



Demands

of the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions
(CESI)

concerning the rights of the armed forces in Europe

EN Brussels, 05.10.2012

Confédération Européenne des Syndicats Indépendants

European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions ★ Confederazione dei Sindacati Indipendenti
Europäische Union unabhängiger Gewerkschaften ★ Confederación Europea de Sindicatos Independientes

Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée 1-5, B-1040 Bruxelles ★ Tel. +32.(0)2.282.18.70 ★ Fax. +32.(0)2.282.18.71
www.cesi.org ★ info@cesi.org



In agreement with its trade council "Defence", CESI demands that the following issues relating to the exercise of the job of soldier be considered:

- Firstly, CESI considers that military personnel are first and foremost **citizens** – both in their countries of origin and within the context of their deployments abroad. Thus, they are granted **the same rights** and have the same duties as all European citizens. Soldiers are an integral part of our societies and, in CESI's view, they fulfil an important task.
- In this context, the right to humane treatment is inviolable and must be respected in full even in the case of military personnel, despite the fact that operational military systems are based in great part on the principle of order and obedience. In order to ensure that military personnel can exercise fundamental and human rights to the greatest extent possible, full legal guarantees and the right of petition must be granted to them.
- CESI highlights the fact that armed forces are regularly deployed military to **defend the freedom of citizens' and human rights**. For CESI, this means that military personnel should receive adequate training in politics and human rights. Moreover, it seems unconceivable to demand of soldiers that they defend citizens' freedoms if they themselves only partially enjoy the freedoms of the citizens in their countries of origin.

The soldiers should have **adequate representation** of their professional interests. In this context, their situation will vary according to their countries of origin. CESI notes that full freedom of association in certain countries does not have a negative impact on the armies' ability to obey orders and be efficient. Thus, CESI is saddened to see that some countries continue to interpret the freedom of association of military staff – especially their freedom to found and participate in professional associations – as a threat. This stance demonstrates mistrust towards soldiers – an attitude which CESI believes to be misguided.

CESI highlights the fact that **coordination** with representative entities of military staff, especially in the case of professional associations (if applicable) represents added value for the working conditions of soldiers and consequently, for their physical and psychological integrity. In addition, on the basis of several concrete examples, CESI is of the opinion that such cooperation would enable better reflection about and implementation of the further development of the armed forces. This is particularly important because over the past 20 years, European armies have been the object of far-reaching reforms and are still subject to in-depth changes, especially as a response to new threats, technological developments and the reduction of personnel.

- The many multilateral military operations and the participation of soldiers from member states of the European Union in multinational military corps mean that soldiers work with colleagues from other countries on an increasing basis. In CESI's view, this implies that these common missions will lead to **a growing harmonisation between the working conditions and forms of representation** at a high level in the midterm.

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- **Civilian staff** plays an important role in European ministries of defence. In particular, they are responsible for the important task of supporting the deployed troops. Taking this fact into account, CESI is against the cuts that have been made over the past years to civilian personnel and demands that **greater value** be given to their role.

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