2013, does not include economic and social rights in the agency's work, these rights received much more attention than in the previous years. Among others, Luis Jimena Quesada, Chair of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) of the Council of Europe, gave a presentation on the ECSR system of collective complaints, an often neglected procedure. “Often the crisis is used as an excuse for remaining passive”, he said. “We cannot

exclusively accuse institutions of democratic deficit and lack of social citizenship, if we are not consistent with our responsibilities. If you don't submit collective complaints, the European committee of social rights cannot adopt decisions.”



The meeting was also an occasion for FRP participants to discuss important fundamental rights issues in the 24 sessions of the “Floor is Yours”. EUROMIL, represented by Project Officer, Caroline Henrion, hosted one of the sessions on the topic “Freedom of association for all?” EUROMIL's work in the field of fundamental rights and freedoms for armed forces personnel, including the issue of the right of association for military personnel across Europe, was presented.

Finally, FRP participants exchanged views with FRA's team in the 12 thematic workshops organised by the agency.

The FRA's Director concluded that “speaking of the principle of equality, human dignity and profound respect are the starting point for fundamental rights. (...) We need to ensure that rights in books become rights in practice. (...) And yes, civil society has an important role to play, throughout the entire process.”

For further information regarding the meeting, including speeches, presentations and pictures, please visit [fra.europa.eu](http://fra.europa.eu)

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Photos: FRA

# MEETING OF THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY IN LUXEMBOURG



By EUROMIL

From 17 to 20 May 2013, the Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly took place in Luxembourg.

“The Assembly last met in Luxembourg in 1997 so for many of the participants this will be their first opportunity to explore and enjoy this delightful and historic city”, said the President of the NATO PA, Hugh Bayley. “Three challenges will be at the heart of the discussion”, the President continued. “Our Committees will look at how NATO and the European Union are adapting to address the security threats of the 21st century, and striving to maintain the capabilities needed to respond to future crises. They will also review the evolution of the Alliance’s role in Afghanistan, as we reach the final stages of transition to a full Afghan lead in security. They will examine ongoing political, economic and security developments in North Africa, the Sahel region and the Middle East, and consider possible avenues for strengthening NATO’s partnerships, particularly with Asia. Discussions will also take place on many other key issues on the Alliance’s agenda”.

Norbert Hauptert, Head of the delegation of Luxembourg, and Prime-Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, in turn, welcomed the delegates. In his speech, Juncker thanked the French and Belgian friends for their support, without which the presence of Luxembourg in the Balkan area and Afghanistan would not have been possible. The Prime-Minister called it “smart defence avant la lettre”.

After the opening speeches, the NATO PA convened in a joint meeting with the North Atlantic Council. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen talked about the highest operational priority of NATO, namely Afghanistan. “Our troops, our nations, and the whole international community have made an unprecedented investment in blood and treasure in Afghanistan. So I want to answer the question that we all face, as politicians: Have our efforts been worth the cost? My short answer is yes. And my long answer is absolutely yes”, Rasmussen said. Answering on one of the questions from the delegates about the possible outcome of the European Council on Defence in December 2013, the Secretary General answered that he hoped that there would be a commitment to invest in the needed defence capabilities. “The only way forward is to help each other; Smart Defence or Pooling and Sharing, as they say in the EU. That’s the way to make more efficient use of the resources that we do have,” he said.

On Saturday and Sunday, EUROMIL monitored the Political Committee and the Defence and Security Committee. Traditionally, the NATO PA spring meeting holds discussions on draft reports that are afterwards approved or amended during the autumn meeting.

Beside the future Afghan situation, several reports and presentations focused on the ongoing conflicts in Mali and Syria. Smart Defence and Pooling and Sharing were also deeply discussed. On several occasions, it was mentioned that the EU December Security & Defence Council is of the highest importance for the future of the European Defence in relation to NATO. *EJ*

Photos: EUROMIL



## EUROMIL Calendar 2013

20 September 2013	Board Meeting	Brussels, Belgium
11-14 October 2013	NATO Parliamentary Assembly	Dubrovnik, Croatia
17 October 2013	Board Meeting	Brussels, Belgium
18-19 October 2013	Presidium Meeting	Brussels, Belgium
26-27 November 2013	Berlin Security Conference	Berlin, Germany
12 December 2013	Board Meeting	Brussels, Belgium

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