



**European Organisation
of Military Associations**

33, av. Général de Gaulle
B-1050 Bruxelles
Tel.: 0032.2.626.06.82
Fax: 0032.2.626.06.99
Email: euromil@euromil.org

Report

The Secretary General

**Board and Solidarity Meeting in Lisbon 3-5 September 2007
SUPPORTING OUR PORTUGUESE ASSOCIATIONS**

The EUROMIL Board convened to its regular meeting 3-4 September. To support our Portuguese friends the Board meeting was held in Lisbon and combined with the participation at a solidarity meeting 4 September and lobbying talks with the Portuguese Minister of Defence as well as with two members of the Portuguese Parliament 4-5 September.

Board meeting 3-4 September: Preparing the Presidium meeting in Paris

The focus of this Board meeting was on the preparations for the coming Expert-Workshop and Presidium meeting in Paris 25-26 October 2007. The Board approved the course of the Paris meeting. The actual Presidium meeting will be held Friday, 26 October. This will be preceded on Thursday 25 October by a EUROMIL-Expert Workshop on "Challenges of European Soldiers in the Field – the Human Factor in International Missions". This workshop has found huge interest among our member associations. The main aim of the workshop is to exchange experiences among the associations on the social and psychological effects that the increasing participation in crisis-management missions has on our soldiers. The workshop will be preceded on Wednesday evening 2000h, 24 October 2007, by an ice-breaker reception, where the experts from our associations can already start to network.

The full draft minutes of the Board meeting can be found on the member section of the EUROMIL Web pages.

Solidarity with our Portuguese comrades

The Portuguese military associations ANS, AOFA and APA organised on the evening of 4 September a successful solidarity meeting in support of those Portuguese soldiers who face disciplinary measures after having voiced criticism on the currently ruling government's social policies toward military personnel. The meeting took place in a public hall and was attended by approximately 300 soldiers. Representatives of the Spanish military associations AUME and AMARTE participated also in this meeting, as well as the present EUROMIL-Board members.

Meetings with the Portuguese Members of Parliament Antonio Filipe (PCP) and Mr. João Rebelo (PP)

A small EUROMIL-delegation met with the members of the Portuguese Parliament, Mr. Rebelo and Mr. Felipe, on 4 September. The EUROMIL-

delegation consisted of the President Emmanuel Jacob, the Portuguese Board Member Antonio Lima Coelho and the Secretary General Mikko Harjulehto.

The aim of the meetings was to present EUROMIL, the only European umbrella organisation for military associations, functioning since 1972 and comprising these days of 34 associations in 22 countries.

The deputies Mr. Rebelo and Mr. Felipe were highly supportive of the association rights and inclusion of Portuguese military personnel into a normal social dialogue. They both deplored the non-accomplishment of the Portuguese "Organic Law 3/2001" by the currently ruling government, which grants full association and consultation rights to Portuguese military associations.

Meeting with the Portuguese Defence Minister Dr. Severiano Teixeira

The aforementioned EUROMIL-delegation met with the Portuguese Defence Minister, Dr. Severiano Teixeira, on 5 September.

The first aim of the meeting was again to present EUROMIL, its member associations and activities. Opponents of association rights for military personnel often fear that involving democratic military associations in a social dialogue would lead to a loss of military discipline or obedience. The representative associations of military personnel in Portugal are not involved enough in a social dialogue on their service conditions. The second aim of the meeting was thus to reduce fears among Portuguese officials and to highlight the positive experiences that many European countries have had with the extension of the social dialogue to military personnel. It was emphasized by the President that it was not the intention of EUROMIL, as a pan-European umbrella organisation to meddle with an inner-Portuguese discussion, but to demonstrate the benefits that democratic, independent military associations can bring to the political and military leadership.

The Portuguese Board Member Lima Coelho added that military associations increase the quality of military work.

The Minister of Defence thanked the delegation for its visit. He had familiarized himself with EUROMIL and welcomed the European cooperation in this area. He emphasized the need to uphold the strategic Defence sector and the social position of its personnel. Dr. Severiano Teixeira saw the value of a social dialogue but observed also the need for flexibility due to the different cultural particularities of European societies.

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