



# European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **EBCO General Assembly 2020: Overcoming the distance – Uniting the efforts**

Brussels, 14 November 2020

EBCO held its **General Assembly 2020** today (this time online due to the COVID-19), bringing together conscientious objectors and activists from national and international organisations in a number of countries: Belgium, Cyprus (both from the Republic and the northern part), Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Catalonia/Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

The General Assembly of EBCO elected unanimously a **new board** which will be chaired by Alexia Tsouni from the Greek Association of Conscientious Objectors. At the same time the members of the Assembly thanked the previous board for its work, especially Friedhelm Schneider for his strong commitment and invaluable contribution as EBCO President over the past 9 years.

**Overcoming the distance and uniting the efforts, EBCO members discussed about their activities on the national, european and international level in support of the right to conscientious objection to military service.**

EBCO reaffirmed its general recommendations, applicable to all European States:

- 1) if they have not already done so, to abolish all compulsory military service**, and meanwhile refrain from prosecuting or otherwise harassing conscientious objectors, with no further action required from such persons; or - secondly – providing a non-punitive and non-discriminatory alternative service of purely civilian nature.
- 2) to ensure that it is possible for all conscientious objectors to avoid enlistment in the armed forces** and for all serving members of the armed forces or reservists to obtain release without penalties should they develop conscientious objections.
- 3) to immediately cease any recruitment into the armed forces on of persons aged under 18.**
- 4) to accept applications for asylum** from all persons seeking to escape military service in any country where there is no adequate provision for conscientious objectors.
- 5) to decrease military expenditure** and increase social spending.

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.

6) to introduce **peace education** in all parts of the education system.

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