



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

EBCO welcomes the Resolution on the right to conscientious objection to military service in Europe adopted by the General Assembly of the European Youth Forum

Brussels, 12 December 2018

EBCO welcomes the Resolution on the right to conscientious objection to military service in Europe which was adopted by the General Assembly of the [European Youth Forum](#) in Novi Sad, Serbia, 22-24 November 2018.

"EBCO's commitment and advocacy work for war resisters who are exposed to prosecution and discrimination has at its core the legal recognition of the youth right to conscientious objection to military service on the ground of a moral and/or religious opposition to war and its preparation. Despite the increasing international and regional recognition of the human right to conscientious objection to military service, young people in Europe seeking to exercise this right continue to face violations of this and other rights due to non-recognition of the right or a failure to fully implement it.", EBCO President Friedhelm Schneider stated today.

In the Council of Europe area military service remains obligatory in Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine. With the solitary exception of Turkey, all these States have over the course of the years either explicitly recognised conscientious objection to military service or at least indicated the intention of making a civilian alternative service available. Such recognition does not however imply full acceptance of the currently agreed international standards. Constitutional provisions, for example, in Bulgaria, Russian Federation and Belarus were not implemented in legislation for many years. In many cases the initial legislation applied only to very narrowly-defined groups, or merely made an unarmed military service available. The persecution of conscientious objectors often persisted – and in some places still persists – long after legislation.

Martina Lanza and Daniele Taurino, EBCO's delegates to the European Youth Forum, stated: *"This resolution draws attention to the rights violations faced by young conscientious objectors to military service and contributes to ending these violations by calling on all European States to review their policies in order to ensure they are in line with the rights covered in the resolution. Moreover, it reminds those European countries which are considering to reintroduce obligatory military training for young people of the need to respect the right of conscientious objection in their legislation. Finally, the resolution honours the worthy and useful contribution that the conscientious objectors performing an alternative unarmed and nonviolent civilian service bring to the well-being of vulnerable groups and to the entire social fabric, and more in general as a young contribution to peace processes and conflict prevention and resolution."*

EBCO was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. It enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. It provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. It is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994. It is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.

Main part of the resolution:

THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM,

Urges States with a system of compulsory military service to excuse conscientious objectors from military service with no further action required from such persons; or - secondly - to provide an alternative service that is compatible with the reasons for conscientious objection, of a non-combatant, nonviolent or civilian character, in the public interest and not of a punitive nature, such as longer duration, unreasonable placement or monetary discrimination,

Urges also States to respect the freedom of expression of those who promote the protection of the rights of conscientious objectors or who advocate for the right of conscientious objection to military service,

Recommends that States reduce the length of alternative civilian service to the length of the shorter military service available in their countries,

Recommends also that a declaration setting out the individual's motives should suffice in order to obtain the status of conscientious objector, *or in second place*,

Calls upon States to establish independent and impartial decision-making bodies, which are entirely separate from the military authorities, with the task of determining whether a conscientious objection to military service is genuinely held in a specific case, taking account of the requirement not to discriminate between conscientious objectors on the basis of the nature of their particular beliefs,

Affirms that after any decision on conscientious objector status there should always be a right to review by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law,

Emphasises that States should take the necessary measures to refrain from subjecting individuals to imprisonment solely on the basis of their conscientious objection and to repeated punishment for refusing to perform military and alternative services,

Emphasises also the important role that young people performing alternative service can play in public services, charities and associations - especially if volunteer and/or youth-led - supporting their activities in favour of vulnerable groups and for a more peaceful society,

Reaffirms the importance of the availability information about the right to conscientious objection to military service, and that those information can be written and delivered in a youth-friendly way;

Invites States to consider including in their national reports, to be submitted under the UN Universal Periodic Review mechanism and to the UN treaty bodies, information on national provisions related to the right to conscientious objection to military service.

Calls upon the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations to promote the right to conscientious objection as a youth right, including through the submission of information regarding this right when engaging with human rights mechanisms and processes.

Attached please find the full resolution.

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