



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

Greece: Joint Submission by EBCO and the Association of Greek Conscientious Objection to the UN Universal Periodic Review

Brussels, 26 March 2021

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection](http://www.ebco-beoc.org) and the [Association of Greek Conscientious Objection](http://www.agco.be) submitted yesterday (25/03/2021) a joint contribution to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) documentation on Greece in the [3rd UPR cycle: contributions and participation of "other stakeholders"](#) (including civil society and national human rights institutions).

"Greece continues to violate the human right to conscientious objection to military service. There was another joint submission by EBCO and AGCO in 2015 in the context of the 2nd UPR cycle. Unfortunately Greece rejected ¹ all the recommendations ² concerning conscientious objectors then. We now call again on the Greek government to finally comply with the European and international standards and recommendations", EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated today.

EBCO and AGCO call for:

- immediate amendments to the Greek law and practice in order to refrain from prosecuting or otherwise harassing conscientious objectors, with no further action required from such persons, and suspend all prosecutions (including the repeated prosecutions in violation of the "ne bis in idem" principle);
- providing a civilian service in line with the European and international standards and recommendations. Such standards require, among other things, that ³:
 - 1) all individuals who object to compulsory military service on grounds of conscience, without discrimination on different grounds, have the opportunity to perform a non-punitive, non-discriminatory, genuinely civilian service of equal length to the one of the military service that is compatible with the reasons for objection;

¹ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, ([A/HRC/33/7/Add.1](#)), 2 September 2016, p. 3.

² UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, ([A/HRC/33/7](#)), 8 July 2016, recommendation 136.15 (Uruguay), 136.16 (Slovenia).

³ Approaches and challenges with regard to application procedures for obtaining the status of conscientious objector to military service in accordance with human rights standards - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/41/23

- 2) applicants are granted conscientious objector status without inquiry, as a best practice, and if there is a procedure of examination, this should be under the full control of civilian authorities, i.e. outside the Ministry of Defence and with no military participation in the body examining the applications;
- 3) all individuals, including serving members of the armed forces, be allowed to register as conscientious objectors at any time before, during or after their conscription or performance of military service, without any restriction before or revocation after they acquire the status of conscientious objector;
- 4) information on the right to conscientious objection and the means of obtaining conscientious objection status be readily available to all those liable to be conscripted to the armed forces, including in the registration form and the call-up papers.

NOTES:

You can find the UPR Joint Submission on Greece by EBCO and AGCO at <https://www.ebco-beoc.org/node/492>

More information in EBCO's Annual Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2020 at <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/491>

For more information and interviews please contact Alexia Tsouni, EBCO President (+30 6974461210; tsounialexia@gmail.com)

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.