



## **Input from EUROMIL<sup>i</sup> and CESI<sup>ii</sup> in Preparation of the European Council Meeting of June 2015 on Security and Defence**

### ***"New threats, new challenges, new commitments!"***

In June 2015, the European Council meeting will be dedicated to security and defence. EU Heads of State or Government will assess the progress made in this field since the December 2013 summit.

Even more than before, the security environment of the EU is under threat and calls for a strong European response. These threats are coming from several directions. The bipolar world changed into a multipolar and to some extent unpredictable world environment. At the eastern borders of Europe, the actions of Russia in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea pose a threat to its security. In the South, conflicts in some Mediterranean, African as well as Middle-Eastern countries and regions including Iraq, Libya, Mali, the Sahel and Syria are also putting pressure on its security environment. Furthermore, Europe was recently confronted with terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen as well as with cyberattacks going hand in hand with the rise of extremism in society including on the European continent.

Simultaneously, European countries have been faced with an economic crisis in the last years and consequently decrease their defence budgets. In Fact, several European countries had already started decreasing their spending on the military and reducing their Armed Forces in numbers since almost 20 years. However, faced to current challenges, it became clear that EU Member States must increase their individual and especially collective efforts. A majority of the public is in favour of a broad European project in the field of security and defence.

The recent declaration of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, who expressed himself in favour of a European army, broadened the defence debate in the European political and military arena. Even if not everybody is yet convinced that there will be, one day and not in the short term, a European army, it is undeniable that there is a strong need for closer defence cooperation and not only for budgetary reasons. If Europe wants to be taken seriously it should maintain its military capabilities, strengthen its global position and ensure its security in a more coordinated way, comprising to what concerns its defence spending.

The establishment of a European army would lead to further transfer of sovereignty to the EU level. Its development and deployment would therefore necessarily require a legitimization by the European Parliament.

EUROMIL and CESI support a comprehensive and indivisible approach to security, which includes, among others, a human dimension. Armed Forces personnel, whether civilian or military, put their live at risk for the preservation of some European values and must be treated as "Citizens in Uniform". They deserve the best living and working conditions as any other EU citizens. This implies the need for soldiers serving in EU missions to receive proper training equipment and have access to medical facilities as well as social protection. Indeed, we call for deeper cooperation and harmonisation among EU Armed



Forces, not only to what concerns Pooling and Sharing of capabilities, but also for the development of common standards for the living and working conditions of Armed Forces personnel. Civilian and military personnel, as any other European workers, should enjoy all the rights and benefits inherent in that condition.

Already today, similar standards in terms of working conditions for all employees in the armed forces should be respected, for instance: working conditions in accordance with the EU safety and health framework directives and the related Working Time Directive, healthcare benefits, , the possibility to access (civilian) vocational training and further training for temporary employees during and after their employment in the armed forces.

Therefore, EUROMIL and CESI are of the opinion that a closer collaboration between European Armed Forces has to go hand in hand with the development of certain standards. At that point we recall the SAFE project which stands for "Synchronised Armed Forces Europe", voted by the European Parliament in 2009 as a first step towards a true European military force. The SAFE project should be brought back on the agenda for further discussion and development.

EUROMIL and CESI also call on all EU Member States to abide by international legislation and respect the fundamental rights and freedoms -including the freedom of association, as stipulated among others in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights- of Armed Forces personnel. The establishment of a European Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces would be a sign of political will towards these principles.

For further information, please contact:

#### EUROMIL

Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78  
B - 1000 Brussels  
Tel: +32/(0)2.626.06.80  
E-mail: [euromil@euromil.org](mailto:euromil@euromil.org)  
URL: [www.euromil.org](http://www.euromil.org)

#### CESI

Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée 1-5  
B - 1040 Brussels  
Tel: +32/(0)2.282.18.70  
E-mail: [info@cesi.org](mailto:info@cesi.org)  
URL : [www.cesi.org](http://www.cesi.org)

---

<sup>i</sup> The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 41 military associations and trade unions from 26 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL 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. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

<sup>ii</sup> The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a European organisation, made up of trade union organisations from European Union Member States as well as accession states. With no political affiliations, CESI represents over 5 million affiliates, promoting better living and working conditions, as well as improving the European social dimension.