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EUROMIL SURVEY RESULTS

THE PROBLEMS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE EUROPEAN ARMED FORCES



**European Armed Forces
Want You**



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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, the problems of recruitment and retention in the European Armed Forces were gradually intensified. However, these issues were neglected by most of the national governments and various defence stakeholders. Since 2010, the national priorities and international developments revolved around the financial crisis and its impact. Consequently, the needs and the problems of the European Armed Forces were considered as second priority.

Since 2020, the combination of national and international challenges pressured the majority of the European states to focus on their Armed Forces and their unresolved needs. Precisely, the outbreak of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic negatively affected the Armed Forces. Despite the prediction for increasing the number of new recruits due to economic instability, the pandemic led to less interaction between the potential candidates and the military. Moreover, the war in Ukraine set in ruin the European security architecture. The EU Member States forced to examine their defence capability gaps and enhance the operational performance of their Armed Forces. The EU's geostrategic environment was characterized from high sustained number of conflicts. The potential for expanding Russian aggression reinforced the states' [sensitivity](#) to the security developments.

At the national level, the European Armed Forces were affected by the impact of [demographic change](#). The number of the available entry level candidates was decreased. The physical condition of the [younger generations](#) was deteriorated. Also, the young's perception was turned against the control centric military approach, without preferring to join the Armed Forces. Lastly, the advance of new military technologies and their profound impact at the character of the warfare increased the domains of operation (cyber-space) and the need for military personnel.

The need for a well-trained and immediately deployable soldiers, who are ready to operate in a multidomain environment, was recognized by various organizations. Recently, the European Parliament recognized the importance of recruitment and retention problems in the adopted 2023 annual [report](#) for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In the article 48 the MEPs underlined that European Armed Forces face severe recruitment and retention problems inviting the HR/VP to task the EUMC with gathering and analysing data on these issues.

INTRODUCTION

The same problems were demonstrated as a red line in the national reports of the EUROMIL's member associations. Other national authorities and umbrella organizations (e.g. EuroCOP and EU.Pol) in the broader security sector initiated negotiations for collective arrangements in human resources area.

[EUROMIL](#) aims to mitigate the closely linked challenges of recruitment and retention in the European Armed Forces. This report supports the sharing of information among EUROMIL's members and the formation of a detailed analysis about the various aspects on these issues. Precisely, the basic purpose of the survey is to identify:

- the causes of the recruitment and retention
- the relation of conscription with the recruitment and retention
- the implications of the recruitment and retention to the European Armed Forces and the military associations
- the national efforts to tackle the recruitment and retention
- the proposals of EUROMIL's member associations

At this point, it is important to note that all the data were sourced by EUROMIL's members associations and not the national authorities of each state.

PARTICIPANTS

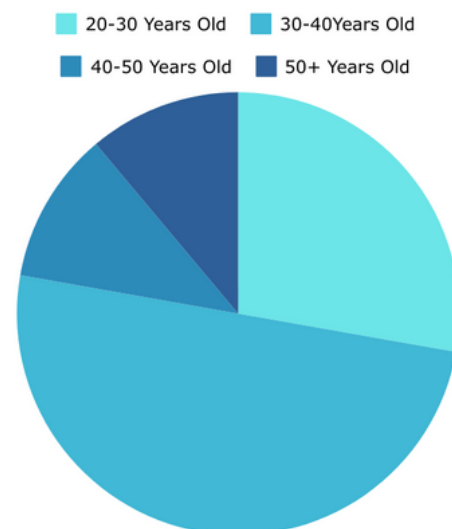
Country	Military Association
Belgium	ACMP-CGPM
Cyprus	N-COACA
Denmark	DS
Germany	DBwV
Greece	PFEARFU
Ireland	PDFORRA, RACO
Italy	ASSODIPRO
Luxembourg	SPAL
Malta	GWU
Montenegro	SOVCG
Portugal	AOFA, ANS, AP
Sweden	SAMO
The Netherlands	AFMP, MARVER

MAIN RESULTS

Proceeding to the survey's results, the military associations illustrated concretely the various aspects of the retention regarding their countries. According to the majority of the participating associations, **since 2011-2013 the issue of low retention rates gradually emerged.** In Germany, from 2011 to 2023, the number of early retired personnel was increased with the total number of military personnel declining from 206,000 to 183,000. In Ireland, the rate of those who remain in the Armed Forces reduced annually at 8-10%. Other EUROMIL's members in Denmark and in Montenegro underlined that the issue of low retention rates was raised during the last three years.

Moreover, the associations attempted to identify the age of those who resign before their retirement age. 50% of the participants indicated that the majority of military personnel that resign from the Armed Forces are between **30 and 40 years old.** The rate of the associations, which supported that the resignation age before the retirement is between 20 to 30 years old, reached at 27,8%. The options after 40 years old were representing 22,2% of the total participants.

Average Age of members of the Armed Forces that resign



The identification of the factors which negatively affected the retention rates is another striking result. To elaborate more, the **economic reasons** such as competitiveness, affordable salaries, lower risk, and greater stability accumulated the **83,3% of the responses.** In the cases of the Netherlands, the Dutch associations noted the lack of development opportunities in the Armed Forces. Another determinant of the low retention is the work-life imbalance reaching at 72,2%. The Irish member RACO referred that the overwork due to personnel shortages reduced the internal morale influencing the retention rates. Apart from that, 55,6% of the participants touched upon the negative work environment and the ineffective control centric approaches from the senior military leadership.

MAIN RESULTS

Which factors affect negatively the retention rates in your country's Armed Forces?

Economic reasons with Armed Forces' weakness to compete the labour market's attractive job opportunities with affordable salaries, lower risk, and greater stability

83.3%

Work-Life Imbalance

72.2%

Negative work environment, with mismanagement, ineffective control centric approaches from the senior military leadership, and internal violent incidents

55.4%

In case of Malta, the GWU highlighted the negative implications of the fossilized mentality by the administration and the unwillingness for progress. The lack of societal recognition and the family issues represent the 44,4% and the 50% of the responses, respectively.

Is conscription mandatory?



The survey also touched upon the conscription. In the public discourse, the compulsory military service is a proposed measure to cover the shortages of the military personnel in the European Armed Forces. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, conscription gradually raised as a solution, while in other countries like Sweden, Denmark, Greece[1] and Cyprus has already been established. The EUROMIL's members in Germany and the Netherlands[2] reaffirmed this tendency. Their national governments, political parties and part of the civil population are willing to adopt different variations of "[the Swedish model](#)". However, **a large number of participants argued that conscription should not be considered as a feasible response to the retention crisis.** Regarding the Portuguese ANS, the re-establishment of the conscription will help in case the given conditions improve in many aspects.

1] The compulsory military service in Greece is regulated by the Constitution and the law 3421/2005. The article 4/6 of the Constitution states that "Every Greek who can bear arms is obliged to contribute to the defence of the Homeland, in accordance with the definitions of the laws".

[2] Conscription is by law still mandatory, but there is a decree that no conscripts will be called up in peacetime.

MAIN RESULTS

The low retention rates prompted negative implications to the European Armed Forces and the military associations. For instance, in Belgium and in Greece the **low retention rates impacted on the proper execution of duties and the operational readiness**. In Denmark and in the Netherlands the Armed Forces cannot meet their international obligations decreasing their deployments in various missions. Furthermore, the association in Germany referred to the **impact on the power of the association to fight for better conditions**.

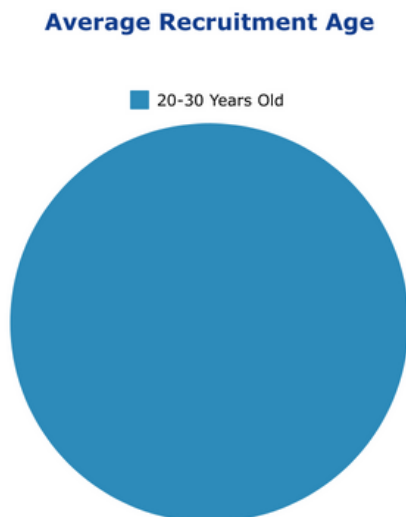
Contrary to the implications against the European Armed Forces, the responses of the national governments to tackle the retention issue vary. According to a part of the participants, the governmental **response is insufficient**. Despite few measures like Greece's tax cuts and Montenegro's research about the retention, **the response was slow and inefficient**. However, the participating association from Malta highlighted the efficiency of governmental response through the various allowances and the amelioration of the work conditions.

To tackle the issue of low retention rates and support the action of the national authorities, **the military associations proposed:**

- the implementation of economic measures such as the salaries' increase, the supplementary pension entitlements, and the financial compensation for irregular workhours
- the enhancement of the competitiveness and the career development through the application of new work evaluation systems
- the improvement of the working conditions protecting Work Time Directive, ensuring the fair and equitable work-life balance, assuring the compensatory time-off, and preventing duplication of duties
- the amelioration of living conditions in and out of the military units
- the investment in leadership with greater focus on the staff and its needs
- the implementation of the same rights for military personnel and the rest of the public sector including the social and medical assistance, the representation in the court, and the collective bargain in social dialogue

MAIN RESULTS

EUROMIL's survey focused also on the issue of recruitment in the European Armed Forces attempting to obtain a comprehensive view about its aspects. Broadly, the majority of the participants acknowledged that the **recruitment age is between 20 to 30 years old**. In some states like Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the military associations did not identify a decrease in the recruitment rates. On the other hand, in Greece, Portugal and Malta the recruitment numbers decreased since 2011-2013. In other countries, lower recruitment numbers were recently observed; to provide an example, in Italy and Montenegro recruitment has a downward trend since 2020-2022. The respondents from Greece and Montenegro also underlined that such trend is also evident by the low enlistment rated in the military academies.



Additionally, EUROMIL's members focused on the factors that intensify the problem in the recruitment. According to **94,4%** of the participants, the **attractive job opportunities from private sector** contrary to unattractive career opportunities in the Armed Forces were considered as determinant of low recruitment. Another influential factor was the demographic change.

61,1% of the military associations concentrated on the impact of the low birth rates, the deterioration of physical condition of young people, and the increase of medical problems. Equally, the ineffective leadership, which cannot motivate the new generations, was considered as a major contributing factor for the recruitment issue accumulating 61,1% of the responses. Last but not least, the low-performance recruited activities and high qualifications for recruitment procedure represented the 33,3% and the 16,7% of the participants.

Which factors intensify the problem of recruitment in your country's Armed Forces?

Attractive job opportunities from private sector with economic and social benefits

94.4%

Demographic changes with low rate of births, deterioration of physical condition of young people, and increase of medical problems

61.1%

Ineffective leadership which cannot motivate the new generations

61.1%

MAIN RESULTS

Apart from that, the associations referred to the implications of low recruitment rates to them and the European Armed Forces. The military associations in Greece, Portugal, Montenegro, Luxemburg, and Ireland argued that the low recruitment is translated to less personnel **increasing the burden of work while decreasing the operational capacity**. In Germany, the low recruitment weakened the Armed Forces' defensive capability and **limited the leverage of the associations** in the public discussions. However, some participants from Malta, Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark did not identify any implications.

The emergence of the recruitment problem led to the reaction of the national authorities. According to **77,8% of the responses**, the national authorities mostly attempted to **conduct more recruitment campaigns using social media**. Moreover, the 55,6 of respondents focused on the reinforcement of human resources department of the Armed Forces. In some states such as Ireland, Belgium and Luxemburg, the national authorities limited the recruitment qualifications and provided economic motivations for the newly recruited personnel. Each of these options represented the 44,4% of the participants.

However, the participants from Greece, and Cyprus underlined the insufficient response of the national authorities to mitigate this issue.

Since the recruitment is vital for the European Armed Forces, the participants provided some proposals to face this problem. **The participants recommended to the national authorities:**

- the provision of economic and social motivations like better salaries, competitive career path, and enhanced payments for additional hours
- the projections of a healthy and attractive work life attitude in the Armed Forces ameliorating the working and living conditions, modernizing the infrastructure, and building a positive image for the Armed Forces
- the abolition of the incorrect admission rates
- the provision of the opportunity for a valuable education and training process
- the allocation of more experienced personnel in recruitment efforts to accelerate the recruitment process

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

Belgium - ACMP-CGPM

In Belgian Armed Forces, the issue of low retention rates remained intact for the past two decades with many service members at the age of 20-30 years old quitting voluntarily. According to ACMP-CGPM, the family issues, the mismanagement and the lack of challenging and competitive working environment played a crucial role for the retention problem. The association did not consider any connection between conscription and retention. The latter heavily impacted the Armed Forces' manpower and readiness as the national authorities implementing limited changes surging the salaries and relocate some units. In response to the low retention, the Belgian association suggested the provision of cheaper military houses and the improvement of the financial compensation for irregular workhours.

Regarding the recruitment, Belgium has limited experience since younger generations (20-30 years old) maintained stable the recruitment rates. However, the demographic changes, the competitive opportunities of the private sector and the limited recruited activities were considered as obstacles in this process. The national authorities limited the recruitment qualifications, while are also intensifying their social media campaigns to boost the recruitment rates.

Cyprus - N-COACA

In Cyprus, the number of military personnel who resign before the retirement age from the Cypriot Armed Forces is limited. However, the N-COACA expressed its concerns about the competition in the labour market and the attractive job opportunities. Also, the negative work environment with control centric approaches affected the retention problem. The Cypriot Armed Forces have to face the economic and social benefits of the private sector in order to secure the recruitment flow. In response to these problems, the association argued in favor of the enhancement of the financial support to the military personnel.

Denmark – CS

In the Danish Armed Forces, the retention rates gradually decreased during the last 10 years from the middle-aged personnel of 30-40 years old. Without ignoring the private market's influence, the CS focused on the work-life imbalance and the mismanagement as determinants of the low retention rates.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The latter resulted personnel shortages inhibiting task execution, proper training, and mission deployments. The national authorities exploited a few measures like conscription to cover the shortages, but the response was insufficient. The CS proposed the salary's increase and the introduction of civilian education programmes.

The recruitment procedure is efficient with government supporting the social media campaigns and enhancing its neglected (for the last 10-15 years) human resources department. CS also stated that conscription is perceived as a measure to boost recruitment and has positive results. [Obligatory conscription for women](#) is also hailed as an important development. Nevertheless, the private sector's attractiveness, the demographic changes and the ineffective leadership can reduce the recruitments from the younger generation (20-30 years old), which was the main source of candidates until this period.

Germany – DBwV

The DBwV acknowledged the emergence of the retention issue in the German Armed Forces since 2011. The association highlighted the influence of the attractive and stable job opportunities of the labour market and the family issues like temporary accommodation to the low retention. According to DBwV, the international events such as the war in Ukraine also impacted the number of resignations. EUROMIL's member highlighted the positive contribution of the conscription's re-establishment as a measure towards quantitative and qualitative issues. In this context, the retention issue affected the Armed Forces' operational capabilities to respond against geopolitical challenges and decrease the negotiating leverage of the association.

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RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The German government conducted research about the retention of the military personnel which led to the establishment of the program “Turnaround in personnel”. From its standpoint, the DBwV recommended the reform of the working conditions.

Regarding the recruitment, the German Armed Forces was experiencing a slight decline with the number of recruits in 2016 reached at 42,900 while in 2020 at 36,200. Despite the main age of recruits was between 20-30 years old, the low births and the physical conditions of young people influence the recruitment. Also, the association touched upon the benefits of private sector and the slow performance of the human resources department. Subsequently, the slow procedure prompted personnel shortages which weakened Germany’s defensive capabilities and the military presence in the public discussion. Responding to this issue, national authorities created economic motivations, boosted the human resources department, and formed a new digital recruitment strategy. Similarly, the DBwV’s proposals were to enhance a positive attitude of the Armed Forces through the stories of the military personnel and accelerate the recruitment procedure.

Greece - PFEARFU

In the Greek Armed Forces, the issue of low retention rates raised gradually since the 2010 financial crisis mainly in the young military personnel (20-30 years old). The retention rates were affected by the job opportunities of the labour market, the need for permanent accommodation, the control-centric approaches of the leadership and the lack of societal recognition. The conscription is mandatory in Greece, but PFEARFU disagreed with its use as a tool to tackle the reduced percentages of the young personnel and the lack of operational readiness. Although the implementation of fragmented economic measures, the governmental response was not efficient. The Greek association recommended the equal treatment of military personnel like the rest of the public sector, as well as a salary’s increase. Also, PFEARFU advocated for the improvement of the work-life balance minimizing the duplication of duties and reassuring safety and health of personnel in the workplace.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

Equally, the recruitment issues were emerged since 2010 constraining mainly the younger generations to participate in the Armed Forces. Despite the association's pressure, the national authorities neglected the impact of the private sector's opportunities, the demographic changes, and the ineffective leadership on the potential candidates. Thus, PFEARFU highlighted the need for fair salaries, corrected admission rates in the recruitment procedure, and limited violent and authoritarian behaviours.

Ireland – PDFORRA & RACO

In the Irish Armed Forces, the retention rates gradually declined since 2013, with their total size reaching from 10,500 in 2013 to 7,600 in 2023. The Irish military associations provided different data on the age of those who resign early from the Armed Forces, because they do not represent the same workforce; RACO represents only officers and PDFORRA non-officers. To continue, according to RACO mostly officers from 30-40 years old resign from the Armed Forces, while and following PDFORRA's comments non-officers resign at earlier age (20-30 years old).

According to RACO, 79% of post-2013 officers intend to resign from service well in advance of their mandatory retirement age. However, both associations underlined that the private sector's competitive career opportunities and the work-life imbalance were critical factors for the low retention rates. RACO highlighted the influence of the family issues, the senior leadership's mismanagement, and the high workload. The shortages in personnel affected the Armed Forces and the leverage of the associations in the public discussions. Regarding the conscription, RACO noted that the compulsory military service conscription would never be considered a response to the retention crisis.

Both associations agreed that the Irish government made some steps to tackle this issue. The national authorities increased the salaries and improved the work-life balance and the infrastructure. Nevertheless, RACO was concerned about the slow materialization of these measures. In response to the retention problem, PDFORRA proposed the provision of longer-term contracts and the payment of the additional hours. The RACO supported the changes to pension arrangements, the introduction of the European Working Time Directive and the minimization of duplication regarding the personnel's duties.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

Regarding the recruitment issue, both EUROMIL's members argued that the issue was raised in 2013 and concerned the younger generation (20-30 years old). The appealing economic and social benefits of the private sector was an important determinant of the low recruitment. In addition, RACO referred to ineffective leadership and the limited recruitment activities without interest from the national authorities and the media. Subsequently, the decline rates influenced the Armed Forces decreasing the operational capacity and overburdening the personnel. Apart from that, PDFORRA noted the impact of the low recruitments on the subscriptions' decrease.

The national authorities used various ways to tackle the low recruitment. Some of the governmental responses were the provision of economic benefits, the revision of the recruitment qualifications, and the boosting of the human resources department. Both EUROMIL's members recommend the enhancement of the economic benefits and the application of the Working Time Directive to increase the attractiveness of the Armed Forces. Lastly, RACO was concerned about the lesser governmental focus on the retention. Retaining more experienced personnel translates to maintaining core skills and institutional knowledge, thus upgrading defence capabilities in a qualitative way.

Retaining more experienced personnel translates to maintaining core skills and institutional knowledge, thus upgrading defence capabilities in a qualitative way.

Italy – ASSODIPRO

In Italy, the retention issue was limited. The Italian association was concerned about the gradual lack of societal recognition, the imbalance between work and life, and the impact of the working conditions on the families of the personnel. Contrary to the retention, the Italian Armed Forces were experiencing a decrease in their recruitment rates since 2020.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The high qualification required in the recruitment procedure, along with demographic data and mismanagement from senior leadership, decreased the military attractiveness to young people (aged 20-30), who constituted the main source of recruits. The national authorities adopted a new recruitment model with stable three-years contract while enhanced the Armed Forces' human resources department and its social media campaigns.

Luxemburg – SPAL

EUROMIL's member in Luxemburg presented a slow decline of the retention rates for the 30-40 years old military personnel since 2021. This tendency was determined by the family problems like the partners' employment, the work-life imbalance and the negative working environment consisting of mismanagement and violent incidents. The low rates affected the Armed Forces by significantly increasing the burden of work. The government did not discuss the reintroduction of the conscription as potential response concentrating mostly on fixing the image of the Armed Forces. Similarly, SPAL rejected the use of conscription and recommend the improvement of the work-life balance and the management from the senior leadership.

The recruitment procedure was in a moderate level since 2023 mainly attracting people between 20-30 years old. However, the association noted that the Armed Forces were hiding recruitment problems by employing more civilians leading to an unbalance on proportions. Despite the abovementioned tendency in recruitment, the low rate of births, the inability of the leadership to inspire younger generations, and the private sector opportunities constrained the recruitment and put pressure on personnel. The national authorities focused on ameliorating recruitment campaigns on social media to boost the recruitment flow. From its side, SPAL proposed a working conditions improvement, a stable career opportunity with 10 years contract, and an easiest recruitment procedure.

Malta – GWU

GWU considered that the low retention rates is an issue that influences the personnel at the age of 40-50 years old. Looking at the complexity of retention, the association argued that the determinants of the problem vary.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The competitive environment of the labour market, the fossilized mentality of the military leadership, the lack of societal recognition, and the work-life imbalance impacted this issue. In response, the national authorities provided several allowances with GWU pushing for 23% increase in the pensions of those who serve 4 additional years after the 25-years of service.

Thus, the association proposed not only the provision of economic motivations but also the adaptation of the military mentality to the current social environment.

Additionally, the recruitment process was constrained significantly. Instead of the broad obstacles like the demographic changes, EUROMIL's member touched upon the lack of the Armed Forces' flexibility and the leadership's difficulty in attracting the new generation. Thus, the association proposed not only the provision of economic motivations but also the adaptation of the military mentality to the current social environment.

Montenegro – SOVCG

In Montenegro's Armed Forces, the retention rates followed a gradual decrease from 1,03% in 2021 to 2,23% in 2023. Especially, the new generation of military personnel (20-30 years old) was influenced by the ineffective control centric approaches of the senior military leadership and the economic benefits of the private sector. The declined retention rates had direct impact on the manpower of the Armed Forces and the membership of the association. The conscription was not reintroduced, but SOVCG was positive on that measure. The Ministry of Defence developed a retention policy examining the different aspects of the problem, setting operational goals and adjust the working condition. However, the governmental response was slow and inefficient.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The association suggested for the signing of a Collective Agreement to ameliorate the working conditions, augment the salaries, and regulate the status of contracts. Also, a new housing solution program and a new work evaluation system should be introduced.

Similarly, SOVCG demonstrated the recruitment problem. Indicatively, the number of candidates per post was 1,6 in 2022 and 1,1 in 2023 while the number of candidates per announcement for education at military academies was 6 in 2022 and 2,4 in 2023. To elaborate more, the mismanagement, the economic motivation and the dysfunction in the recruited activities affected the young military personnel, who constituted the main source of recruitment. The recruitment issue decreased the quantity and quality of the selected personnel. The national authorities adjusted the recruitment procedure and enhanced the human resources department. Besides that, the association proposed the introduction of greater economic benefits and the reform of the working environment.

Portugal – ANS & AOFA & AP

In Portugal, the declined retention rates raised gradually in 2011. The age of those The age of military personnel that resign also differs based on the groups of workforce they belong. To elaborate more, Sergeants (NCO's) represented by ANS and officers represented by AOFA, tend to resign at 30-40 years old. On the contrary soldiers and corporals represented by AP, in most cases resign when being between 20-30 years old.

Apart from that, all the associations agreed that the competition from the labour market, the work-life imbalance, and the lack of societal recognition reinforced this decline. Moreover, AOFA and AP touched upon the influence of the negative working environment and the mismanagement. These circumstances prompted discussions about the conscription. ANS also noted that the conscription should not be considered as solution under these conditions, whereas AP highlighted its added value.

Clearly, the low retention rates impacted the Armed Forces and the military associations. The workload increased disturbing the work-life balance while the associations' leverage weakened.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The EUROMIL's members argued that the national reforms were cosmetic proposing the provision of better salaries, and more social and health benefits. Besides, ANS recommend the introduction of merit evaluation system for the career development, while AP suggested the amelioration of the living conditions in military units.

Correspondingly, the recruitment problem was emerged since 2011 targeting mainly the young potential recruits (20-30 years old). The associations identified the economic and social benefits of the private sector as critical determinant. Also, both, AP and ANS focused on the demographic issues and the control-centric military leadership. Consequently, the low recruitment poses a risk to the Armed Forces and the associations by increasing the workload and limiting the associations' membership.

Responding to the recruitment challenge, the national authorities implemented few changes regarding the digital recruitment campaigns, the qualifications, and the human resources department. However, the governmental response is not adequate according to EUROMIL's members. The associations remained on the line of competitive salaries and stable career path. Moreover, the ANS recommends the sharing of personnel's stories as a campaign strategy and the recognition of military personnel as citizens and workers in uniform with proper citizenship rights.

Sweden – SAMO

In Sweden, the retention rates remained stable with the average age of those who early resign was between 30-40 years old. However, SAMO was concerned about the impact of the attractive opportunities of the labour market, the work-life imbalance, and the lack of societal recognition. The conscription is mandatory and considered as fundamental by the association to avoid any imbalance in the workload. Moreover, Sweden has to face the potential changes in the demographic data and their impact on the recruitment rates. The national authorities responded to the rising issue conducting more social media campaigns and providing greater economic motivation for the new recruits.

RESULTS BY COUNTRY

The Netherlands - AFMP & MARVER

Since 2022, the Dutch Armed Forces experienced a decline of the retention rates mainly from the 30-40 years old personnel. Almost 10,000 posts were not filled due to the lack of development opportunities, discontent with working conditions, and mismanagement by the leadership. The reintroduction of the conscription emerged to the public discourse. AFMP rejected this measure since its inability to train properly the personnel against the complex military tasks. Both EUROMIL's members noted the impact of the retention to the strength and the leverage of their associations. The retention's decline tendency augmented the workload, leading to the reduction of defence capacities and the inability to meet the international obligations.

The national authorities attempted to tackle this issue by increasing the salaries, providing definite contracts, and ameliorating the working conditions. Aiming to retain more personnel, the associations proposed the provision of stable career opportunities, the allocation of a staff-oriented leadership, the improvement of working conditions, and more clarity about work-life balance.

The changing geopolitical environment affected the recruitment procedure, especially in the young potential candidates (20-30 years old). The Armed Forces had to deal with the ineffective management, the lack of financial support for recruited activities, and the demographic impact to the new generation. Subsequently, the decreased retention rates weakened the operational capabilities and undermined the leverage of the association during the negotiations with the national authorities. The latter implemented some measures to counter this issue. The government conducted more social media campaigns, adjusted the recruitment procedure, and increase the deployment of civilian personnel. The associations supported the working conditions' improvement and the formation of realistic recruitment campaigns without creating misunderstandings about the situation in the Armed Forces.

Lastly, the associations recognised that the alternative of civilian personnel cannot be considered as a substitute for well-educated and trained permanent military capacity.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, the majority of recruitment and retention issues emerged in the period 2011-2013 and continue until today. Military Personnel at the age of 30-40 years old often resign from the Armed Forces for better career opportunities in the private sector, better work-life balance and a healthier working environment. However, the result is an increased workload within the Armed Forces that further worsens the situation and acts as a vicious circle. Besides, military associations are heavily impacted since their members are subsequently also declining. Conscription in rare cases (e.g. Sweden) can boost recruitment and positively affect the image of the Armed Forces, however in the most cases it does not represent a feasible response and conscripts cannot replace highly experienced and well trained personnel. Governments should efficiently respond to such challenges by providing a stable career path and abandon outdated management style by adapting to the needs and mentality of the new generation.

Regarding the current geopolitical environment, the idea that the need to boost defence since Russia's invasion to Ukraine has been widely welcomed by the public, but the truth is that years of underinvestment led to such situation. Now, it has become imperative to make the European Armed Forces more agile, interoperable, fit for the future by also increasing the number of well trained Military Personnel to respond to international challenges. To elaborate more, the majority of the European states have increased their [defence spending](#) to respond to the changing geostrategic environment, recruitment and retention should also be at the hear of it, because without the necessary human resources, governments will not be able to fulfil their international obligations at NATO and EU level. Lastly, recruitment and retention campaigns should also take under consideration [gender perspectives](#) and what needs to be done in order to attract more women in the Armed Forces.

To conclude, EUROMIL strongly supports concrete actions that aim to tackle these issues, to strengthen the European Armed Forces, and improve the working conditions of military personnel. More research on a wider scale on the matters of recruitment and retention is highly needed.

CONCLUSION

Thus, [EUROMIL welcomes](#) the decision of the European Parliament on the Annual CSDP Report 2023, to task the HRVP and the EUMC with gathering the necessary data to analyse the situation and identify solutions; immediate implementation and strong political will is highly needed to tackle the issues that the European Armed Forces are facing and move towards a stronger Europe in Defence.



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