EUROMIL

NEWS

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Security has a social dimension

EDITORIAL

Limits of Personal Freedom: Civil Rights of Soldiers under Attack?

This is the headline of an event which EUROMIL will organize on 19 February 2013, together with the Brussels-based office of the *Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FNS)* and the *European Security Round Table (ESRT)*. It is the fruit of a three-year-long cooperation with these two partner organizations and will feature, along with EUROMIL, Hellmut Königshaus, Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for the Armed Forces in Germany, as keynote speaker. EUROMIL maintains traditionally close relations with Ombudsmen for the Armed Forces, as illustrated by the presence of EUROMIL's former Vice-President, Bernhard Gertz, at the *4th ICOAF* in Ottawa in September 2012 (see report in this issue). Moreover, 2013 will be the 'European Year of Citizens' and should contribute to the recognition of soldiers as "European Citizens in Uniform". Pursuing this objective, EUROMIL not only showed its colours in Ottawa but also at an *OSCE* meeting in Vienna, the so-called *Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDIM)*, a follow-up to EUROMIL's side-event organized together with *ODIHR* in Warsaw at the HDIM (see reports in issue 22 and 23).

EUROMIL Secretary General, Dr. Gerhard Ahlbrecht, Photo: EUROMIL

In this context, we are glad to notice that the Chairman's column of this edition was written by Nenad Čobeljić, the President of EUROMIL's youngest member, *SOVCG*, a Montenegrin military association, which joined EUROMIL in April 2012, and it is all the more a pleasure to read his optimistic belief "that the MoD and SOVCG will continue to build up the path of mutual respect and appreciation" in his country. In other words, a real partnership arrangement which has already been achieved and successfully established in other European countries, but it is always invigorating to get new insights into the sort of challenges military associations face nowadays. To this end, please read the articles on the Dutch, Irish, Danish and Albanian cases in this issue – covering a whole variety of topics - and you will grasp how proactive responses can look like.

Another recurrent theme in recent years, naturally mirrored in our newsletter, is the question how to cope with the crisis: its impact on salaries and pensions as regards military personnel was raised and vividly debated in a discussion forum on the occasion of EUROMIL's Presidium in October whereas the challenge to democracy and security was the focus of the *2nd Belgrade Security Forum* at which EUROMIL was actively present with a booth, thus attracting much attention to its point of view and reaching out to the Balkans (see article in this issue). The tensions, palpable all over Europe, erupted in the "European Day of Action and Solidarity" on 14 November 2012, and culminated, as far as EUROMIL is concerned, in a statement of solidarity (see reports in this issue) which highlighted, among other things, that "the armed forces are composed of human beings". This human factor was also emphasized by EUROMIL Secretary General in a presentation and discussion during the panel "Protection of Crisis-Management Forces" at the *11th Congress on European Security and Defence* on 28 November 2012, also known as the *Berlin Security Conference*.

Fortunately, the EUROMIL family had also some occasions to celebrate in the last quarter of this year: *AKUSH*, our Albanian member association celebrated its 3rd anniversary (and at the same time the 100th anniversary of the independence of Albania), *ASSODIPRO* its 20th anniversary in Rome (EUROMIL was present) and, last but not least, EUROMIL celebrated its 40 years of existence, held its 4th Congress and 106th Presidium in Brussels. At this meeting, *ANEAED* was granted full membership; a minister, a general as well as a honorary member delivered speeches and a new Board was elected (see all the details and some pictures in this issue).

Finally, 40 years, that is also the magic figure in the fascinating report on "40th Ysermarch: Four Days in Flandres Field", a peace march around Ypres, the rebuilt "City of Peace", which you will find at the end of this newsletter, and I cannot resist the temptation to

recall Christian Carion's film "Merry Christmas" (2005), in which on Christmas Eve 1914 - during a brief unofficial truce in no-man's land - trench warfare was transformed into fraternization at the front and a kind of brotherhood of man could be celebrated…. In every parting is an image of death (T. S. Eliot).

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2013!

Gerhard Ahlbrecht

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And still, it turns

By Nenad Čobeljić, Chairman of SOVCG, Montenegro

The "Trade Union Organization of Army of Montenegro" (SOVCG) held its second regular Assembly on 24 November 2012.

The period between the two first assemblies was marked by both difficulties and successes. First of all, it was characterized by a very difficult financial situation for the employees of the armed forces and the violation of their rights when it comes to compensation for overtime work, night work and work on weekends and holidays, thus the right to limited working hours.

But SOVCG's most significant achievement in this period was its affiliation to EUROMIL. On the occasion of EUROMIL's 105th Presidium Meeting on 27-28 April 2012 in Limerick, Ireland, SOVCG became an observer association. Since that date, which will be proudly remembered by the association's members, even the slightest doubt about the success of the association was wiped-off. Besides the memory, Ireland will be linked to their hearts because this important event happened there. We are proud as SOVCG became part of the 40-year-long EUROMIL history, and participated in its fourth Congress recently held in Brussels.

Thus, the period between the two SOVCG assemblies can be divided into two parts. The first (negative) half, showed an intensive anti-trade union campaign and discrimination towards SOVCG members. The Second (positive) half, was singularized by two events in April this year, namely a change at the head of the Ministry of Defense and SOVCG's affiliation to EUROMIL. Since these events, relations towards SOVCG and the respect of trade union rights and freedoms in the Army of Montenegro improved.

Finally, we have a measurable and valid indicator that anti-union discrimination and actions are decreasing and that a phase of normalization of general relations began.

Nenad Čobeljić, Chairman of SOVCG, Photos: SOVCG

This is demonstrated by the adhesion of 17 new employees to SOVCG in the last 20 days. It seems ridiculous, but, if this is substantiated by the fact that no member of the Army joined SOVCG in the last 18 months, then it is clear that the subscription of new members is a true indicator of success and a new beginning. And still, it turns, slowly but surely, in the right direction.

We have surmounted the hardest part, the time of persecution is behind us, but consequences remain. We are a step away from being rehabilitated, and that step is to be taken because reparation of the wounded soldiers and the rehabilitation of the victims represent an act of civilization and a prerequisite for progress.

We are pleased with our achievements and developments, but also unhappy as the door of social dialogue is not completely open for us. It significantly diminishes our access to a qualitative and efficient resolution of existing problems and, above all, work on improving the material and social position of military personnel.

We believe that the MoD and SOVCG will continue to build the path of mutual respect and appreciation to our mutual satisfaction and especially to the satisfaction of the employees in the Army of Montenegro.

On this occasion, I would like to, on behalf of SOVCG, wish all the best for the New Year 2013 to EUROMIL's leadership and members, and to spend Christmas holidays in health and happiness. Cheers!

■

HKKF Congress in the Shadow of Hard Defence Negotiations

By Mette Marie Volander, HKKF, Denmark

Participants in HKKF Congress 2012 in Kolding last November agreed. Despite uncertainty about the future for themselves and the Danish defence forces, the HKKF Congress was a success.

Sunday at noon, guests in uniform, with nice clothes and polished shoes, swarmed through the revolving door of the Comwell Kolding. The scene for the first day of HKKF Congress 2012 was set.

The Minister of Defence had cancelled his venue because of political negotiations. But both the Chief of Defence, General Peter Bartram, and the Chairman of LO, the "Danish Confederation of Trade Unions", Harald Børsting, showed up - together with a lot of military VIPs, trade unionists and many others to open the Congress.

HKKF's Chairman and EUROMIL Vice-President, Flemming Vinther, took the podium and dedicated the Congress to soldiers who have paid the highest price for Denmark's participation in international missions. The speech was a strong praise for the soldiers' efforts at home and abroad.

"Despite difficult times and challenges, despite the bad eggs and a few fools, I am proud of being part of both a defence and a trade union organization like HKKF. Because we, side by side with our sister organizations all over Europe, fight for fundamental values that make our society what it is. Values that are so fundamental and so real, that they are worth dying for", Flemming Vinther said.

Flemming Vinther, HKKF's Chairman,
Photo: HKKF

In his speech, the Chief of Defence, General Peter Bartram, stated that he - as the new Danish Defence Chief - will put great effort to open up the Danish armed forces more to the outside world and will maintain it as a good workplace for about 20.000 soldiers and employees.

"Despite the crisis, despite savings and despite changes to our terms, I will do what I can to preserve the armed forces as a good place to work, taking care of our employees in a respectful way. I want to be in charge of a development in which I, as your employer, can look each of you in the eyes", said Peter Bartram.

Chief of Defence, General Peter Bartram ,
Photo: HKKF

Ton de Zeeuw, EUROMIL's Treasurer, also gave a speech. His talk revolved around the sad fact that not all European soldiers enjoy the same terms of conditions and rights and freedoms as their Danish colleagues.

"The cuts in defence budgets have had a negative effect on many European soldiers' conditions and fundamental rights and freedoms. The only proper response to this and the growing cooperation between European armies, may be even more solidarity. We owe it to the soldiers, their families and the armed forces in Europe. So thanks to EUROMIL's new Vice-President, and Chairman of HKKF, Flemming Vinther, for his speech reminding us this principle." ■

Ton de Zeeuw, Chairman of MARVER/FNV and EUROMIL Treasurer,
Photo: HKKF

100th Anniversary of the Independence of Albania & 3rd Anniversary of AKUSH

By Nevruz Sako, AKUSH, Albania

Nevruz Sako, Secretary General of AKUSH,
Photos: AKUSH

On 12 October 2012, Major General Xhemal Gjunkshi, the General Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Albania, attended the solemn meeting of the "Hundredth Anniversary of the Independence of Albania", organized by the "National Alliance of Albanian Military" (AKUSH). Mr. Nevruz Sako, opening the meeting, thanked Major General X. Gjunkshi for his participation in this meeting. Mr. Sako stressed out that "In 100 years of independence, the Albanian Armed Forces have defended and secured the freedom of Albanian people and Albania's territorial integrity. In carrying out their mission, they have sacrificed their fundamental freedoms and human rights. For this reason, the Albanian people should value, reward and love their military personnel."

Then, Mr. Kujtim Cako, AKUSH President, took the floor. He presented AKUSH activities during its three years of existence, and pointed out that "AKUSH is now a unification and integration factor of former and active Albanian military personnel". Mr. Cako delivered some moral incentives to distinguished members of AKUSH. Major General X. Gjunkshi was given the title of "Honorary Member of AKUSH". Taking the title, the General Chief of Staff held a speech. He greeted and thanked the participants and all members of AKUSH for their successes in defending the rights and interests of military personnel. Then he pointed out: "I am fully convinced and understand well that former military personnel, even if they are not in active service anymore, will never forget their love and readiness to defend their fatherland, which they consider as their mission for all their life." Mr. Gjunkshi spoke about the missions of the Albanian Army deployed abroad. Albanian forces have successfully carried out their tasks, together with forces of other countries as members of NATO forces. Finally, the General Chief of Staff congratulated AKUSH for its accession to EUROMIL as a full member. He valued the role and mission of EUROMIL saying that it is the most prestigious and important international institution wherein are built and implemented the strategies for defending the fundamental freedoms and human rights of European military personnel.

At the end of meeting, the participants watched photos and video-clips of AKUSH activities. ■

Committee of the Irish Parliament Reviews Irish Defence Forces Allowances

By Simon Devereux, PDFORRA, Ireland

Both, PDFORRA and RACO, appeared recently before a committee of the National Parliament in Ireland, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The Public Accounts Committee is one of the most powerful Oireachtas Committees. It has a key role to play in ensuring that there is accountability and transparency in the way Government agencies allocate, spend and manage their finances and in guaranteeing that the taxpayer receives value for money for every euro spent.

The Committee on Public Accounts is a standing Committee of the Irish Parliament and is responsible for examining and reporting on reports of Comptroller and Auditor General on Departmental expenditure and certain other accounts. It also considers the Comptroller and Auditor General's reports on his or her examinations of economy, efficiency, effectiveness evaluation systems, procedures and practices. This committee is made-up of elected representatives from all political parties including independents.

PDFORRA and RACO were of the view that the justification for the payment of these allowances was well made and it created a greater understanding of the purpose of these allowances to the PAC members who heretofore would have had a very negative view on a lot of these allowances.

The Public Accounts Committee delivered their findings and recommendations on the payment of allowances to members of the Irish Defence Forces and are outlined below.

The Committee made the following findings

1. In common with other areas of the public sector, many individual payments to members of the Permanent Defence Forces

are made by way of a special allowance in order to ring-fence the payments to the army and thus stop related claims being pursued by staff in other parts of the public sector.

2. The Military Service Allowance is a universal payment that is pensionable and will be paid to new recruits and new recipients.

3. There are a number of allowances paid to Defence Forces personnel that could be amalgamated under one generic type allowance, for instance in the whole area of security and patrols.

4. The Permanent Defence Forces require a range of staff with technical and professional qualifications in order to ensure self-sufficiency. These skill-sets are paid through the allowance system.

5. A range of expenses incurred by Defence Forces personnel are reimbursed by way of an allowance payment.

6. The starting salary of the lower grades in the Defence Forces is low, with apprentices being paid below the national minimum wage.

The Committee made the following recommendations

1. The Department of Defence should undertake a review of all allowances paid to the Permanent Defence Forces with a view to streamlining and thus reducing the number of allowances in the system.

2. The pay scales of personnel who also receive the Military Service Allowance should be revised so as to incorporate the payment of this allowance into core pay.

3. The Department of Defence should, as part of the on-going negotiations on change under the remit of the Croke Park National Pay Agreement, examine whether pay banding can be introduced for technical and professional staff whose specific jobs are required to ensure self-sufficiency.

4. The introduction of an expense recoupment based on vouched claims should be examined as this would eliminate the need for certain allowances.

5. Care should be taken that any withdrawal of allowances does not have the effect of pushing staff into requiring social welfare payments such as the Family Income Supplement. ■

25 Years of Homosexual Emancipation in the Dutch Armed Forces

By Amin Michel, AFMP/FNV, the Netherlands

On 9 November 2012 the "Homosexuality and the Armed Forces Foundation" (SHK) celebrated its 25th anniversary. To mark the occasion, the SHK published its very first book, entitled *Defensies Trots* ["The Pride of the Dutch Defence Organisation"]. The book has been presented to Lieutenant General Willem van de Water, the Principal Director of Personnel at the Ministry of Defence, during the celebrations. The gay-straight alliance formed by the SHK and the Dutch Association for Military Personnel (AFMP) co-organized the celebrations.

The SHK has been acting in the interests of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) civilian and military personnel working within the Netherlands Defence organisation since 1987. The Defence organisation's personnel policy focuses on creating a social and safe work environment for LGBTI personnel. Twenty-five years of homosexual emancipation has brought the Netherlands to where it stands now: homosexuality on the work floor is a subject that can now be discussed openly. The visibility of LGBTIs has also increased significantly, as demonstrated by the Defence organisation's annual participation in the Amsterdam Gay Canal Pride. Tolerance amongst Defence organisation personnel has increased.

Photos: AFMP/FNV

Despite the numerous successes of the past, there are still problems to be solved. Major Peter Kees Hamstra, Chairman of the SHK stated "In the early years of the SHK, the Foundation's intention was to self-abolish as soon as possible all impediments to LGBTI personnel. Now, twenty-five years later, we can ascertain that day has not yet arrived. Contrary to what is often claimed, homosexual emancipation has not yet been completed. In 2012, there are still men and women who don't wish to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. The SHK will therefore continue to fight for social acceptance, equality and inclusion. A progressive step in this fight was the launch of a Gay-Straight Alliance with the Dutch Association for Military Personnel (AFMP) in 2010". The Gay-Straight Alliance is called "Dutch Armed Forces Alliance".

Wim van den Burg, President of AFMP, declared "There is still much work to be done in terms of social acceptance and strengthening the position of LGBTI military personnel. Our association is very committed to the equality, diversity and inclusion of all employees regardless factors like sexual orientation and gender identity. We'll continue our efforts to ensure that all employees can be themselves at work within the Defence organization. We were also very happy to be able to contribute to the publication of the book. A book that certainly underlines a unique and international milestone in terms of military LGBTI equality".

The Dutch Armed Forces Alliance is one of the co-founders of the **NATO LGBTI Working Group** and advises other nations' Defence organisations on creating and maintaining a safe social work environment for LGBTI military personnel. The Dutch Armed Forces Alliance also made a contribution to the American research project which led to the abolishment of the "Don´t Ask, Don´t Tell" policy in 2010. ■

Military Family - Public Demonstration on 10 November 2012 was Successful

By Manuel Cracel, President of AOFA, portugal

On 10 November 2012, military personnel and their families, in a crowd of approximately 15,000 persons, left at 3.30pm from Town Hall Square - established in the Republic in 1910 - to *Restauradores* Square, where a monument perpetuates the memory of the Restoration of the National Independence in 1640.

It was a journey full of symbolism, as Portugal is experiencing a dramatic moment in which its sovereignty over social and economic policies is being reduced, due to the wrong policies developed by the successive governments. Consequently, it induced a deterioration of the living conditions of its population in general and, in particular, its military personnel.

In *Restauradores* Square, the Presidents of AOFA, AP and ANS addressed the military family.

Following to the speeches, a resolution, which traces the main lines of action of the Portuguese military associations in the near future, was passed unanimously and acclaimed.

The event sparked a huge interest from the media, as we can see on Facebook. ■

Photos: ANS, AOFA, AP

1992 – 2012: ASSODIPRO celebrates its 20th Anniversary

By EUROMIL

On the occasion of its 20th anniversary, the Italian association, ASSODIPRO, held several meetings in 2012 to raise the voice of armed forces' personnel in Italy.

The closing event, organised on 22 November in Rome at Spazio Europa, the seat of the information office of the European Parliament for Italy and the Delegation of the European Commission in Italy, focused on "Democracy, Rights and Reform within the Armed Forces – An Experience for the Respect and Protection of the Military Profession".

Several guests representing the Italian military representation, trade unions, Italian and foreign associations, lawyers, as well as EUROMIL –represented by Caroline Henrion- took part in the event. The President of ASSODIPRO, Emilio Ammiraglia, opened the meeting by recalling the work done by his association to protect the military profession and the numerous difficulties still facing by military personnel in Italy. His statement was followed by interventions from, among others, Oyvind Hoyen (ODIHR), Miguel Lopez (AUME), who expressed his solidarity with military personnel in Italy and encouraged them to follow the path of perseverance in their struggle for the full recognition of their rights, and Antonio Coelho (ANS), who added that military men and women deserve all the respect that is entitled to any other citizen. A. Coelho particularly emphasized crisis effects in Southern Europe and its negative impact on armed forces personnel. He concluded: "That is why it is so important on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of ASSODIPRO that we are here all together, showing our support and our solidarity to the ones that in Italy, among others, fight not only for the rights of their own members but also for the right of existing and being recognized as partners with a constructive role to play in the game of building a more just and fraternal society." The meeting was closed by Nicola Nicolosi, National Secretary of the "Italian General Labour Confederation" (CGIL). ■

"We need a defence recovery!" NATO PA, Prague 2012

By EUROMIL

From 9 to 12 November 2012, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly gathered for its Annual session in Prague, Czech Republic. Prague marks a milestone in the Alliance's history. Ten years ago, the Heads of State and Government of the then 19 members of NATO decided to invite 7 new countries to join the Alliance. "The vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace remains today the cornerstone of NATO's 'open door' policy" stated Dr. Karl Lamers in his Presidential message to the participants in the Parliamentary Assembly. Therefore, the Heads of State and Government of the NATO aspirant countries, namely Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and FYROM were invited to address the Assembly.

Maritime Security and Counter Piracy

On Saturday and Sunday, four Committee Meetings were organized: the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, the Defence and Security Committee, the Science and Technology Committee and the Political Committee. EUROMIL's President, Emmanuel Jacob, was invited to participate and he followed the work of the Defence and Security Committee chaired by Senator Joseph Day from Canada. One of the highlights of this Committee was a panel discussion on Maritime Security and Counter Piracy. Compared to the situation in 2011, pirate attacks have dropped by 85% in 2012 and the number of prosecuted pirates has risen by more than half, while fewer pirates have been released. Vice Admiral Christian Canova, Deputy Commander of NATO Maritime Command in Northwood, declared "We are containing them, we are succeeding, but piracy is not eradicated. The shipping industry may be back in business like it was in 2006, but pirates are still in Somalia." Canova also stated that it is important that NATO and EU have the same rules of engagement. Patrick Van Eerten, from the Rotterdam-based maritime heavy lift company, Jumbo Shipping, called on the Assembly to install rules on the employment of privates to clarify the grey-area concerning their legal use.

Afghanistan post-2014

Of course the pre- and post-2014 situation in Afghanistan was also high on the agenda. Highly interesting was the presentation of Dr. Alexander Cooley, Professor of Political Science at the Barnard College, Columbia University. He thoroughly explained his views on the Afghanistan and NATO's drawdown of forces. His starting point was the question "Can we find regional consensus for a stable post-2014 Afghanistan?" Dr. Cooley explained that publicly all neighboring actors are committed to securing peace and stability in Afghanistan. However, he continued, some of the regional powers see Afghanistan as an instrument for pursuing other regional goals and rivalries. There are also differences about how to achieve "stability" and "conflict resolution" and furthermore there is lack of a common regional forum for cooperation. Highlighting the interests and activities of China and India in Afghanistan and a possible Russia-China regional competition, Dr. Cooley concluded that despite public commitments to Afghan stability, regional goals and rivalries inhibit strategic cooperation and planning.

NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Photo: NATO PA

EUROMIL's President, Emmanuel Jacob, Photo: EUROMIL

Plenary Sitting

During the Plenary Sitting on Monday, a keynote speech was delivered by the NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen. "Defence spending is declining across the Alliance. We need an economic recovery. And based on that, we need a defence recovery. We need to stop the decline. And then we need to reverse it.", Rasmussen argued before the members of the Assembly. As a politician he understands that people always mention defence as an area where governments should cut spendings. But freedom does not come for free and politicians need to explain that there is also the security reality. In his opinion, governments need to continue to invest in real security. To keep our nations safe, he continued, we need to

have the right forces and capabilities.

"Compared to 2009, total Allied defence expenditure last year declined by over 56 billion US dollars in real terms. In Europe, six Allies (Albania, Estonia, Luxembourg, Poland, Turkey and the United Kingdom – in real terms) actually increased defence spending last year compared with 2009. But it was not by a large amount. And it was outweighed by the deep cuts made by the other nineteen Allies. Among the European Allies, only two devoted more than 2% of their Gross Domestic Product to defence last year. Four devoted less than 1%. The United States, too, has just started to reduce its defence spending. And more cuts are in the pipeline." Rasmussen stated that this is worrying! And another worrying trend, he said, is that since 1991, the non-US share of NATO's defence spending has fallen from 35% to 23% today and that this undermines the Alliance principle of solidarity.

Before closing his speech, Rasmussen called on the Parliamentarians stating that "NATO needs you to help hold the line on defence spending, to avoid the risks that would be created through further cuts. We need you to increase defence spending as soon as the economic situation allows".

New NATO PA President

NATO's Parliamentary Assembly elected Hugh Bayley, MP from the United Kingdom (Labour Party) as its new President. He replaces the German Karl Lamers who served two years as the PA's President.

Hugh Bayley entered the NATO PA in 2001 and was elected as one of the Assembly's five Vice Presidents in November 2010. Previously, he served as chairman of the Assembly's Economics and Security Committee.

From 1999-2001, Bayley was a social security Minister in the government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair. He also served as Minister for Veterans.

Bayley's international parliamentary experience also includes terms at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank and IMF, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Before entering parliament, Bayley worked as a trade union official, television producer and university lecturer. *EJ*

European Day of Action and Solidarity on 14 November 2012

By EUROMIL

Statement by Emmanuel Jacob, President of EUROMIL

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL), an umbrella organization composed of 43 military associations and trade unions from 28 countries, joins the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) call for a European Day of Action and Solidarity on 14 November 2012 to mobilise in favour of employment and solidarity and against austerity.

EUROMIL is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. The organisation 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.

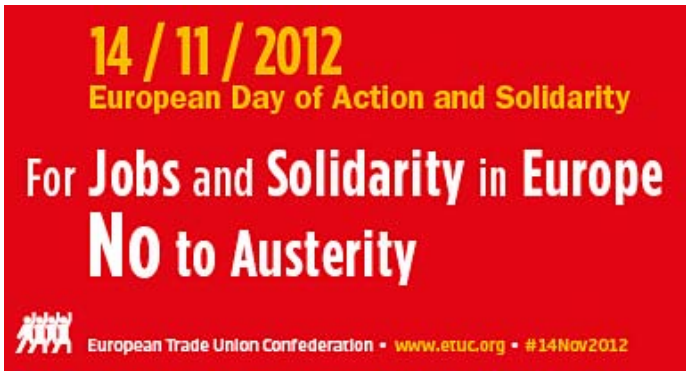
The European Trade Unions are protesting against austerity measures "…dragging Europe into economic stagnation, indeed recession with the result that growth has stopped and unemployment is rising inexorably. Cuts to salaries and social protection are attacking the European social model, worsening imbalances and fostering injustice." (ETUC Press Release 5/11/2012)

Since EUROMIL signed a cooperation agreement with the ETUC in 1998, it supported the European Trade Union movement on several occasions, such as recently during the Euro-demonstrations in Brussels in September 2010 and in Budapest in April 2011.

European armed forces and their military personnel are not spared by the negative impact of the severe austerity measures and defence budget cuts induced by the economic and financial crisis. Soldiers have to pay twice for this crisis. Firstly as civilians, they have to share the efforts every citizen is making by, for instance, paying new taxes, having their income reduced and their social security systems cut. Secondly as soldiers, they have to assume the consequences of the cutbacks in their defence budgets! Defence budgets only consisting of a few pillars, namely training and operations, investments and personnel, soldiers are always affected by budget cuts: poor training and preparation for military operations abroad would put soldiers in danger; a lack of investments would induce inadequate equipment for those sent out in missions, which would jeopardize their safety; and a reduction of the number of personnel would have important human consequences.

Despite the financial and economic crisis, soldiers' terms and conditions of employment must be maintained to the greatest extent possible. Above all, what military associations cannot accept is an outrageous regression of established rights.

The armed forces are composed of human beings who have chosen to serve their country as citizens in uniform. The fact that these men and women happen to be wearing a uniform does not negate their rights as citizens of that country. EUROMIL strongly regrets that some European countries continue to impose undue restrictions on the right of association for military personnel and particularly calls for the recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and that these are included in a regular social dialogue by the authorities. Soldiers are highly-skilled employees, who have the legitimate right to promote their social and professional interests - as do other workers.



EUROMIL held its 4th Congress and 106th Presidium Meeting

By EUROMIL

More than 80 delegates representing 20 countries gathered in Brussels for the 4th EUROMIL Congress and 106th Presidium Meeting on 26-27 October 2012.

The Congress is the highest EUROMIL authority. It is composed of delegates of member associations in proportion to their membership and meets every four years. The Congress elects the President and the Board, approves the long-term policy objectives of the organisation and has the sole authority to make amendments to its Charter.

The meeting was opened by Emmanuel Jacob, outgoing President of EUROMIL, Pieter De Crem, Belgian Minister of Defence, Brigadier General Pascal Roux, Director of Concepts & Capability Directorate of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), and Jens Rotbøll, EUROMIL Honorary Member. The focus of their speeches was the 40th anniversary of EUROMIL, which coincided with the gathering.

EUROMIL President welcomed the participants and recalled the initial goals of the organisation, set 40 years ago by EUROMIL's founding fathers. He emphasized the importance of EUROMIL, its lobbying role in the Council of Europe or European Parliament, particularly for raising the voice of soldiers who still do not have the right to organise themselves to defend their fundamental rights.

**Emmanuel Jacob, President of EUROMIL,
Photo: EUROMIL**

Pieter De Crem, Belgian Minister of Defence, who had previously addressed the Congress in 2008, congratulated EUROMIL for its 40 years. In 2008 he spoke about a 'momentum' to take important new steps forward in the field of international military cooperation. Since then important progress, such as pooling and sharing initiatives, has been made to improve European military capabilities in a difficult financial situation. "…doing more together is a very effective response to the financial and military pressures we face today", he said, taking into consideration the current international context in which Europe needs effective military capabilities to become a more capable and coherent global actor. The Minister underscored the important work of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in this regard, as well as EU and NATO complementarity. He briefly presented his policy for the Belgian armed forces, one of the most integrated with partners in Europe, and finally acknowledged the role of EUROMIL in this process of strengthening cooperation between European armed forces to defend the social and professional interests of military personnel.

**Pieter De Crem, Belgian Minister of Defence,
Photo: EUROMIL**

Brig. General Pascal Roux presented the work of the EUMS, source of military expertise in the EEAS, highlighting military collaboration at the EU level, pooling and sharing and the development of an EU defence. He noted that in the end of 2013 defence will be on the agenda of the European Council for the first time since 2005. "A lot of things are changing, occurring, and this is maybe the only benefit of the financial crisis. We have to be very pragmatic. This pragmatism is an opportunity to seize", he concluded.

**Brigadier General Pascal Roux, Director of Concepts & Capability Directorate of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS),
Photo: EUROMIL**

Jens Rotbøll, Honorary Member of EUROMIL, one of its founding fathers and former President, underscored EUROMIL's

cooperation agreement with ETUC and the needed support of established Trade Unions to help "Citizens in Uniform" obtaining the right of association, negotiate and conclude labour agreements. Mr. Rotbøll shared some thoughts about the history of EUROMIL with the delegates. He said Volland and Sørensen had visions. They knew about the needs of soldiers and their rights and obligations as any other citizen. Without Volland, EUROMIL would not exist as it is today. Finally, he noted that EUROMIL successfully grew over the years, but some objectives still need to be achieved.

Jens Rotbøll, Honorary Member of EUROMIL, Photo: EUROMIL

On Saturday morning a Discussion Forum was organised on the "Crisis Effects on Payment and Pensions in the Military". The panel, moderated by Finn Bengtsen (CS – Denmark), was composed of Flemming D. Vinther (HKKF – Denmark), Simon Devereux (PDFORRA - Ireland) and Antonio L. Coelho (ANS – Portugal). Although Ireland, Denmark and Portugal suffer all from cutbacks in their defence budgets, the presentations exposed clear differences between European countries. Nevertheless, they opened a discussion on how to respond to the crisis that will have to be continued.

During the Congress, Emmanuel Jacob was re-elected President of EUROMIL, Flemming D. Vinther was elected Vice-President and Ton De Zeeuw was re-conducted as Treasurer. The 6 other elected members of the Board are namely Simon Devereux (PDFORRA – Ireland), Jörg Greiffendorf (DBwV – Germany), Jesper Korsgaard Hansen (CS – Denmark), Stavros Kyrou (CAOA – Cyprus), Antonio Leon (AUME – Spain) and Gvido Novak (SVS – Slovenia).

Filip Duquesne (ACMP-CGPM – Belgium) and Albrecht Kiesner (DBwV - Germany) were elected as auditors.

The Greek association AN.E.A.E.D was granted EUROMIL full membership. *CH*

EUROMIL newly elected Board, Photo: EUROMIL

EUROMIL President says goodbye to Bernhard Gertz, former EUROMIL Vice-President, and the outgoing Board Members, namely (from left to right) Antonio Lima Coelho, Finn Bengtsen, Miguel Angel Lopez and Ari Pakarinen, Photos: EUROMIL

EUROMIL participated in the 4th ICOAF

By EUROMIL

EUROMIL former Vice-President, Bernhard Gertz, participated in the 4th International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF) on 23-25 September 2012 in Ottawa.

The 4th ICOAF was hosted by the Canadian Department of National Defence and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). The main themes of ICOAF 2012 were domestic outreach and capacity development in emerging ombudsman institutions.

The ICOAF brings together representatives of ombuds-institutions from various countries with the purpose of exchanging information and experiences about the functioning of ombuds-institutions. The objective of the initiative is to establish best practice and lessons learned related to the mandate, powers and functioning of these institutions. The initiative also reaches out to states that do not have an ombuds-institution for the military but have expressed an interest to learn from experiences from other states.

For further information on the ICOAF, please visit: http://icoaf.org

DCAF recently published a handbook on Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces, which can be downloaded at the following address: http://icoaf.org/pubs/OMBUDSHbook.pdf

Photos: Office of the Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Forces

Freedom of Association and Assembly in the OSCE Region: Challenges, Opportunities and the Role of New Technologies

By EUROMIL

As a follow-up of EUROMIL's cooperation with *ODIHR*, EUROMIL participated in the *OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (SHDIM)* which took place in Vienna on 8-9 November 2012. At the meeting, which was dedicated to the issues of freedom of association and peaceful assembly with a special focus on the role of new technologies and particularly social media, EUROMIL Secretary General, Dr. Gerhard Ahlbrecht, put forward the right of association for military personnel, thus connecting with EUROMIL side event organized at the *HDIM* 2012 in Warsaw where he moderated the panel and EUROMIL's Project Officer, Caroline Henrion, made a presentation on the right of association for soldiers in Europe (see www.osce.org/odihr/94092). The discussions at the *Civil Society Forum*, which was held in Vienna the previous day (7 November 2012) also stressed that the exercise of both of these fundamental rights, the right of association and peaceful assembly, have to be considered crucial to the development of a democratic society. The meetings were attended by delegates from *OSCE* participating States, as well as representatives from other international institutions and non-governmental organizations. One of the numerous highlights of the gathering was the launch of *ODIHR*'s report on "Monitoring of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Selected *OSCE* Participating States (May 2011 – June 2012)" with an introduction delivered by Snjezana Bokulic, Head of *ODIHR*'s Human Rights Department, in the *Ratsaal* of the *Hofburg* on 9 November 2012.

Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Assembly and Association,
Photo: OSCE/Jonathan Perfect

For more information, please visit www.osce.org/odihr and http://associationline.org/ *GA*

Coping with the Crisis: Challenges to Democracy and Security - EUROMIL at the Belgrade Security Forum 2012

By EUROMIL

EUROMIL participated in the 2nd Belgrade Security Forum which took place on 20-22 September 2012. At EUROMIL's exhibition booth, visited by numerous experts and decision-makers - including regional political, military, business and civil society leaders - EUROMIL Secretary General, Dr. Gerhard Ahlbrecht, supported by local staff (*BFPE*), explained EUROMIL's objectives and thus reinforced its outreach to the Western Balkans, especially as regards fundamental rights for military personnel.

Hosted by three partner civil society organizations – Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (*BFPE*), Belgrade Centre for Security Policy and European Movement in Serbia – the Belgrade Security Forum is a vibrant initiative launched in 2011. It aims at creating a relevant policy venue that contributes to the development of a "security community" in the Balkan region. The Belgrade Security Forum 2012 addressed "pressing issues of regional and international foreign policy, security and economy, with a special emphasis on the crisis that is challenging states and societies". On 21 September, the "Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing Practice" were launched, presented by the *Women Police Officers Network in South East Europe (WPON)*.

For more information, please visit www.belgradeforum.org *GA*

EUROMIL booth "Security has a social dimension", Photo: Nenad Bosiljcic, Executive Director, BSF

EUROMIL highlighting the Human Factor of Security at the 11th Congress on European Security and Defence

By EUROMIL

EUROMIL participated in the *11th Congress on European Security and Defence*, also known as *Berlin Security Conference*, which took place in Berlin on 27-28 November 2012. At this unique congress, arguably the most important gathering of this type in Europe, EUROMIL is traditionally present as speaker in workshops, in the previous years also with a booth and in 2010 even with a press conference.

In the 2012 edition, EUROMIL Secretary General, Dr Gerhard Ahlbrecht, made a presentation in the panel "Protection of Crisis Management Forces" emphasizing the human dimension in this context. He drew the attention of the audience, consisting mainly of high-level decision-makers and experts, to EUROMIL's recommendations, worked out by its member associations and summarized in the brochure "The Human Factor – Recommendations for Armed Forces in Times of Multinational Crisis-Management and Peace-Keeping Missions". His speech, rather unusual in such an environment, met vivid interest, and all brochures could be distributed. The panel was chaired by Joachim Spatz, MP and Member of the German Defence Committee, and the introductions were provided by Colonel (ret.) Hans-Hinrich Kühl, 2005-2008 Commander German NBC Defence School, as well as Andrey Obolensky representing *General Dynamics European Land Systems (GDELS)*. The panel was comprised of, among others, Albrecht Broemme, President of the *Technisches Hilfswerk (THW)*, and Gerlof de Wilde, Assistant Director R & T at the *European Defence Agency (EDA)*.

For more information, please visit european-defence.com

GA

EUROMIL Secretary General, Dr. Gerhard Ahlbrecht, Photo : EUROMIL

Panel "Protection of Crisis Management Forces", Photo : Dennis Schäfer, Berlin Security Conference

"Four Days in Flandres Fields, the 40th YSERMARCH"

By Peter Weyers, LtCol, German Army Reserve and Marc Boiting, LtCdr, German Naval Reserve

The "Ysermarch" in Flandres is one of the two marches that Belgian service personnel should attend at least once in their military career.

This year, the 40th edition of the "Ysermarch" or *Vierdaagse van de Ijzer,* as it is called in Flemish, took place from 22 August to 25 August, one week after Assumption Day, as usual.

For approximately 30 years, Reservists of the German *Bundeswehr* take part and are well-liked guests.

This 4-day event is organized by the Belgian army and the townships along the river Yser. It features a "round package", comprising physical exercise, an overwhelming Belgian hospitality and a geographically and historically interesting region, as well as an enjoyable moment of mutual understanding between people.

Each day, 32km are usually crossed in formation. The different routes lead along the Northern Sea, the River Yser and the Flemish Ardennes to the French border. Thus, various areas of the beautiful Flandres region, in which during World War I fiercest and bloodiest battles were fought, are covered and can be explored.

The transfer to the daily changing starting and finishing points is done by a convoy of busses. The Military police blocks the roads in order to help the marchers reaching their destination on time.

Day 1- Start in Oostduinkerke: Coast and "Polders"

It goes along the coastline to Nieuwport and from there via the "Polders" back to Oostduinkerke. In Nieuwpoort, the floodgates of the Yser are passed.

Here, in October 1914, Belgian Engineers opened, secretely in the night, the floodgates during the high tide, while at the same time the dykes were blown up at several places. Because the floodgates were not yet occupied by the German troops, the Belgians were able to repeat these missions during the following nights. The result was a flooded and muddy landscape on both sides of the Yser, from Diksmuide down to the mouth of the Yser on the coast. Both the "race to the sea" and the German attack was stopped.

The troops of both nations were literally stuck in mud. It went neither back nor forth and the entrenched warfare started to ensue.

The evening finds the German Reservists in Ieper under the Menengate where they attend the "Last Post" together with their British comrades. Buglers from the local fire department repeate the ceremony each night at 8pm since 1928. The participants remember the fallen and missing of the British Commonwealth. Every single Missed In Action (MIA) from 1914 to 1916 is listed here with his name on the walls of the Menengate, 55,000 in total. The list is continued on the walls of the British Cemetery in Tyne Cot, with additional 33,000 names. A speaker emphasizes: "We'll always remember them".

Day 2- Start in Poperinge: Hops and Hills

During the "Great War" the town of Poperinge was in the rear, around ten kilometers behind the front line and was used as a supply base and for recreation. The famous "Talbot House" was a facility open to all ranks. Still existing, it serves today as a museum, meeting point and accomodation for mostly British tourists.

Traditionally, for the time being the German Group uses the local fire station as its base camp. The fire brigade empties the vehicle hall which is then turned into a place to linger, relax and used for activities. In the sports hall next door, as well as in military tents, 450 guests, among whom 100 service personnel, are hosted.

There is always a very nice atmosphere in the camp. Fully matching as it is written in the announcement of the organizers: "the camp is characterized by its "Westvlaamse ambiance". The German Reservists

contribute to the good spirit in a very special way when singing the "Poperinge hop song" in the original Flemish version.

From the market place at the start, the way leads through endless fields of hop. Each year a slightly different way over the hills towards the French border is chosen. Of these hills Kemmelhill and Schwarzeberg are the most famous.

There was hard fighting on these hills in 1918, during the last German offensive of the war. Taken by the Bavarian troops in April 1918, Kemmelhill was abandoned already a month later due to the pressure of the French, British and American Forces.

Here, the marchers usually take a break, for a special reason. It is a must to test a local speciality: the Picon. Drunk with just a little hint of champagne the drink is refreshing and stimulates for the last kilometers of the day.

In the evening, accompanied by music, the military formations parade on the market place of Poperinge. Here, and with great participation of the local town folks, delegations of politicians and military lay down wreaths at the Memorial for the Fallen.

Day 3- Start in Diksmuide: Uneasy Feelings

Diksmuide was repeatedly taken and retaken by both sides. Starting from here causes uneasy feelings among the marchers, who cross places reminding them of the cruelties of the war.

Firstly Poelkapelle, where on 15 April 1915 at 5.30pm the Germans used poisonous gas for the first time in modern warfare, causing 5,000 casualties among the French soldiers.

Secondly, Langemarck, a German Cemetery where hundreds of German students were killed on 10 and 11 November 1914. Unexperienced and badly trained, these young men were mowed down by British machine gun fire during an attack "west of Langemark", actually Bixchote. Both sides contributed in their own way to what became later the "myth of Langemarck". Thirdly, the Trench of Death, a Belgian system of trenches at the River Yser, built of bags filled with concrete, still accessible today. After the march the foreign delegations were taken from Diksmuide to the German Cemetery at Vladslo. On this cemetery stands the sculpture of the "Moaning Parents", created by Käthe Kollwitz. Two full size figures of a mother and a father who show their feelings about the loss of their beloved one. They are eying the grave of Käthe Kollwitz´ son, Peter, who fell in Flandres on 22 October 1914.

Here, at this sculpture, wreaths and flowers are laid to honour the fallen.

Day 4- Start in Ypres: the "City of Peace" and the Salient

Ypres – THE symbol of the fights in Flandres. Obstinately and until the end, the British troops successfully defended the town.

The Ypres Salient stuck like a thorn into the German frontline which could neither be pushed in nor conquered. The German answer was heavy shelling. The result was the complete destruction of Ypres. When the war ended, a rider on horseback standing at the "Lille Gate" was able to overlook the complete area of what was once a beautiful and lively town. Today Ypres calls itself the "City of Peace" and has a partnership with its equivalent of World War 2: Hiroshima!!

In the late 1920s, the historical medieval buildings were rebuilt and the special atmosphere was restored. Particularly impressive is the "Lakenhalle" ("Clothhall") with a length of 200m. Located in it are the Town Hall and the "Flandres-Field-Museum".

On this last day of the march, the southern part of the Salient with the mine craters is crossed. In the area of Wijtschate British Engineers and miners dug tunnels underneath the German positions. The tunnels then were filled with explosives of 20,000 tons on average. On 7 June 1917 at 4.10am, 19 charges were ignited simultaneously. It was the loudest sound ever created by men so far, to be heard in London. The shaking ground to be felt even in distant Ireland. The German forces were literally vaporized. Today the craters with a diameter of up to 100m are still visible. Quiet witnesses of a brutal war.

In the afternoon, all marchers and groups assembled at the Menengate to participate in the final parade. The parade is accompanied by applauding people on both sides of the streets and ends at the market place and Lakenhalle with the VIP stand. The effort of the last four days is acknowledged and celebrated by the local people.

And each of the participants can be proud to have mastered the challenge.

This year, 9,700 people took part in the "Vierdagse van de Yser". The magic number of 10,000 was closely missed. Surely one of the reasons is that the Ministries of Defence all over Europe shall save money. Consequently less service personnel was present. Bearing the present shortages and those to come in mind, we can only hope that the Belgian Army will be able to organize this impressive event in the future.

Unsponsored but since years present by their own means, the group of German Reservists with their "unofficial" CO LtCol Peter Weyers will definitely return in August 2013.

For further infomation please visit: vierdaagse.be ■

Photos: Peter Weyers, LtCol, German Army Reserve and Marc Boiting, LtCdr, German Naval Reserve

INTERESTING READINGS

By Georgios Athanasiou, SYSMED, Greece

ATHANASIOU, Georgios, *Epityximeni Epiviosi ston Elliniko Strato* ("Successful Survival in the Greek Army"), Ocelotos Publications, Athens, 2012

Cpt (Rt) Georgios Athanasiou served in the Greek Army for 25 years as a Non-Commissioned Officer and was then promoted to Officer in 2007. After his retirement, he laid out a safe and secure guide for successful survival in the Greek Army, addressed to all Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, extended service volunteers and professional soldiers of the Land, Air and Naval Forces. An insightful and meticulous analysis behind the scenes that is going to shed light in the lives of Corporals to Brigadier Generals!

The book can safely be described as the outcome of deep observation and equally insightful interpretation of the reality in all aspects of military life, a collection of both personal and many colleagues' experiences, aiming at embedding the conclusions and on-hands practical military wisdom in all military minds throughout daily work life at camps.

It is more than certain that a great number of military cadets will re-examine personal beliefs and viewpoints while others are sure to benefit themselves. What is being described in the book is only the fruit of reality, incidents and situations that were falsely repeated on and on and on and might be repeated on and on and on, unless new cadet generations change their way of thinking, ponder and act responsibly, in order to bury the sick past and breed the new generation of the 21st century Greek Army!

Military readers are called into retrospection, to ponder on their up-to-now course of professional life, to discern with courage, boldness and self-criticism. "Mission accomplished" can only be proclaimed after, at least one officer, benefits from the book.

We cannot live a successful future without studying the past, live consciously in the present and programme the future… How you perceive life is how life perceives you!

■

EUROMIL
European Organisation of Military Associations

EUROMIL Calendar 2013

19 February 2013	EUROMIL/FNS/ESRT lunchtime debate	Brussels, Belgium
11 April 2013	Board Meeting	Nicosia, Cyprus
12-13 April 2013	Presidium Meeting	Nicosia, Cyprus
17 October 2013	Board Meeting	Brussels, Belgium
18-19 October 2013	Presidium Meeting	Brussels, Belgium

EUROMIL and the Brussels team
wish you
a Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year 2013!

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