



EUROMIL aisbl

*(European Organisation of
Military Associations)*

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To the Minister of Defence of the Republic of France, Jean-Yves Le Drian

To the Minister of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ursula von der Leyen

Brussels, 13 September 2016

Ministers,

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 35 military associations and trade unions from 21 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

EUROMIL read with great interest the news about your plans for closer EU defence cooperation. We agree that "in the context of a deteriorating security environment ... it is high time to reinforce our solidarity and European defence capabilities in order to more effectively protect the citizens and borders of Europe".

EUROMIL equally welcomed the declarations of several European heads of states and governments as well as high ranking EU officials on the need for more and better coordinated European defence. Since its foundation in 1972 EUROMIL is of the opinion that the different European armed forces should train and work more and better together. A closer cooperation of our armed forces growing towards a European defence union and even a European army is the key factor for a true and powerful Common Security and Defence Policy.

However, the implementation of a European defence union also has a social dimension. Every day hundreds of thousands men and women serve in the armed forces. They are motivated armed forces personnel and deserve to be treated with respect. They must be able to execute their duties under the best conditions and this is true not only for the field of training and equipment but also for the social field. As already stated, EUROMIL promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform" and is therefore of the opinion that military personnel should be treated as every other worker. EUROMIL is convinced that executing a very

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specific task guaranteeing national peace and security is no obstacle to the enjoyment of the most basic fundamental rights and freedoms.

Dear Ministers, despite international legislation and regulations several European countries do not grant the right of association to their soldiers. EUROMIL is proud that the German Armed Forces Association (DBwV) is not only one of its founding members, but today also its biggest member association. At the same time, EUROMIL welcomes the recent changes in legislation implemented in France, allowing military personnel to form and join professional associations. EUROMIL believes that a well-organised social dialogue is very important and the results of such a well-regulated relationship are not only beneficial for military personnel but also for the armed forces as such. It is EUROMIL's experience that an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is needed for a social dialogue in which equal partners come together.

In these times wherein armed forces pool & share their resources, it is also important that staff organisations work together and share their experiences on the international scene. Of course EUROMIL is available to discuss this topic with you or with your close collaborators in this field. We are always willing to share our experience and information on this and other issues whenever needed and wanted.

We thank you in advance for your reaction.

Yours sincerely,

Emmanuel Jacob,
President