

2023

# EUROMIL EUROPEAN ELECTIONS PROJECT

2024



EUROMIL aisbl  
European Organisation of Military Associations  
and Trade Unions  
Boulevard du Jardin Botanique 20  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 480 660933  
[www.euromil.org](http://www.euromil.org)

# Recommendations

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- 3.The EU should not miss the chance of a timely implementation of the Strategic Compass**
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# 1

## THE RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION IN THE ARMED FORCES – CITIZEN IN UNIFORM



EUROMIL, as the European Organisation of military associations and trade unions is first and foremost aiming at the respect for and the application of human rights and fundamental freedoms in and by the European Armed Forces. EUROMIL's essential consideration is that a soldier should be treated as a "citizen in uniform" with the same rights and obligations as his fellow citizens. However, by fully understanding the role of the military and the role that soldiers may have to play, restrictions should only be allowed in time of operations and wartime.

However, in practice the right of association for military personnel in Europe has been a peculiar situation depending on the particularities of each country. To provide a few examples, in the Netherlands a military association was founded already in 1898, and several decades later it became a trade union, while in Belgium, the first signs of a military association can be found in the late 19th century. However, a legal basis to transform these associations in trade unions has only been decided in 1978 and it took almost 17 years to execute this legislation. Looking to the Northern part of Europe, we see that all of them – Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland – grant full trade union rights to their military personnel. Another example is Ireland where the right of association was denied to military personnel up until 1992 and it took at that time a two-year fight with politicians and the military leadership. Comparable situations are existing for example in France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Greece where military personnel can join professional associations, however trade union rights, collective bargaining, or joining Trade Union Federations may not be permitted. In other cases as in Bulgaria or Poland military associations may be accepted but have limited competences.

Finally, the situation on the right of association in the German Armed Forces is rather unique. The German Armed Forces Association – the Deutscher Bundeswehr-Verband or DBwV – was founded in 1956. Built on the foundations of the new post-war German armed forces in which democratic conduct and principles such as citizen in uniform were applied, this new association would become a household name in the German armed forces. The fact that the DBwV is viewed as the only representative partner for German military personnel but on the other hand is not part of a trade union federation, creates some national relational problems.

## THE RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION IN THE ARMED FORCES – CITIZEN IN UNIFORM

Overall, all workers and therefore also those in uniform, need associations and by preference trade unions to look for improving their terms of employment, to improve their legal position, their salary, their career possibilities, their education, their career planning, their housing, their medical and psychosocial care. At a European level the past decade and especially today many developments concerning the future of European Defence have taken place. Hence, it has become evident that strong military representation through associations or trade unions is needed to organize the social impact of such upheavals; The increase of defence spending, common EU defence projects as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the adoption of the Strategic Compass and the creation of a Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) are just a few examples of a changing situation in the European Armed Forces.

In this regard, it is important to note that the European Parliament on its [annual Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) report 2022](#) calls – among others- for the protection of the social rights of military personnel that train and work together under an EU framework. Similarly the European Parliament also adopted in April 2023, a Resolution entitled “[EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward](#)”, and it includes a section on gender, social and worker’s rights which underlines that the EU RDC “will be made up of forces that will train and work together and that as long as they are under EU command, the troops assigned to the EU RDC should enjoy equal working and social rights”.

Hence, EUROMIL calls on the European Institutions to take under consideration – especially given the upcoming European Elections in 2024 – that human rights in the Armed Forces need to be fully or correct implemented and it should not be forgotten that soldiers are citizens in uniform with the same rights and freedoms as their fellow citizens. It is also important for the European Parliament to continue advocating for a fairer working environment for military personnel and make sure that the Member States are willing enough to make this happen. In this way, Europe can become more socially inclusive for its Armed Forces.

## 2

## THE INTERCONNECTED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE MILITARY SECTOR



According to Newton's Third Law "for every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction", a relation that can also be applicable in the way the Armed Forces interact with climate change and vice versa. Firstly, it is important to note that the military sector is huge greenhouse gas emitter and heavily dependent on fossil fuels which negatively impacts climate change. Secondly, military personnel face operational difficulties due to climate change; extreme heatwaves in Afghanistan or Mali to extreme cold environments in the Arctic. Besides, European Armed Forces are often called upon to deal with environmental catastrophes as floods in Western Europe to fires in the South of Europe.

To elaborate more, the military sector should move forward into implementing sustainable policies to reduce its emissions and at the same time increase operational effectiveness. Reducing dependency to fossil fuels has been deemed as essential and a first step is the wider use of electric vehicles by the military sector, while adequate equipment and specialised training would significantly provide military personnel with assets to respond to such challenges. Climate Change has been recognized as a multiplier of threats both in the EU and NATO; the [Strategic Compass](#) calls for environmental considerations to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military missions and operations, while the [Strategic Concept](#) endeavours NATO to become a climate neutral organisation, considerations that are also evident at the [EU-NATO third joint declaration](#). However, more actions are needed, especially considering that the EU is committed in becoming climate neutral by 2050. In order to succeed though many changes in European militaries are needed. EU tools as the European Defence Fund (EDF), which has a dedicated category for energy and climate, and European Defence Agency's initiatives as the consultation forum for sustainable energy in the defence and security sector (CF SEDSS), and the circular economy in defence significantly contribute into making the military more energy efficient.

EUROMIL, on its side, is advocating for the promotion of sustainable practices in the military sector, the proper training of troops and the total understanding that the defence sector can significantly contribute in the fight against climate change. For that reason, EUROMIL has become part of [the EU Climate Pact](#) to promote the active participation of military personnel in introducing sustainable practices in the armed forces.

## THE INTERCONNECTED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE MILITARY SECTOR

Considering the actions taken by the European Parliament on the topic, the [Annual Common Security and Defence Policy \(CSDP\) Report](#) underlines the need to have climate change considerations when planning and implementing CSDP missions and operations, while it calls on the Member States to focus on the needs of military personnel and provide specialized training for them to be able to deal with emerging threats and challenges as climate change. To continue, the Strategic Compass also calls for the full implementation of the [EU Climate Change and Defence Roadmap](#) by the end of 2023, and thus the Member States should move towards implementation.

In this regard, the European Parliament should ensure timely implementation of the provisions made by the Strategic Compass and the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap for the European Armed Forces to move towards energy efficiency and -at the same time - increase capabilities and efficiency. To provide a few examples, it is high time that climate change advisors are deployed in CSDP missions and operations, while increasing training for military personnel in that matter. Lastly, it has become evident that moving towards climate neutrality can only happen by cooperation with the industry; energy efficiency also in the military goes hand in hand with innovation and technology, since the threats that are posed by climate change change the operational requirements of the Armed Forces.

Another aspect that has been often underdiscussed is the role that the reserve forces can play in dealing with environmental hazards. Increasing the capacity of the reserve in Europe by providing specialized training and proper equipment could create forces with the necessary expertise in dealing with such challenges and providing the necessary humanitarian assistance when needed.

Overall, Member States, under EU guidelines, should show the necessary political will to move towards sustainability in the military sector, and thus invest in green defence. The majority of the EU Member States have announced a unique increase in their defence spending – given the underspending for more than a decade in Europe – and climate change should be in the core of it.

3

## THE EU SHOULD NOT MISS THE CHANCE OF A TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC COMPASS



The [Strategic Compass](#), adopted in March 2022, represents a first EU “white paper” on defence, providing guidelines for the EU and the Member States to adapt and respond to the new geopolitical environment. The document aims to make the EU and the Member States capable to respond to the challenges and threats for the next decade. More robust and efficient CSDP missions and operations, climate change, gender inequality, hybrid and cyber threats are just a few examples of what the Member States must respond to.

To elaborate more, the Strategic Compass is being built upon four pillars: to act, to secure, to invest and to partner, with the aim of enriching EU capabilities on security and defence. More than a year since the adoption of the Compass many steps have been taken in all domains with the aim of making the European Armed Forces more interoperable with new sets of capabilities, as the adoption of the [Military Mobility Action Plan 2.0](#), [the EU Space Strategy for security and defence](#) or the revision of the [Maritime Strategy](#).

Concerning the military domain, one important milestone has been the activation of the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017. However, in the year 2023, PESCO projects are almost 70, and only three have already delivered results, thus delivering on their objectives will be extremely challenging. In this regard, it is important to note that the Compass sets out that by 2025 the participating Member States at PESCO must fulfil the binding commitments and 1/3 of the projects should deliver results by then. Also, PESCO’s primary goal was for Member States to reach their commitment to allocate 35% of defence spending to collaborative projects; for the moment it currently stands at 18%. Besides, and according to the latest [CARD review](#), cooperation remains the exception rather than the norm.

Another important aspect of the Compass – especially for military personnel – is the creation of the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) which will be constituted of 5000 troops covering land, air, and maritime domain, with the necessary strategic enablers. The military personnel that will participate at the RDC will focus on evacuation, stabilisation and rescuing missions, and will train and work together.

## THE EU SHOULD NOT MISS THE CHANCE OF A TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC COMPASS

Thus, and as the European Parliament resolution [“EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, EU Battlegroups and Article 44 TEU: the way forward” underlines](#) the EU RDC “will be made up of forces that will train and work together and that as long as they are under EU command, the troops assigned to the EU RDC should enjoy equal working and social rights”. A provision that is much supported by EUROMIL and should be taken into account in 2025 concerning the possible revision of the Strategic Compass.

The above mentioned resolution also calls for the gradual advancement of the number of troops consisting the RDC to better respond to the current geopolitical environment. It should also not be forgotten that the EU Battlegroups were never deployed and one of the main reasons was the reluctance of the Member States to fund such a deployment. Thus, work must be done in order for the RDC to receive support by the Union, under the European Peace Facility or a similar tool.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the Compass – among many issues – also focuses on the need for European defence to become more sustainable by deploying climate advisors to the EU missions and operations, as well as boosting gender equality. Concerning the latter, the [annual implementation report](#) of the Compass states that more work will be done for the promotion of gender equality, a requirement that should not be neglected. EUROMIL strongly supports gender equality in the Armed Forces and underlines the importance of recruiting but also retaining more women in the military.

Overall, the timeline provided by the Compass leaves no room for delays, it is high time to move towards greater defence cooperation to meet the goals set for 2025. The first steps have already been made but quicker action is highly needed. Fast implementation, greater defence integration and cooperation are essential for the EU and the Member States to be able to effectively respond to the current threats and challenges and become more autonomous, better partners and at the same time strengthen the European pillar in NATO. Hence, European Armed Forces will become more interoperable, while reducing fragmentation. However, without equal working and social conditions for military personnel under EU command, no real defence integration can be achieved.



# 4

## THE EU SHOULD FOCUS ON BUILDING A COMMON MILITARY CULTURE



A common culture is defined as a group of people who share similar beliefs, values and behaviours, language or cultural heritage. EU Member states, despite their historical or linguistic differences have succeeded in becoming stronger when working together and be united in diversity. Building a common military culture though is becoming an important factor for closer defence cooperation between the Member States.

The adoption of the [Strategic Compass](#) as well as the drawing of the – first ever – Common Threat Analysis document with inputs from the 27 intelligence services, represents an example of building a common strategic culture. However, the military perspective is not often taken into account. The EU body that could effectively contribute to that is the European Security and Defence Colleague (ESDC). Common courses, a military Erasmus, deeper cooperation between the national military academies is a first step forward. In line with the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the ESDC has been tasked in 2016 by the Chairman of the European Military Committee (MC) to develop a Sectorial Qualification Framework for the Military Officer Profession ([SQF-MILOF](#)). SQF-MILOF is a tool for member states to promote cooperation and exchange views on the performance and learning of military officers. However, EUROMIL believes that this should also be expanded to all the different ranks throughout their career

EUROMIL also believes that the inclusion of the social dimension of the Armed Forces in the ESDC curriculum is crucial in order to ensure that EU standards and policies are applied to the Armed Forces in the areas of social protection and working conditions. This will also contribute at developing a European military culture. A European War College or Military University would be a perfect initiative developing a common military culture.

One important barrier that soldiers from different EU Member States face when participating in CSDP missions and operations, or trainings as under the EU Battlegroups, is the linguistic one. Often, for the non-native English speaking soldiers it is difficult to communicate with the other comrades. Hence, it is imperative that military personnel receive a sufficient number of English language courses. Examples and experiences from decades of existing cooperation such as the Franco-German Brigade teach us that the use of various languages still creates a barrier for a satisfying, but above all smooth cooperation.

## THE EU SHOULD FOCUS ON BUILDING A COMMON MILITARY CULTURE

Today, and given the current geopolitical environment, EU soldiers are participating more and more in international missions and trainings, as the EU CSDP Mission for Ukraine (EUMAM)[1] or the upcoming Rapid Deployment Capacity live exercise (MILEX-23) that will start in October 2023 in Spain. Consequently, building a common EU culture of defence, or common military culture is essential in order to best exchange best practices, increase cooperation and effectiveness of the European Armed Forces, while also respecting the national specificities. For the next European Commission and European Parliament term, building a common European military culture should become a priority, if further defence integration is to take place. And let there be no doubt that further defence integration is a necessity and is gradually gaining the necessary political will. Should this not be the case, then EUROMIL will certainly be the promoter and advocate of the need for this.

[1] Never before had a missions been agreed and executed so quickly.

# 5

## GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE ARMED FORCES



The Armed Forces has been considered for a long time as an only male profession, despite that women are joining more and more the military, stereotypes still prevail. Consequently, substantial change in the Armed Forces cannot be achieved. According to an [opinion](#) provided by the FEMM Committee of the European Parliament to the annual CSDP report only 5% of women participate in CSDP military missions, while there are no female commanders of CSDP military missions.

To continue, the [Strategic Compass](#) calls for gender equality in the Armed Forces, while gender advisors will also be deployed at the missions and operations. At the [annual progress report](#) of the Compass it was also highlighted that work on this domain will continue.

EUROMIL conducted in this regard, an [internal survey](#) concerning women in the Armed Forces, to gather intel on how the situation is for women in European militaries. According to the input from our members, women face cases of bullying, sexual assault and/or harassment, equipment and uniforms not suitable for female soldiers, while female military personnel do not reach as often high-ranking positions, as their male counterparts.

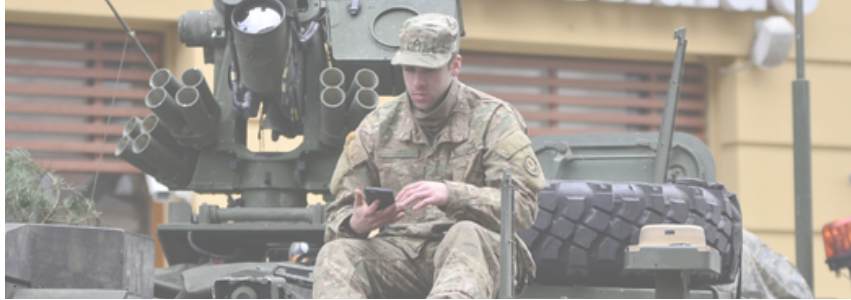
It should also not be forgotten that LGBTQI+ people continue to face discrimination, harassment and violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, especially considering the Armed Forces. Hence, LGBTQI+ integration in Armed Forces is a matter of justice, equality and human rights. If people are willing to serve their country, then they should be recognized and respected for who they are.

People joining the Armed Forces should also receive specialized education on the issues of gender equality and diversity in militaries. For instance, by having more women joining the military, the Armed Forces will become more robust, will gain more high skilled and educated personnel– especially in conflict resolution and peace building, while changing the military culture that remains a patriarchal one.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE ARMED FORCES

It is essential, that the European Institutions focus on inclusion, diversity and equality in the European Armed Forces, cooperation is needed between the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council, as well as with the national parliaments and military associations to jointly work for a more equal and inclusive working place environment for military personnel. It should also not be forgotten that a reflection of the society in the Armed Forces could improve the image of the military, while also ameliorate the rights, opportunities and working conditions of military personnel. Thus, providing equal opportunities to military personnel – regardless of gender – to reach higher ranking positions, adequate equipment and uniforms to female personnel, and drastically tackling issues of harassment and sexual assault in the military should become a priority.

EUROMIL remains committed into a gender equal and inclusive military culture. More work is needed and cooperation between different actors to achieve substantial results and significantly change the deep-rooted stereotypes and mentality around women in the Armed Forces. In order for Europe to build stronger, more durable, equal and inclusive societies, this should be reflected in all its aspects, including in the Armed Forces.



Military personnel often work in tough and dangerous conditions: such demanding nature of military service can take a toll on the physical and mental well-being of personnel. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the safety and performance of these individuals by ensuring adequate working hours and ample rest time. However, due to the distinctive characteristics of military work, labour standards often impose restrictions that lead to prolonged work hours, insufficient rest, and, inevitably, significant health concerns.

To tackle these challenges and promote high productivity while safeguarding the physical and mental health of workers, the International Labour Organization has established various labour standards on working time at the international level. In the European Union (EU), the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Article 31) and the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principle 10) serve as the foundation for every worker's rights, guaranteeing limitations on maximum working hours, daily and weekly rest periods, annual paid leave, and access to care services for parents and individuals with caregiving responsibilities.

Moreover, the Working Time Directive (WTD), which came into effect in 2004, compels Member States to uphold workers' rights concerning limited working hours, daily and weekly rest periods, paid annual leave, and additional protections for night work. While labour legislation typically includes exceptions to these rights under certain circumstances, the unique nature of military service often results in extensive exclusions from these safeguards enshrined in legislation like the WTD. Although legislation aims to shield employees from excessive and unnecessary workplace hazards, wide-ranging limitations are often justified by labelling certain "essential" workers, often those in uniform, exempt from such protections. Nonetheless, recent case law from the European Court of Justice has demonstrated that workers should not be automatically excluded from these protections based solely on their employment sector.

While the armed forces inherently involve high-risk environments, military personnel are equally entitled to basic protections, just like any other worker. Excessive derogations from these rights can lead to avoidable and unnecessary physical and psychosocial illnesses, as well as a decline in job performance and attractiveness.

## THE EU SHOULD PRIORITISE FAIR REGULATIONS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

To address these concerns and advocate for the well-being of military personnel, EUROMIL recommends the implementation of clear and comprehensive working time regulations tailored specifically to the armed forces. These regulations should be negotiated through social dialogue with representatives of staff associations or military unions. EUROMIL emphasizes the importance of protecting military personnel from extended and irregular working hours and proposes that all working time, including on-call duty and emergency preparedness, be counted as working hours. Nonetheless, exceptions may apply to specific military activities, international military operations, and missions involving unique security conditions. It is important to note that these exceptions should still be implemented based on collective bargaining and agreements.

Furthermore, EUROMIL advocates for achieving a better balance between professional and family life for military personnel, including the development of childcare facilities within army establishments to support families. Additionally, annual leave is an entitlement for all armed forces members, accompanied by full pay allowances. EUROMIL suggests limited exemptions from the WTD and emphasizes the need for direct negotiation and consultation with representative bodies of military personnel in each state to ensure effective communication and respect for their rights and entitlements.

In conclusion, military personnel, as Workers in Uniform, deserve equal rights and protections akin to any other worker. Their health and safety in the workplace must be safeguarded. Effective monitoring of the application of the Working Time Directive for military personnel is crucial, ensuring they receive adequate rest and reasonable working hours. Such measures will not only preserve their well-being but also enhance their performance and productivity.

Both the EU and Member States should recognize the unique circumstances faced by military personnel and work collaboratively to implement fair and just regulations that protect their rights: no worker should be banned from social rights.

In relation to the Working Time Directive, EUROMIL has actively addressed this issue by producing a position paper on the topic ([link](#)). Additionally, EUROMIL has participated in a collaborative project with EuroCOP and EPSU, titled “Strengthening and Defending Trade Union Rights in the Public Sector.” This project specifically examined the impact of the exclusionary clause on certain workers within the public sector ([link](#)).

# 7

## THE UNSEEN BATTLE: MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL



As the European elections draw near and the European Union (EU) unveils its [comprehensive approach to mental health](#), it is crucial to bring attention to the critical issues impacting our society. With different flagship initiatives, the approach aims to prioritize mental health on par with physical health and establish a cross-sectoral approach to mental health issues. By focusing on prevention, access to quality care, and reintegration into society after recovery, the EU seeks to address the multifaceted risk factors contributing to mental-ill health. The EU's commitment to mental health signifies a significant step forward in recognizing and addressing the impact of mental health problems on individuals and society as a whole.

Among these topics, the mental health of military personnel, both in active duty and after their service, should stand out as a pressing concern. The men and women who serve in the armed forces play a vital role in ensuring safety and security, often facing challenging and demanding situations that can have profound effects on their well-being. It's important to note that the duty of care for military personnel doesn't stop at retirement age or upon leaving the armed forces. Some consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may only manifest many years after the mission or event that formed the basis of their condition. Therefore, it is crucial to provide ongoing support and assistance to former military personnel, acknowledging that their mental health needs persist long after their service has ended.

Recognizing the significance of mental health support for military personnel and advocating for comprehensive measures to address their unique needs is of utmost importance for EUROMIL. Military service presents numerous stressors, including extended deployments, exposure to traumatic events, separation from loved ones, and the weight of high-stakes responsibilities. These factors can significantly impact the mental well-being of service members, irrespective of their ranks, roles, and branches.

## THE UNSEEN BATTLE: MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

One of the primary obstacles to addressing mental health issues in the military is the enduring stigma surrounding seeking help. To combat this stigma, we must prioritize raising awareness and fostering a culture that encourages open conversations about mental health challenges. Furthermore, establishing accessible and comprehensive mental health services is crucial to adequately support the mental health needs of military personnel, with programs that focus on prevention and early intervention. Integrating mental health training into the initial and ongoing military training can equip service members with the necessary coping strategies. By emphasizing prevention, we can work towards reducing the overall burden of mental health issues among military personnel.

Post-service support is equally important, as veterans can face unique risks and challenges to their mental health. Adjusting to civilian life can be problematic, leading to relationship or family problems, homelessness, and social exclusion. The most common mental health problems among personnel and veterans include depression, anxiety, alcohol problems, and PTSD. Post-deployment mental health challenges are often overlooked but can significantly impact military personnel. The EU can encourage member states to implement comprehensive post-deployment support systems, including reintegration programs. By sharing best practices and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise, the EU can foster collaboration among member states, ultimately improving the well-being of military personnel.

As we approach the European elections, it is crucial to advocate for the prioritization of mental health support for military personnel. By addressing the unique challenges faced by those who serve in our armed forces, we can promote a healthier and more resilient society. Tackling mental health challenges among military personnel requires a multi-faceted approach, and the EU has a vital role to play and can significantly contribute to the well-being of military personnel. With its commitment to safeguarding the well-being of its citizens, the EU can play a crucial role in tackling these problems by implementing comprehensive measures and supporting initiatives to enhance mental health support systems for military personnel. By prioritizing mental health and working in partnership with member states and other stakeholders, the EU can ensure that military personnel receive the support they need and deserve.

In relation to Mental Health, EUROMIL has actively promoted it by endorsing the [EndStress.EU campaign \(link\)](#), an initiative by Eurocadres in cooperation with ETUC, to tackle the stress epidemic, which addresses psychosocial risks, violence and harassment and improves work organisation. Furthermore, EUROMIL endorsed a [joint statement on Mental Health in all Policies \(link\)](#) from Mental Health Europe.





Social policies play a crucial role in ensuring people's well-being and quality of life. Recognizing this importance, the European Union (EU) has been actively engaged in discussions and initiatives aimed at improving the social conditions and rights of its citizens. One example can be seen in the European Semester, part of the EU's economic governance framework, that goes beyond being solely an economic exercise and integrates other relevant policy fields, including social affairs, by coordinating and monitoring employment and social policies, aligning them with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. By incorporating social policy coordination into the European Semester, the EU demonstrates a clear recognition of the importance of social affairs and endeavours to improve social conditions and rights for its citizens.

In this article, we will explore key areas of concern and potential solutions regarding military personnel.

### **Fair Compensation and Benefits**

One of the primary concerns in enhancing the social policies for military personnel is fair compensation and benefits. EUROMIL held the "[Fair Defence Pay Campaign](#)" (2019-2020) emphasizing the need for military salaries to be comparable to those in public services. To attract and retain skilled personnel, it is essential to ensure that military salaries and allowances are competitive and commensurate with the responsibilities undertaken. EUROMIL's campaign report underscored the significance of granting military personnel the right to freedom of association without restriction. Encouraging dialogue between military associations and relevant authorities can help address issues effectively and promote a fair and supportive working environment for military personnel. Furthermore, low salaries often undermine the attractiveness of a military career.

Thus, EUROMIL emphasizes the need for increased investment in the working conditions of military personnel, including salaries and allowances, as part of the overall defence budget. Adequate resources allocated to improve infrastructure, training opportunities, and equipment can contribute to better working conditions, job satisfaction, and retention rates.

## **FOSTERING WELL-BEING AND EQUALITY: ADVANCING SOCIAL POLICIES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL**

Retirement benefits are a crucial aspect of social policies for military personnel. Fair pension schemes should be in place to provide financial security and stability in the post-service phase. And should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect changing societal needs.

### **Transition and Post-Service Support**

Ensuring a smooth transition from military service to civilian life is a critical aspect of social policies for military personnel. Recognizing the challenges faced during this period, it is imperative to provide a range of resources to facilitate the process, with comprehensive transition support that encompasses elements such as job placement assistance, vocational training opportunities, and accessible social services.

Furthermore, the establishment of robust veteran policies is crucial to provide sustained support and acknowledging the distinct needs and experiences of those who navigate post-service life.

### **Comprehensive Healthcare**

Military personnel often face unique occupational hazards, including potential exposure to substances such as asbestos. Recognizing these risks, healthcare policies must prioritize robust safety and health at work programs within military settings. This includes implementing stringent safety protocols, conducting regular risk assessments, and providing proper training and protective equipment to mitigate the dangers associated with military duties.

Comprehensive healthcare services are vital to ensuring the overall well-being of military personnel. These services should encompass a wide range of medical and psychological support, providing timely access to preventive care, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation for both physical and mental health conditions. In this regard, it is important to highlight that social dialogue and collective bargaining play a pivotal role in shaping healthcare policies that effectively meet the specific requirements of military personnel.

### **Whistleblower Protection**

The inclusion of whistleblowing mechanisms within military organizations is vital for maintaining transparency and accountability. Establishing ombuds institutions that can receive and investigate complaints from military personnel helps create an environment where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal.

## FOSTERING WELL-BEING AND EQUALITY: ADVANCING SOCIAL POLICIES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Safeguarding whistleblowers' rights and protecting them from retaliation is essential for fostering a culture of integrity within the military.

In relation to whistleblowing, EUROMIL has actively addressed the issue in the report "[Demystifying Whistleblowing in the Armed Forces](#)", published in collaboration with the Whistleblowing International Network (WIN). The report sheds light on the role of whistleblowing in promoting ethics and preventing wrongdoing in the defence sector, while also reviewing global legal protections and offering guidance for ombuds institutions in safeguarding whistleblowers.

### **Comparable Social Systems**

Ensuring fairness and equality for military personnel entails aligning their social systems with those of other workers in the public sector. This alignment extends to various provisions, including maternity and parental leave, which play a crucial role in supporting work-life balance. By implementing policies that grant military personnel the same benefits as their civilian counterparts, we can promote a level playing field and create a supportive environment that values the well-being and needs of military families.

### **Conclusions**

Enhancing social policies for military personnel is crucial for creating a supportive and equitable environment. Fair compensations, investment in working conditions, transition support, comprehensive healthcare, whistleblower protection, fair pension schemes, and comparable social systems are all essential elements to consider. By addressing these areas, the EU can contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of military personnel while attracting and retaining the talent necessary for strong and capable defence force.



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