



**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**

35 Van Elewyck Street, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
www.ebco-beoc.org / ebco@ebco-beoc.org / [@ebcobeoc](https://www.instagram.com/ebcobeoc)

Annual Report

Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2025





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Researched and edited by

Theodoros DIAMANTIDIS

Semih SAPMAZ

Yurii SHELIAZHENKO

Zaira ZAFARANA



Foreword by Daniele Taurino, EBCO President

This year's EBCO Annual Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe is published in a context marked not only by the continued **acceleration of militarisation** across the continent and beyond, but also persistent and widespread violations of international and human rights because of wars. Increased defence spending, the normalisation of rearmament policies, and the consolidation of security-driven political narratives are progressively narrowing the space for the exercise and protection of fundamental rights, including the right to conscientious objection. At the same time, ongoing armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions are intensifying pressures on individuals who refuse to bear arms, exposing them to prosecution, discrimination, and repression.

Within this evolving landscape, the report documents both the **persistence of structural shortcomings** and a deterioration in the conditions faced by conscientious objectors, draft evaders, and deserters across the Council of Europe area. Legal recognition remains uneven and, in some cases, is being **actively undermined**. Practices of criminalisation, administrative harassment, and social stigmatisation continue to expand, confirming that the right to conscientious objection is far from being fully guaranteed in practice.

A particularly alarming case is the illegal arrest and ongoing persecution of **Yurii Sheliashenko**, Executive Secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement. It represents a critical breach of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, and expression. Widely condemned by international civil society, this case exemplifies the shrinking space for dissent in times of war and highlights the urgent need for European institutions and member states to uphold human rights standards consistently and without exception.

At the institutional level, recent developments also require attention. The appointment, at the end of March 2026, of a new EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU constitutes a relevant step in reinforcing the European Union's external human rights architecture. In this regard, ensuring coherence between the promotion of freedom of religion or belief and the protection of **conscientious objection** remains essential, as both are grounded in the same fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

In parallel, the renewed debates and attempts in several countries to reintroduce conscription further underline the urgency of safeguarding and promoting the right to conscientious objection. In this context, EBCO's engagement within the European Youth Forum acquires particular significance. Through its active role, EBCO contributes to raising awareness among youth organisations and to embedding the recognition of conscientious objection within broader youth policy frameworks. Promoting this right among younger generations is not only a matter of legal protection, but also a strategic investment in a **culture of peace, nonviolence, and democratic participation**.

EBCO continues to operate within its mandate under the Council of Europe framework, combining systematic monitoring with targeted advocacy. While our work focuses on member and former member states, it is grounded in a broader commitment to universal human rights and **solidarity with all those who resist militarisation and violence worldwide**. Conscientious



objection must be recognised as a universal and indivisible right, applicable in all circumstances, including during times of war.

The broader policy direction at European level raises additional concerns. The prioritisation of military expenditure risks undermining investments in social, economic, and ecological resilience. EBCO reaffirms that sustainable security cannot be achieved through militarisation, but requires a comprehensive approach rooted in **human rights, social justice, and peaceful conflict transformation**. In this perspective, conscientious objection represents not only an individual right, but also a form of civil resistance that contributes to preserving democratic space.

This report also reflects the continued resilience of the international movement supporting conscientious objectors. Cooperation with civil society organisations, transnational networks, and institutional actors remains essential to ensure protection, including access to asylum and safeguards against persecution. Maintaining and strengthening this ecosystem of solidarity is particularly critical in a context where even humanitarian and human rights actions are increasingly politicised.

Finally, the report formulates a set of **recommendations** addressed to states and European institutions. These include the full recognition of the right to conscientious objection in all circumstances, the establishment of genuinely civilian and non-punitive alternative services, and the alignment of national legislation with international human rights standards. Particular reference is made to the standards developed within the Council of Europe system and by United Nations human rights bodies, which provide a clear and authoritative framework for action.

This report stands both as documentation and as a tool for advocacy. In a time increasingly defined by preparation for war, it reaffirms a fundamental principle: the refusal to participate in war is not only a protected right, but a necessary condition for building a just and lasting peace.

Daniele Taurino

President, European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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1. DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES & JURISPRUDENCE¹

1.1. COUNCIL OF EUROPE

1.1.1. European Court of Human Rights and Committee of Ministers

1.1.1.1. Armenia

- Case of *Petrosyan v. Armenia*

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), in January 2025, issued its judgement on the Case of *Petrosyan v. Armenia* (Application no. 51448/15), which became final in April 2025.² The applicant is the mother of H. Movsisyan, who in 2012 was found dead in a detention centre in the unrecognised "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" (the "NKR"). From the text of the judgement it is inferred that H. Movsisyan had stated that he did not want to serve in the military and that he was even ready to be convicted for refusing to serve, that he had refused to wear military uniform but, after several conversations with military personnel, had eventually agreed to do so. He had refused to carry out the duties assigned to him, had left his military unit and later brought back, and had allegedly cut himself in his left forearm with a razor blade. He was charged with self-mutilation in order to evade military service (aggravated evasion of military service) and on 20 November 2012 found guilty as charged and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. On 28 November 2012 he died in Shushi Detention Centre. According to the official version, his body was found hanging by his bedsheet from a pole that protruded from the window bars of his cell.

The Court found the investigation insufficient and inadequate for the purpose of establishing the circumstances of H. Movsisyan's death and any potential responsibility for his death on the part of particular individuals³ or the authorities and that the respondent State failed to provide a satisfactory and convincing explanation for his death, which occurred when he was in detention within the control of the authorities⁴. Consequently, it found violations of Article 2 of ECHR about the right to life and also a violation of Article 13, concerning the right to an effective remedy.

1.1.1.2. Azerbaijan

- Supervision of the execution of the European Court's judgment *Mushfig Mammadov and Others v. Azerbaijan* (Application No. 14604/08)

In September 2025, the Ministers' Deputies, *inter alia*, deplored the lack of information submitted by the authorities' as regards the individual and general measures adopted. They called once again on the authorities to remedy the negative consequences of the applicants' criminal convictions on account of their refusal to perform military service, including erasure of their criminal records, and further called on the authorities to provide information on the measures taken to prevent the repeated prosecution of the fourth and fifth applicants who still risk prosecution for refusing to perform military service, and stressed once again that the issue of individual measures in the present case is closely linked to the urgent need of adoption of general measures; strongly urged the authorities to adopt the necessary legislation without any further delay and to ensure its compliance with the Convention requirements and the Council of Europe standards.⁵

1.1.1.3. Greece

- Case of *Tsiliggros v. Greece*

See [relevant chapter about Greece](#) where there is also a commentary.

1.1.1.4. Lithuania

- Case of *Rutkauskas v Lithuania*

On 26 August 2025, the ECtHR finally decided on this case (Application no. 15816/20).⁶ A committee of just three judges represented the Second Section, and their findings ran to just 22 paragraphs, as compared to the 119 paragraphs of the earlier decision in the case of *Teliatnikov v Lithuania* (Application no. 51914/19),⁷ decided in 2022, however this latest decision firmly reinforces jurisprudence.

¹With contribution from Georgios Karatzas.

²<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-238658>

³Ibid. para. 147.

⁴Ibid. para. 159.

⁵CM/Del/Dec(2025)1537/H46-4 - 1537th meeting (15-17 September 2025) (DH) - H46-4 *Mushfig Mammadov and Others v. Azerbaijan* (Application No. 14604/08).

<https://search.coe.int/cm?i=0912594880282ef4>

⁶<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng%22%7D?i=001-244592>

⁷<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-217607>

See also in EBCO, *Annual Report Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2022/23*, 12 May 2023, pp. 8-9.

https://ebco-beoc.org/sites/ebco-beoc.org/files/attachments/2023-05-12-EBCO_Annual_Report_2022-23.pdf



The facts of this case were very similar to those of Teliatnikov. Rutkauskas, also a Jehovah's Witness minister, had been called up in 2015 for Lithuania's recently reinstated military service. On the grounds of conscientious objection, he had requested instead to be allocated to an alternative civilian service, but this request was ignored. In 2019, the Supreme Administrative Court upheld this decision, without addressing the question of conscientious objection; finding that "the constitutional duty of a citizen to perform mandatory military service or alternative national defence service applied both to ministers of churches and religious organisations that were considered traditional in Lithuania, and also to ministers of non-traditional religious communities and associations. (...) the questions related to the applicant's status as subject to military conscription, such as whether he was medically fit to perform such service, or which type of service – military or alternative national defence service – should apply to him, or what the conditions of such service should be, were not the subject matter of the case".⁸

Rutkauskas' application to the European Court however clearly stated the issue at stake: "that the State's rejection of his application for conscientious objector status had interfered with his right to freedom of thought and conscience as safeguarded by Article 9 of the Convention. The system in Lithuania failed to strike a fair balance between the interests of society and those of persons like himself, who had deeply and genuinely held beliefs. Accordingly, the refusal by the State to respect his conscientious objection to military service had not been necessary in a democratic society."⁹

In its findings, the Court repeated almost verbatim the last two sentences, but it also made it clear that the nature of the service to be performed was relevant by making a link to its finding in Teliatnikov regarding the alternative service supposedly available to conscientious objectors in Lithuania. It noted that in Teliatnikov it had found "the existing alternative national defence service to be intrinsically linked to military service and therefore considered that it could not be seen as a separate civilian service".¹⁰ "In the present case, the Court notes at the outset that the Government has admitted that the present case concerned the same factual circumstances

as those examined by the Court in Teliatnikov. The applicant [...] sought to be exempted from military service on the ground of his genuinely held religious convictions, and had referred to those grounds in his request to the military authority in 2015 [...]. The refusal of this request for exemption therefore amounted to an interference with the applicant's right to freedom of thought and conscience under Article 9".¹¹ "That interference had a basis in law, namely the Law on Conscription. [...] the impugned decision was based on a system which did not allow any conscience-based exceptions to mandatory military service or service intrinsically linked to it and did not consider the performance of alternative civilian service."¹²

The most interesting aspect of the case was the line taken by the Lithuanian government. It sought to have the case struck out, even before the decision on admissibility, on three grounds. First, following the Teliatnikov verdict, "the domestic authorities had immediately identified the need for systemic reform of the alternative national defence service and had taken steps to remedy the relevant legal framework, notably by drawing up guidelines for draft legislation."¹³ Second, Rutkauskas had in the event never been forced to perform military service. In 2015, the recruitment target had been met while his case was being argued, he was not called up in 2016, and by 2017 he had passed the age of liability for military service. Third, "the military authorities themselves apply transitional measures aimed to prevent persons from finding themselves in a situation similar to that of the applicant and suspend the call up to perform mandatory military service of persons who submit requests to perform alternative national defence service independent of military control and supervision until such is established."¹⁴

The Court found that it was not "proven by the Government that the situation complained of by the applicant has been resolved [...]. The Court notes, in particular, that the impugned decisions date back to 2015 and have not been quashed (see also Teliatnikov, cited above, §§ 48, 49 and 64-67). Moreover, it has not been submitted that an alternative civilian service, the lack of which the applicant had complained of, had been provided for by Lithuanian law. It therefore dismisses the

⁸<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng%22j%7D?i=001-244592> para. 3.

⁹Ibid. para. 10.

¹⁰Ibid. para. 14.

¹¹Ibid. para. 15.

¹²Ibid. para. 16.

¹³Ibid. para. 5.

¹⁴Ibid. para. 6.

¹⁵Ibid. para. 8.



Government's request to strike the application out of its list."¹⁵

- About execution of Judgments in Teliatnikov and Rutkauskas cases

On 24 November 2025, the Department for the Execution of Judgments organised a round table in Strasbourg on the execution of the [Ülke v. Turkey](#) and the [Teliatnikov v. Lithuania](#) groups of judgments. These cases concern the absence of a statutory framework or procedure guaranteeing the right to conscientious objection, providing a genuine civilian alternative to compulsory military service.

The Lithuanian authorities presented both the current and the [new legal framework](#) on alternative civil service, which will enter into force on 1 January 2026, following the *Teliatnikov* judgment of the Court.¹⁶

Indeed, in February 2026, the Lithuanian authorities submitted a communication to the Committee of Ministers of CoE, where, besides informing of the payments of sums awarded by the Court to Teliatnikov (on 4/11/2022) and Rutkauskas (3/10/2025), they claimed that: *"on 13 June 2024 the Law No. XIV-2729 Amending the Law on Conscription No. I-1593¹⁷ was adopted, Article 21 of which set forth the new wording of the Law on Conscription and Alternative National Defence Service, which entered into force on 1 January 2026. [see the report on Lithuania for more details on the new amendments]*

It could be concluded that the deficiencies of the legal framework established by the Court in the judgment on hand related to alternative national defence service were eliminated as soon as the new wording of the Law on Conscription and Alternative National Defence Service was adopted.

*Accordingly, it could be stated that the State has organised and implemented a system of alternative service offering in law and in practice an alternative to military service of a genuinely civilian nature independent from control and supervision of the military, which entered into force on 1 January 2026."*¹⁸

1.1.1.5. Russian Federation

- Case of *Kolyasnikov and others v. Russia*

In March 2025, the ECtHR issued jointly judgement on several applications mainly about unjustified restrictions

on their right to freedom of religion under Article 9 of the Convention.¹⁹ Among them there is the case of Yevgeniy Aleksandrovich Vladimirov (application 45519/18)²⁰ a Jehovah's Witness, who applied multiple times but "was refused alternative civilian service by the draft commission without being given an opportunity to present his beliefs, and solely on the grounds of his religious affiliation. The courts upheld the refusal despite evidence of his genuine religious convictions". The court found that there has been a violation of Article 9 of the Convention, concerning freedom of thought, conscience and religion, in all applications, including the one of Mr. Vladimirov.

- Case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*

In July 2025, the ECtHR issued its judgement in the Case of *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia* (Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, 28525/20 and 11055/22).²¹ In this extensive judgement and annexes of thousands of pages, while there is no explicit reference to violations of the right to conscientious objection to military service, there are various parts concerning forced conscription of Ukrainian citizens and even their use in the armed conflict by "Russian-backed de facto authorities" and "Russian-affiliated armed groups",²² as well as reported "conscription of Ukrainian children into the Russian army once they acquired Russian nationality and turned 18".²³ It is worth noting that some of the instances of forced conscription were examined under the heading of "forced labour"²⁴, and that among the various findings of the Court was that there "has been an administrative practice of forced labour in violation of Article 4 § 2 of the Convention" (operative provision 14).

1.1.2. European Committee of Social Rights

On 20 January 2026 the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe, unanimously considered EBCO's complaint (about violations of economic and social rights of conscientious objectors performing the punitive and discriminatory alternative service in Greece) admissible in its entirety.²⁵ Consideration on the merits is pending.

¹⁶<https://www.coe.int/en/web/execution/-/lithuania-and-t%C3%BCrkiye-round-table-on-the-execution-of-judgments-of-the-european-court-on-conscientious-objection>

¹⁷[Note in the original] The Law No. XIV-2729 on Conscription and Alternative National Defence Service amending the Law on Conscription No. I-1593 in Lithuanian is available on the official register of legal acts of the Seimas at: <https://www.etar.lt/portal/legalAct.html?documentId=03878580337811efbdaea558de59136c>

¹⁸Communication from Lithuania concerning the group of cases of Teliatnikov v. Lithuania (Application No. 51914/19), DH-DD(2026)208, 06/02/2026. Available through: <https://search.coe.int/cm?i=09125948802a909d>



1.1.3. European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission)

At the request of Ukraine's Constitutional Court, the Venice Commission produced an amicus curiae brief on alternative (non-military) service in Ukraine in March 2025.²⁶

In December 2024, the Constitutional Court requested an amicus curiae brief from the Venice Commission, regarding the case of Dmytro Zelinsky. The Constitutional Court started, in October 2024, hearing the case of Dmytro Zelinsky²⁷ – a Seventh-day Adventist sentenced to a three-year prison term for refusing mobilisation on grounds of conscience. Mr. Zelinsky complained that his right to alternative civilian service cannot be limited under martial law and that the state violated his rights by providing no legal access to alternative civilian service in wartime.

In its amicus curiae²⁸, the Venice Commission restated that "under the ECHR as well as under the ICCPR, States have the positive obligation to set up a system of alternative service which must be separated from the military system, shall not be of a punitive nature and remain within reasonable time limits." It also added that "under no circumstances may a conscientious objector to military service be obliged to bear or use arms, even in self-defence of the country".

Worth noting that the Commission highlighted that "the very nature of conscientious objection implies that it cannot be fully excluded in time of war, albeit States have a limited margin of appreciation, especially in case of a general mobilisation. However, it appears to the Venice Commission that under no circumstances may a conscientious objector to military service be obliged to bear or use arms, even in self-defence of the country."

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters' International, publicly cited, in the plenary at the 58th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2025, the important Venice Commission Opinion clarifying that conscientious objection status has to be provided for even in times of war/mobilisation.²⁹

1.1.4. Commissioner for Human Rights

In July 2025, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Mr. Michael O'Flaherty, issued a "Memorandum on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine". In this document, the Commissioner provides an entire chapter concerning the Martial Law and consequent restrictions and reportedly "systematic and widespread" violations of human rights by Ukrainian military recruitment officials, including allegations of torture and death during military recruitment. Worth noticing that it is a rare case, in recent years, that the Commissioner explicitly cited conscientious objection [to military service]: "The Commissioner also recommends that Ukraine uphold international standards on conscientious objection, summarised by the Venice Commission in its amicus curiae brief on alternative (non-military) service."^{30,31}

1.1.5. CoE projects on Ukraine

On 6 November 2025, a roundtable titled "Freedom to Practice One's Religion or Beliefs in Wartime: The Right to Alternative Service" was held in Kyiv. The event was co-organised by two Council of Europe Projects: "Support for Ukraine in Implementing Council of Europe Standards in the Judiciary" and "Rights of Veterans and Personnel of Armed Forces in Ukraine." It brought together representatives of state bodies, academia, legal practitioners, religious studies experts, and international specialists to discuss the current challenges and legal dimensions of exercising the right to alternative (non-military) service during wartime.

The roundtable featured four thematic sessions covering state-church relations under martial law, international standards and comparative practices of alternative service in Europe, legal and constitutional guarantees of conscientious objection in Ukraine, and the role of the judiciary in safeguarding the right to alternative service. Expert presentations were delivered by national and international speakers, including representatives of the State Service for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience of Ukraine, legal scholars from leading Ukrainian

¹⁹ Applications nos. 39776/15 and 15 others. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-242082>

²⁰ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-211908>

²¹ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-244292>

²² E.g. Paras. 955 (quoting conference room paper of 29 August 2023, of the Commission of Inquiry (C.IV), paras. 712-714), 958, 964 (referring to OHCHR reports).

²³ Para. 1535. It appears to be based mainly on paras. 4227-4228 of Annex B.

<https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/HUDOC-8019-16-Annex-B-Judgment-GC-ENG>

²⁴ Para. 995.

²⁵ ECSR, Decision on admissibility of the Complaint No. 242/2024, 20 January 2026. <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/?i=cc-242-2024-dadmiss-en>

²⁶ https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2974

²⁷ https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2939

²⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/opinion-1219>



universities, a judge of the Dnipro Administrative Court, and experts of the Council of Europe. Key topics included international legal standards on freedom of religion or belief, models of alternative service in European states such as the United Kingdom, challenges of implementation under Ukrainian law, and recent judicial practice relating to conscientious objection in wartime.

The event provided a platform for in-depth discussion on the protection of fundamental freedoms under conditions of armed conflict, with a particular focus on the state's obligations to ensure non-discriminatory access to alternative service for individuals whose religious or moral convictions prevent them from carrying arms. Participants highlighted the need for legislative clarity, institutional mechanisms, and judicial safeguards to ensure that Ukraine's legal framework aligns with international human rights standards. The roundtable concluded with a call for continued expert dialogue and cooperation to strengthen legislative, administrative, and judicial protections for conscientious objection in the context of national defence.³²

²⁹<https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4397>

³⁰[Note in the original] European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Ukraine Amicus Curiae [Brief](#) on Alternative (Non-Military) Service, adopted on 14-15 March 2025.

³¹Michael O'Flaherty, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, *Memorandum on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine*, 8 July 2025, para. 50.

<https://rm.coe.int/memorandum-on-human-rights-elements-for-peace-in-ukraine-by-michael-o-/1680b678ec>

³²<https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/protecting-freedom-of-thought-conscience-and-religion-during-wartime-roundtable-on-alternative-service-held-in-kyiv>



1.2. EUROPEAN UNION

1.2.1. The European Union Agency for Asylum

In November 2025, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a highly important report titled “Military Service and International Protection in Europe. Jurisprudence on applicants invoking compulsory military service, draft evasion and desertion as protection ground”.³³

As stated in the part about Methodology: “This report presents judgments, decisions, preliminary rulings and national jurisprudence from courts across EU+ countries, together with key case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) relating to asylum claims based on a refusal to perform military service, draft evasion or desertion. The selected jurisprudence addresses the evolving understanding of when such claims amount to persecution under Article 9(2)(a)-(e) and related provisions of the recast Qualification Directive (QD), the requirement of nexus to a Convention ground, as well as their interaction with international refugee and human rights laws. Covering the period from 2011 to 2025, the report provides a comprehensive overview of how European and national courts have assessed claims involving conscientious objection, alternative service, disproportionate or discriminatory sanctions, and the nexus to protection grounds such as political opinion or religion.”

In the part about “Key legal concepts” there is a chapter about “Conscientious objection, alternative service and its limits” and in the part about “Substantive grounds for international protection”, in the chapter about “Well-founded fear of persecution” there is a subchapter titled “Conscientious objection: Availability of alternatives to military service”, where the “lack of availability, in an applicant’s country of origin, of the possibility of being exempted from military service or providing appropriate alternative service in its place” is cited as a “key

precondition of a well-founded fear of persecution which was identified by the CJEU”.

The report also contains a section with an “Overview of country-specific jurisprudence”, examining cases about Eritrea, Russia, Syria, Türkiye and Ukraine. It also has a part about “Recruitment of minors”.

The EUAA has also issued in March 2025 a Country of Origin Information Report about Syria, where, *inter alia*, it is mentioned that “The transitional government further abolished conscription, except in situations such as national emergencies”. In the part about children, there is also a paragraph about “Forced recruitment by armed groups”.³⁴ In a subsequent report of July 2025, there is an updated paragraph on forced recruitment of children, including girls, by armed groups.³⁵

1.2.2. EU Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

It should be noted that the European Union, during 2025, has failed to appoint a new EU Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, something which has been publicly criticised.³⁶

³³FERRÉ TRAD, N. (coord.), HERRAIZ JAGEROVIC, V. and TEJEDOR LEJONA, L., *Military Service and International Protection in Europe: Jurisprudence on applicants invoking compulsory military service, draft evasion and desertion as protection ground*. Comillas Pontifical University – University Institute of Studies on Migration under a grant project funded by the EUAA (Call EUBA-EUAA-2025-ASYLUMCASELAW). November

https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/Documents/2025_jurisprudence_compulsory_military_service_EN.pdf

³⁴EUAA, *COI Report – Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025, pp. 23, 40.

https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2025_03_EUAA_COI_Report_Syria_Country_Focus.pdf

³⁵EUAA, *COI Report – Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025, p. 63.

<https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/coi-report-syria-country-focus-1>

³⁶Willy Fautré, “EU/UN – Shame on the EU! 15th month without EU Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief”, *The Geneva Times*, 3 March 2026.

<https://www.thegenevatimes.news/2026/03/eu-un-shame-on-the-eu-15th-month-without-eu-special-envoy-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief/>



1.3. UNITED NATIONS

1.3.1. Treaty Bodies

1.3.1.1. Human Rights Committee

1.3.1.1.1. Views on individual communications

- *Kyung Mook Kim, Yu Ho Park, Du Won Kim and Sung Hyun Hong v. Republic of Korea*

In March 2025, the Committee adopted highly important views on a case of four conscientious objectors to military service in the Republic of Korea.³⁷ In 2015, they were all sentenced to 18 month imprisonment for having violated the Military Service Act, because of their conscientious objection to military service, when there were no alternative service provisions. While serving their sentences, they wished to exercise their right to vote in the general election held on 13 April 2016. However, they could not exercise their right to vote, as paragraph 2 of article 18 (1) of the Public Official Election Act removes the right to vote from a person who has been sentenced to at least one year of imprisonment, with or without prison labour, until the sentence has been completed.

The four conscientious objectors, following exhaustion of domestic remedies, claimed violation of their rights under article 25 of ICCPR.

While noting that they have not invoked a separate violation of article 18 of the Covenant, the Committee nonetheless recalled its jurisprudence that the right to conscientious objection to military service inheres in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and entitles any individual to an exemption from compulsory military service if such service cannot be reconciled with that individual's religion or beliefs. The Committee thus observed that their disenfranchisement was a result of exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Committee considered that the automatic disenfranchisement resulting from their criminal conviction and sentencing to 18 months' imprisonment under the Military Service Act were not based on the required standards of reasonableness, objectivity and proportionality and were thus in violation of their rights under article 25 (b) of the Covenant.

Since they have not requested compensation, the Committee considered that its Views on the merits of the claim constitute sufficient remedy for the violation found. However, the State Party is also under an obligation to take all steps necessary to prevent similar violations from occurring in the future, including by reviewing its legislation on voting restrictions for prisoners and its implementation thereof, in order to align its legislation with the State Party's obligations under article 25 (b) of the Covenant and the Committee's Views in the present case.

This is apparently the first time that the Committee has found a violation of article 25 of ICCPR in a case of conscientious objectors to military service. The decision is also important because it further consolidates the Committee's broader position, previously developed in relation to other rights (e.g. the right to liberty / arbitrary detention (art. 9), the right to liberty of movement (art. 12)), that restrictions of rights of conscientious objectors resulting from exercising their inherent right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion constitute violations of respective articles of ICCPR.

1.3.1.1.2. Concluding observations

In the course of 2025, the Committee included the issue of conscientious objection to military service in its Concluding Observations on Periodic Reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on **Mongolia**, and as for forced conscription on **Burkina Faso** (143rd session in March), and on **Kazakhstan** and **Latvia** (144th session in June-July).

On **Mongolia**, following relevant submissions by the Asia-Pacific Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (APAJW) and The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (EAJW),³⁸ Connection e.V.³⁹ and Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI),⁴⁰ the Committee stated:

³⁷ CCPR/C/143/D/3660/2019, 10 July 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/143/D/3660/2019>

³⁸ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FMNG%2F62295&Lang=en

³⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FMNG%2F62291&Lang=en

⁴⁰ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FMNG%2F62293&Lang=en



"42. The Committee notes that the State Party recognizes, in principle, the right to conscientious objection to military service, but is concerned by reports that the duration of alternative service for conscientious objectors is double that of military service, and that training provided as part of alternative service is conducted by armed forces personnel. Noting the availability under the Law on Military Service of an option to make a payment in order to fulfil the obligation of military service, the Committee is concerned that such an option is not consistent with the Covenant, both in requiring conscientious objectors to support the military and by adversely affecting individuals with a limited ability to pay (art. 18).

43. The State Party should promptly take all measures necessary to ensure that the right to conscientious objection to military service is guaranteed in law and in practice and that alternative service is accessible to all conscientious objectors, without discrimination, and is not punitive or discriminatory in nature, cost or duration."⁴¹

It is worth noting also that as for the issue of registration of religious groups, the Committee highlighted the "repeated denials of registration and delays with processing applications by Jehovah's Witnesses groups in Ulaanbaatar".⁴²

On **Burkina Faso**, following relevant submissions by Connection e.V.⁴³ and CPTI,⁴⁴ there was no explicit reference to conscientious objectors, however, the issue of forced conscription was cited. The Committee expressed concerns "about allegations that certain judges who have issued unfavourable decisions concerning the volunteer defence force or the executive have been forcibly conscripted (art. 14)" and recommended the State party to: "(c) Ensure that judges are able to work independently and safely and carry out their activities without fear of reprisals, including forced conscription".⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Committee noted "with concern reports of the increasing repression of journalists and human rights defenders, including the suspension of broadcasting, threats, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, physical assaults, enforced disappearances and forced conscription to the volunteer defence force (art. 19)" and recommended to: "Ensure that all allegations of threats, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, physical assaults, enforced disappearances and enforced conscription against journalists and human rights defenders are promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of their acts, and that victims are provided with effective remedies and reparations".⁴⁶

On **Kazakhstan**, following relevant submissions by APAJW and EAJW,⁴⁷ Connection e.V.⁴⁸ and CPTI,⁴⁹ the Committee stated:

"45. The Committee notes with appreciation the State Party's expressed willingness to consider international practices regarding the right to conscientious objection to military service and welcomes the information from the delegation of the State Party that some conscientious objectors have, in practice, been permitted to perform alternative civilian service. However, the Committee remains concerned that the right to conscientious objection is not recognized in law and that there is no specific legal provision guaranteeing alternative service of a civilian nature for individuals, including Jehovah's Witnesses, who object to military service on grounds of conscience (arts. 2, 18 and 26).

46. In line with the Committee's previous recommendations, the State Party should promptly take all measures necessary to ensure that the right to conscientious objection to military service is guaranteed in law and in practice, including by adopting legislation explicitly providing for alternative service of a civilian nature that is accessible to all conscientious objectors, without discrimination, and is not punitive or discriminatory in nature, cost or duration."⁵⁰

⁴¹ CCPR/C/MNG/CO/7, 6 May 2025, paras. 42-43. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/MNG/CO/7>

⁴² CCPR/C/MNG/CO/7, 6 May 2025, para. 40. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/MNG/CO/7>

⁴³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FBFA%2F62313&Lang=en

⁴⁴ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FBFA%2F62314&Lang=en

⁴⁵ CCPR/C/BFA/CO/2, 24 April 2025, paras. 36-37(c). <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/BFA/CO/2>

⁴⁶ CCPR/C/BFA/CO/2, 24 April 2025, paras. 42-43(c). <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/BFA/CO/2>

⁴⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FKAZ%2F63264&Lang=en

⁴⁸ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FKAZ%2F63372&Lang=en

⁴⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FKAZ%2F63364&Lang=en

⁵⁰ CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/3, 3 September 2025, paras. 45-46. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/3>



It is worth noting also that the Committee was “concerned about reports that individuals, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, continue to be sentenced to imprisonment or restrictions of liberty in connection with the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs (art. 18)”⁵¹

On **Latvia**, following relevant submissions by Connection e.V.,⁵² CPTI⁵³ and EAJW,⁵⁴ the Committee stated:

“37. The Committee appreciates the measures adopted by the State Party to safeguard the rights of conscientious objectors following the re-introduction of compulsory military service for men under the Law on the National Defence Service. The Committee also notes that the term of alternative civil service is equal in length to military service. However, the Committee is concerned that with alternative service arrangements being administered by the Ministry of Defence, and with the Conscription Control Commission being both constituted by and reporting to the Ministry, there are risks of compromising the independence and impartiality of the decision-making process; and that the rules governing discharges from military service discriminate against conscientious objectors (arts. 2, 18 and 26).

38. The State Party should take all measures necessary to ensure that the right to conscientious objection to military service is guaranteed in law and in practice, and that alternative service is accessible to all conscientious objectors, without discrimination.

In particular, it should:

(a) Ensure the independence and impartiality of the procedures for assessing applications for conscientious objector status, including by placing such procedures under the full control of civilian authorities entirely separate from the Ministry of Defence;

(b) Consider revising the legislative framework to provide for honourable discharges on grounds of conscience, and to ensure that individuals who receive early termination from military service on those grounds do not face financial or other penalties.”⁵⁵

The above concluding observations are highly important, insofar the Committee, by referring to honourable discharges, appears to implicitly refer also to professional members of the armed forces, perhaps for the first time in concluding observations. It is also important that, following relevant suggestions by Connection e.V. (deriving from longstanding recommendations of the PACE and the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance / Freedom of Religion or Belief), the Committee, as for the procedures for CO status, included the phrase “entirely separate from the Ministry of Defence”.

1.3.1.1.3. List of issues prior to reporting

In the course of 2025, the Committee included the issue of conscientious objection to military service in its Lists of issues prior of the submission of Periodic Reports under the ICCPR on **Barbados** (143rd session in March), **Ghana**, **Morocco** and **Switzerland** (144th session in June-July)

On **Barbados**, following a relevant submission by CPTI,⁵⁶ the Committee requested:

“Freedom of conscience and religious belief (arts. 2, 18 and 26)

[...] Noting that military service in the State Party is voluntary, please clarify: (a) the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the military, including with parental consent; and (b) whether current legislation allows for serving members of the armed forces to apply for early release for reasons of conscience.”⁵⁷

Apparently, this is the first time that the Committee has included the above issues in the list of issues.

⁵¹ CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/3, 3 September 2025, para. 47. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/3>

⁵² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FLVA%2F63374&Lang=en

⁵³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FLVA%2F63375&Lang=en

⁵⁴ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FCSS%2FLVA%2F63269&Lang=en

⁵⁵ CCPR/C/LVA/CO/4, 3 September 2025, paras. 37-38. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/LVA/CO/4>

⁵⁶ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FBRB%2F61782&Lang=en

⁵⁷ CCPR/C/BRB/QPR/4, 22 April 2025, para. 21. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/BRB/QPR/4>



On **Ghana**, following a relevant submission by CPTI,⁵⁸ the Committee requested:

“Freedom of conscience and religious belief (arts. 2, 18 and 26)

21. Please provide information on the legal framework governing compulsory national service, including the Ghana National Service Scheme Act, 1980 (No. 426), with a focus on its military training component, and on recent initiatives to make military training mandatory for national service personnel. Please indicate whether the right to conscientious objection is recognized in the State Party, and describe procedures for alternative service, safeguards against punitive measures for objectors, and the treatment of those who do not complete national service.”⁵⁹

Apparently, this is the first time that the Committee has included the above issues in the list of issues.

On **Morocco**, following relevant submissions by Connection e.V.⁶⁰ and CPTI,⁶¹ the Committee requested:

“Freedom of conscience and religious belief (art. 18)

[...] Please describe the steps taken to recognize the right to conscientious objection to compulsory military service and grant conscientious objectors access to alternative, civilian service of a non-discriminatory and non-punitive nature.”⁶²

On **Switzerland**, following relevant submissions by Connection e.V.⁶³ and CPTI,⁶⁴ the Committee requested:

“Freedom of conscience and religion (arts. 2, 18, 26 and 27)

[...] Please provide information on the proposed amendments to the legal framework governing conscientious objection to military service and the steps taken to ensure that the legal provisions in force in this area do not infringe the rights enshrined in the Covenant, including the right of conscientious objectors to a fair trial before the military courts.”⁶⁵

In this case it is highly important that the Committee, following a relevant suggestion by Connection e.V., appears to be willing to examine, possibly for the first time, the issue of the right to fair trial specifically of conscientious objectors when tried by military courts.

1.3.1.2. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

1.3.1.2.1. Concluding Observations

In the context of the 7th periodic report of the **Russian Federation**, the CESCR, had previously included the “disproportionate forced mobilization and conscription of members of Indigenous Peoples and minorities in the State party and of persons from territories under its effective control, including Crimea” in the list of issues.⁶⁶ Despite this and a relevant submission by Connection e.V.,⁶⁷ in the Concluding Observations the term “forced conscription” is not cited. There is only a very general part about “Application of the Covenant in the context of armed conflict”⁶⁸ and a part about coercion of persons to sign as contract soldiers:

“32. The Committee is concerned about reports that foreign nationals, migrants, prisoners, and other people in vulnerable positions are being coerced and/or misled into signing military service contracts by law enforcement officers and other authorities (arts. 2 (2) and 6).

33. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

⁵⁸ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FGHA%2F62981&Lang=en

⁵⁹ CCPR/C/GHA/QPR/2, 25 August 2025, para. 21. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/GHA/QPR/2>

⁶⁰ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FMAR%2F62984&Lang=en

⁶¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FMAR%2F62987&Lang=en

⁶² CCPR/C/MAR/QPR/7, 9 December 2025, para. 21. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/MAR/QPR/7>

⁶³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FCHE%2F63005&Lang=en

⁶⁴ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCCPR%2FICS%2FCHE%2F63011&Lang=en

⁶⁵ CCPR/C/CHE/QPR/5, 30 September 2025, para. 18. <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/CHE/QPR/5>

⁶⁶ E/C.12/RUS/Q/7, 2 November 2023, para. 9. <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/RUS/Q/7>

⁶⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=INT%2FCECSR%2FCSS%2FRUS%2F63995&Lang=en

⁶⁸ E/C.12/RUS/CO/7, 26 September 2025, paras. 4-5. <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/RUS/CO/7>



- (a) Take measures to ensure that its recruitment practices for the armed forces are in line with article 6 of the Covenant;
- (b) Review the policy of paying cash bonuses to law enforcement officers for each detainee that they recruit for military service.”⁶⁹

1.3.1.2.2. List of issues

As for the **Republic of Korea**, despite relevant efforts by civil society organisations, including a submission by Connection e.V.,⁷⁰ the CESCR failed to include violations of economic, social and cultural rights of conscientious objectors in the List of Issues in relation to the State party’s fifth periodic report.⁷¹

1.3.2. Human Rights Council

1.3.2.1. Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus

Mr. Nils Muižnieks, in his April 2025 report to the Human Rights Council did not mention the issue of human rights violations of conscientious objectors to military service. The only relevant issue included was perhaps the following: “For the first time, in 2024, the “extremist material” label was applied to an LGBTQ+ resource and to a website offering advice for military conscripts.”^{72,73}

In his July 2025 report to the General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur failed once more to mention conscientious objectors to military service. Perhaps the most relevant issue mentioned was that: “According to allegations received, correctional colony No. 3 in Vitebsk deliberately assigns prisoners who have opposed the involvement of Belarus in the war with Ukraine to sew uniforms for the Russian army.”⁷⁴

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters’ International participated in the Interactive dialogue with the UN SR at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.⁷⁵

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea

Mr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, in his May 2025 report to the General Assembly, included once more the issue of conscientious objectors and the persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses:

“A. Conscientious objection

51. Eritrea does not recognize the right to conscientious objection and offers no alternative civilian service for individuals who object to military service on religious, ethical or other grounds. Individuals who refuse to participate in political or patriotic activities or to perform the national service on such grounds are labelled as traitors and face persecution.

52. Jehovah’s Witnesses face severe discrimination and persecution. In 1994, the President, Mr. Afwerki, revoked their citizenship, rendering them stateless. Denied identification and travel documents, they live under constant threat of arrest. As a consequence, their access to essential services and entitlements such as healthcare, employment, property ownership, pensions, food rationing coupons and business licences is restricted. Children of Jehovah’s Witnesses have been denied admission to school due to their parents’ lack of coupon cards, and they are unable to graduate from high school due to the requirement to attend the Sawa military camp. Jehovah’s Witnesses have been imprisoned for their refusal to participate in the national service, as well as for declining to integrate or contribute to the ruling party (the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice) and associated organizations (such as the Young People’s Front for Democracy and Justice).”⁷⁶

⁶⁹ E/C.12/RUS/CO/7, 26 September 2025, paras. 32-33. <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/RUS/CO/7>

⁷⁰ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCESCR%2FICO%2FKOR%2F63642&Lang=en

⁷¹ E/C.12/KOR/Q/5, 20 October 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/KOR/Q/5>

⁷² [Note in the original]

https://humanconstantia.org/en/results-of-the-fight-against-extremism-in-belarus-in-2024/#First_LGBTQ_resource_labeled_as_extremist.

⁷³ A/HRC/59/59, 22 April 2025, para. 62. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/59>

⁷⁴ A/80/217, 22 July 2025, para. 73. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/217>

⁷⁵ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4505>

⁷⁶ A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, paras. 51-52. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>



There is also an extensive chapter on National/Military Service,⁷⁷ while conscription, especially forced and indefinite, is mentioned throughout the document.⁷⁸

Additionally, there is a recommendation to: “Respect the statutory duration of 18 months of national service, and prevent the recruitment of children by the military; ensure adequate living conditions for conscripts; prevent the use of conscripts for forced labour; cease the persecution of draft evaders and deserters; and investigate allegations of human rights violations in the context of military/national service, and bring perpetrators to justice”.⁷⁹ There is also a relevant recommendation to: “Release immediately and unconditionally all those arbitrarily detained, including members of the political opposition, journalists, prisoners of conscience, people of faith, religious teachers and community leaders detained since 1991, and draft evaders, and their families”.⁸⁰

There is also an equivalent recommendation to Member States and international organizations to: “Exert maximum pressure on the Government of Eritrea to end [...] arbitrary and incommunicado detention of [...] prisoners of conscience, people of faith [...]”. And a recommendation to: “Provide effective protection to Eritrean nationals fleeing the country due to a risk of persecution or of being subjected to human rights violations, in accordance with the provisions of international refugee law, including the principle of non-refoulement”.⁸¹

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters’ International participated in the Interactive dialogue with the UN SR at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council.⁸²

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation

Ms. Mariana Katzarova, in her September 2025 report to the Human Rights Council, included again a chapter on “Conscientious objection to military service and mobilization”:

“91. Desertion has become one of the main avenues for those seeking to avoid participating in the war. Estimates indicate that over 50,000 Russian soldiers had deserted since 2022, representing nearly 10 per cent of all Russian troops in Ukraine. Since 2022, more than 16,000 military personnel have been prosecuted for desertion-related offences, with over 13,500 conscripts and contract soldiers convicted in 2024.

92. The “disobeying orders” charge is applied to men, including injured soldiers, who refuse to fight. Torture and ill-treatment, including beatings, starvation and death threats, are used to “enforce discipline” and compel compliance with military orders. So-called “torture pits” were created at training grounds to punish soldiers who try to escape fighting on the front lines in Ukraine. [...]

96. The Ministry of Defence has enlisted foreign nationals, including trafficked persons from Nepal and Sri Lanka, into the army, coercing them into signing contracts through torture and threats.

97. As reported in 2024, conscripts are forced, through torture and deceit, into signing military contracts that allow them to be sent to the front lines. In at least one case, a person was shot dead for refusing to sign the contract.”⁸³

The Special Rapporteur reiterated her previous recommendations to the Russian authorities and added numerous further ones. Among them, it is worth highlighting the recommendation to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers, anti-war activists, and others are able to operate free from harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention and torture and ill-treatment. As well as the recommendation to: “cease targeting small-numbered Indigenous populations for military mobilization to the war”.⁸⁴

As for the recommendations to the international community and the States Members of the United Nations, it is worth highlighting the recommendation to: “Uphold the human rights of Russian citizens in need of protection within their jurisdiction by respecting the principle of non-refoulement in regard to all torture survivors and asylum-seekers from the Russian Federation, in particular human rights defenders, anti-war activists, independent journalists and media professionals, conscientious objectors to military service and individuals who have refused forced mobilization to the

⁷⁷ A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, VI. National/military service, paras. 23-33. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>

⁷⁸ E.g. A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, paras. 16, 17, 22, 85, 86. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>

⁷⁹ A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, para. 90(e). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>

⁸⁰ A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, para. 90(b). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>

⁸¹ A/HRC/59/24, 12 May 2025, para. 91(d) and (e). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/24>

⁸² <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4500>

⁸³ A/HRC/60/59, 15 September 2025, paras. 91-92, 96-97. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/59>

⁸⁴ A/HRC/60/59, 15 September 2025, para. 141(b) and (m). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/59>



war against Ukraine [...]”. As well as a detailed recommendation to adopt a strategy and increase sustained support to protect dissenters and human rights defenders, both those continuing to work inside the Russian Federation and in exile, and their families.⁸⁵

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters’ International, participated in the Interactive dialogue with the UN SR delivering a statement in the plenary during the session.⁸⁶

In September 2025, the Special Rapporteur also presented a report to the General Assembly titled: “Rule of fear: silencing dissent and anti-war expression in the Russian Federation in the name of national security”. Conscientious objectors are not explicitly mentioned, but the repression of anti-war activists is extensively detailed, although it is not possible to include extensive parts in this EBCO report. It is worth noting though a list of cases of anti-war activists,⁸⁷ including anti-war activist Pavel Kushnir, who “died in custody following a hunger strike protesting the war”. As well as the following paragraph concerning “Use of military courts and closed trials”:

““Treason” and “terrorism”, as well as some “extremism”-related cases, are tried by military courts, even though the vast majority of the accused are civilians, including anti-war activists tried on “justification of terrorism” charges. Closed-door trials, both military and civilian, impede public scrutiny, in particular in politically motivated cases, and especially when defence teams are gagged with non-disclosure obligations.”⁸⁸

Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Ms. Nazila Ghanea, in a report to the Human Rights Council, published on January 2026 concerning “Freedom of religion or belief and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”⁸⁹ did not appear to mention anything specific about conscientious objectors to military service, despite relevant submissions. Nevertheless, Connection e.V. contributed to the report and, in partnership with War Resisters’s International, participated in the Interactive dialogue with the UN SR and delivered a thematic statement in the plenary.

Subsequently, in the report presented in July 2025 to the General Assembly, concerning “Freedom of religion or belief of people on the move” there are some relevant parts:

“44. There is also little understanding of the fact that conscientious objection to military service relates to freedom of religion or belief and that the rejection thereof may constitute religious persecution. In the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on conscientious objection to military service, the importance of better understanding of relevant international obligations is highlighted,⁹⁰ and the particular challenges faced by conscientious objectors, including the imposition of “exacting standards and burdens of proof that would render it difficult for deserters and draft evaders for reasons of conscience to achieve refugee status”, is acknowledged.^{91,92} It is also worth noting that the SR explicitly notes that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is non-derogable.⁹³

In the “Guiding questions to the relevant authorities” it is explicitly included the question: “Are there provisions to allow for conscientious objection to military service?”⁹⁴

And in the recommendations, there are various relevant ones, such as:

“(o) Respect, in all circumstances, the principle of non-refoulement on the basis of conscience, religion or belief, including non-belief;

⁸⁵ A/HRC/60/59, 15 September 2025, para. 142(b) and (c). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/59>

⁸⁶ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4660>

⁸⁷ A/80/382, 16 September 2025, paras. 96-102. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/382>

⁸⁸ A/80/382, 16 September 2025, para. 62. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/382>

⁸⁹ A/HRC/58/49, 9 January 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/49>

⁹⁰ [Note in the original]

See also:

www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/religion/cfis/cfi-ga80/subm-freedom-religion-belief-cso-26-quaker-un-office.pdf.

⁹¹ [Note in the original] A/HRC/56/30, para. 33.

⁹² A/80/205, 18 July 2025, para. 44. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/205>

⁹³ A/80/205, 18 July 2025, para. 27. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/205>

⁹⁴ A/80/205, 18 July 2025, para. 70(b). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/205>



(p) Provide thorough training for functionaries involved in decision-making with regard to asylum applications, drawing on international best practice, including UNHCR guidelines Nos. 6 and 10, and develop guidelines on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, violations thereof and the effects of those violations, which may rise to the level of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or which may represent a threat to life. In that connection, glossaries of terms relating to the right to freedom of religion or belief and to knowledge of different religion or belief communities, to facilitate understanding and disambiguate terms, should be developed and provided to relevant functionaries; [...]

(r) Ensure that all relevant functionaries are adequately familiar with the risks faced by religious converts, atheists and humanists, those subject to blasphemy or apostasy laws, and conscientious objectors to military service”.⁹⁵

1.3.2.2. International Commissions of Inquiry, Commissions on Human Rights, Fact-Finding missions and other Investigations

Group of Independent Experts on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus

In its reports, the Group of Independent Experts appears to have failed to explicitly address the issue of conscientious objectors to military service. However, in its report of February 2025,⁹⁶ there are some parts which could be of interest. There is a paragraph⁹⁷ about amendment of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations “subjecting all religious organizations to a mandatory process of reregistration within a year of its entry into force”. In the same paragraph it is mentioned: “In parallel to the reregistration process, several interviewees reported that “ideological units” within municipal executive committees were actively monitoring the sermons and social media accounts of religious leaders and priests nationwide. In many cases, that surveillance was accompanied by intimidation and reprisals, forcing priests who spoke out against the war in Ukraine or the use of violence to self-censor or go into exile.” Other parts which could be of interest, especially for conscientious objectors seeking asylum abroad, and human rights defenders, is the part about surveillance of Belarusians in exile⁹⁸ and the repression of Belarusians in exile⁹⁹.

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters’ International participated in the Interactive dialogue with the Group of Independent Experts at the 60th session of the Human Rights Council, in September 2025 in Geneva.¹⁰⁰

Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Human Rights Situation in the South and North Kivu Provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Report of the fact-finding mission, (of which the final version was distributed in November 2025), forced recruitment of children is documented both by the (Rwanda supported¹⁰¹) M23¹⁰² as well as by the (usually allied with the government of DRC) Wazalendo groups.¹⁰³

Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar

In the 7th report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism, published in July 2025, “evidence of the enlistment, conscription or use in hostilities of children below the age of 15” is mentioned.¹⁰⁴

Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan

In the Report of the Commission of February 2025, “forced recruitments” are cited,¹⁰⁵ including forced recruitment of children,¹⁰⁶ attributed to various actors, such as the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO),¹⁰⁷ as well as a Balanda militia aligned with SPLM/A-IO,¹⁰⁸ South Sudan People’s Defence Forces,¹⁰⁹ and affiliates

⁹⁵ A/80/205, 18 July 2025, para. 71(o), (p) and (r). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/205>

⁹⁶ A/HRC/58/68, 7 February 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/68>

⁹⁷ Ibid. para. 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid. para. 65.

⁹⁹ Ibid. paras. 66-68.

¹⁰⁰ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4658>

¹⁰¹ A/HRC/60/80, 21 November 2025, paras. 8, 12, 16, 20, 22, 40, 48, 81-82. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/80>

¹⁰² A/HRC/60/80, 21 November 2025, paras. 40, 45-48, 77. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/80>

¹⁰³ A/HRC/60/80, 21 November 2025, paras. 60-62. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/80>

¹⁰⁴ A/HRC/60/18, 14 July 2025, para. 15. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/18>

¹⁰⁵ A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, para. 20. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹⁰⁶ A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, e.g. paras. 67-68, 70. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹⁰⁷ A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, paras. 31, 68. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹⁰⁸ A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, para. 27. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹⁰⁹ A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, para. 31, 68. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>



of the National Salvation Front (NAS).¹¹⁰ In the recommendations, forced recruitment and the use of children in conflict are cited among the human rights violations and abuses which need to end, along with the need for release of all children and support for their reintegration, and such recommendations are addressed to all armed forces and non-State armed groups.¹¹¹

In the report of September 2025, it is mentioned that “unaccountable armed forces continue to occupy schools and recruit children” and that: “The National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission is not properly funded, and some traumatized boys and girls released from armed forces end up returning to forces or to criminal gangs, because they lacked adequate support for reestablishing their lives”.¹¹²

1.3.2.3. Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Türkiye

Regrettably, despite civil society efforts to report (for instance, Conscientious Objection Watch, Connection e.V.¹¹³ and CPTI) the lack of recognition of the right to conscientious objection to military service in the country and the violations of the human rights of conscientious objectors, no recommendations on such issues have been addressed to the State during its Universal Periodic Review on 6 May 2025.

On the occasion of the adoption of the outcomes at the 60th session of the Human Rights Council, Connection e.V. in partnership with War Resisters’ International delivered a statement in the plenary.¹¹⁴

Belarus received for the first time an explicit recommendation concerning conscientious objectors to military service:

“146.106 Reform national legislation to guarantee effective access to the right to conscientious objection to military service for all persons, regardless of their beliefs, and at any stage, including during active service (Costa Rica)”.¹¹⁵

This was result of efforts by various civil society organisations, including, *inter alia*, a joint submission co-signed by The International Centre for Civil Initiatives “Our House”, Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI), the Center on Conscience & War, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO), the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Fellowship of Reconciliation USA (FORUSA), the International Fellowship of Reconciliation Austria, MIR France, the International Peace Bureau, World BEYOND War, and War Resisters’ International,¹¹⁶ and a separate submission by Connection e.V.¹¹⁷

Belarus responded by accepting the recommendation as already implemented although it is not: “146.106 accepted as implemented: Belarusian legislation provides for the possibility of an alternative to military service”.¹¹⁸

1.3.3. Secretary-General

Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories

In May 2025 report, about the “Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”, the Secretary-General dedicated an entire part to the “Prohibition on the forced conscription of protected persons”.¹¹⁹ It is also worth noting that: “In one case, a man was fined 35,000 roubles (\$ 307) for “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces” because, when refusing to accept a conscription notice at a military conscription office in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, he said that he did not want to serve “a government of terrorists” and that he was against the occupying authorities of the Russian Federation and the “special military operation” in Ukraine.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁰A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, para. 70. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹¹¹A/HRC/58/27, 21 February 2025, para. 102(b) and (c). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/27>

¹¹²A/HRC/60/CRP.5, 16 September 2025, paras. 229, 232 respectively.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/cohrsouthsudan/a-hrc-60-crp-5.pdf>

¹¹³https://www.connection-ev.org/ohchr/49th_UPR_Tuerkiye_EN_Connection.pdf

¹¹⁴<https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4662>

¹¹⁵A/HRC/61/4, 5 January 2026, Recommendation 146.106 (Costa Rica). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/4>

¹¹⁶<https://ebco-beoc.org/report/2025-04-07-belarus-upr>

¹¹⁷https://www.connection-ev.org/ohchr/50th_UPR-Belarus_EN-Connection.pdf

¹¹⁸A/HRC/61/4/Add.1, 8 January 2026, p. 2. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/4/Add.1>

¹¹⁹A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, paras. 16-20. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/67>

¹²⁰A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, para. 37. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/67>



In his recommendations, the Secretary-General did “urge the Russian Federation to end the conscription of protected persons in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine into its armed forces”.¹²¹ As well as “to ensure that the rights to freedom of expression and opinion, association, thought, conscience and religion can be freely exercised by all individuals and groups living in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine without discrimination on any grounds or unjustified interference. In particular, consistent with international human rights law, individuals must be able to peacefully express their opinions that may be considered critical of the Russian authorities, the temporary occupation, and the war in Ukraine without fear of retaliation, imprisonment or other sanctions. Individuals should not be subjected to any arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy and family.”¹²²

The Secretary-General also urged “the Russian Federation to cease all measures that effectively compel Ukrainian children to swear allegiance to the Russian Federation, dismantle military training and educational programmes aimed at securing future enlistment of children into the Russian armed forces, and end the enlistment of children in formations or organizations subordinate to the Russian Federation, such as those providing “patriotic-military” education”.¹²³

Connection e.V., in partnership with War Resisters’ International took the floor in the plenary during the thematic Interactive dialogue at the 58th session of the Human Rights Council. Other statements have also been delivered during the same Interactive dialogue at the 59th session¹²⁴ and the 60th session¹²⁵ of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Myanmar

In his August 2025 report about the “Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar”¹²⁶ the Secretary-General stated:

“The enforcement of conscription had severe consequences, especially for young people.”

“The military continued implementation of the People’s Military Service Law: at least 15 batches of 5,000 recruits had reportedly been called up since its enforcement. Several ethnic armed organizations also enforced conscription in the territories under their control. Thousands of young people sought to avoid forced recruitment, often fleeing the country through irregular channels and facing heightened risks of trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Many families reported being subjected to extortion or pressured to pay unofficial fees for exemptions. The widespread fear of recruitment disrupted education, livelihoods and family life.”¹²⁷

“The earthquakes and the enforcement of conscription have heightened vulnerabilities, contributing to increased risks and reports of trafficking, forced marriage and sexual exploitation.”¹²⁸

¹²¹ A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, para. 66. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/67>

¹²² A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, para. 68. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/67>

¹²³ A/HRC/59/67, 28 May 2025, para. 70. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/67>

¹²⁴ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4652>

¹²⁵ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4664>

¹²⁶ A/80/307, 5 August 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/307>

¹²⁷ Ibid. para. 16.

¹²⁸ Ibid. para. 33.



2. SITUATION IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

In this section we give for each European country, in alphabetical order, an update of the current situation regarding military recruitment and conscientious objection, together with the latest statistics, followed, where available, by an account of developments during 2025, or a note of EBCO's principal concerns in the country.

The area covered is effectively the "Council of Europe area", except that two States within the area are included which have themselves never been members of the Council of Europe: Belarus applied for membership in 1993 but consideration of its application has been suspended since 1997 on account of lack of progress in abolishing the death penalty, while Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia has been recognised by the EU and the majority of States worldwide but, mainly because of Serbian opposition, it has not been admitted to the Council of Europe or the UN as a member. Moreover Russia withdrew from the Council of Europe in 2022, but EBCO continues to work on it.

European Map of Conscientious Objection to Military Service
(in relation to conscription)

- Conscription: No
- Conscription: Yes
Some provisions for conscientious objection
- Conscription: Yes
No provisions for conscientious objection

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2.1. ALBANIA 🇦🇱

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2010 under Article 42 of Law 9999. Could be reinstated in time of war.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1998	Constitution, Articles 166 and 167. First provisions in Law no. 9047 (10.07.2003) "On military service"	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No provisions	
Minimum recruitment age	18	18 in case of general/partial mobilisation	
Military expenditure¹²⁹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	624m (+6.1%)	\$224	2.0%

2.2. ANDORRA 🇦🇩

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Peacetime conscription never existed. No regular military forces. Defence is the responsibility of France and Spain.

Article 38 of the 1993 Constitution however states that the State may create by law duties of community service to pursue tasks of general interest.

While Andorra does not have a military, it has a small volunteer-based force (Sometent) that performs ceremonial duties and is involved in public safety and civil protection during national emergencies. The Andorran Police (Policia d'Andorra) is responsible for maintaining law and order, investigating crimes, and ensuring public safety. This police force is a civilian institution, not a military one. Andorra is a member of the United Nations and adheres to international norms concerning peace and security. However, as a small, neutral state, Andorra has not been involved in any international military operations.¹³⁰ In 2025, the University of Andorra hosted an OSCE educational initiative aimed at promoting peace, dialogue and diplomacy among European youth¹³¹.

2.3. ARMENIA 🇦🇲

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	2003	Law on Alternative Service (unarmed military service) Law on Alternative Service 2013 (alternative civilian service)	
Current provisions		Law on Military Service and the Status of Servicemen Law on Alternative Service 2013	
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	24 months	36 months (150%) Unarmed military service 30 months	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18	Admission to military schools at 17	
Military expenditure¹³²	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,725m (+16.0%)	\$582	6.1%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory, inter alia, in terms of longer duration and insufficient compensation.
- Conscientious objectors are subjected to inquiry and are discriminated against when applying on ideological grounds.
- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection during or after military service.
- Military-themed activities take place in schools with the involvement of the Armed Forces.

Based on public information and the Ombudsman of Armenia reply to the EBCO questionnaire:

¹²⁹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹³⁰ <https://lawgratis.com/blog-detail/military-law-at-andorra>

¹³¹ <https://www.uda.ad/en/uda-hosts-2025-model-osce-for-youth-interested-in-diplomacy/>

¹³² Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



Developments

An amendment that reduces the compulsory military service term from 24 months to 18 months entered into force on 1 January 2026.¹³³

A draft bill submitted to the parliament by MP Hayk Sargsyan is aimed at repatriating draft dodgers aged 27 to 37. The proposal offers five options: a) return to Armenia voluntarily and serve for 24 months, b) serve for 12 months and pay 2.5 million AMD (around 5,600€), c) serve for 6 months and pay 5 million AMD (~11,200€), d) serve for 1 month and pay 8 million AMD (~17,900€), or e) pay 15 million AMD (~33,500€) and get a total exemption.

Conscription provisions and procedures

Article 14, paragraph 3 of the Constitution reads “Every citizen shall be obliged to take part, as prescribed by law, in the defence of the Republic of Armenia.”¹³⁴

The Law “On Military Service and the Status of Servicemen”¹³⁵ defines the types of military service, eligibility criteria, age limits, duration of service, grounds for deferment and exemption, and the rights and legal status of conscripts.

Reserve service

Reservists must notify the authorities of any change of residence within seven days, as well as show up, upon receipt of a duly issued summons, for medical examinations and training (refresher) assemblies of up to 25 days.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Article 41, paragraph 3 of the Constitution reads “Every citizen shall have the right to replace military service with alternative service, as prescribed by law, if it contradicts the religious faith or belief thereof.”¹³⁶ Conscientious objection to compulsory military service is governed by the Law “On Alternative Service”.¹³⁷

By law, conscripts must be briefed on their rights and obligations, including the right to refuse to bear arms and to choose alternative service in cases where it contradicts their conscience or religious beliefs, which is done through military commissariats during the stages of military registration or the delivery of conscription notices. Information is also available on the website of the Ministry of Defense and information boards about

the deadlines for submitting applications and the list of required documents.

Applications for alternative service are examined by the Republican Commission on Alternative Service Issues which “assesses and confirms the existence of the relevant convictions” and is composed of one representative from each of the state administration bodies in the fields of territorial administration, justice, healthcare, labour and social affairs, education and science, police, and defence, as well as from the subdivision of the Prime Minister's Staff coordinating the areas of national minorities and religion. The individual composition is approved by the Prime Minister.

According to the Ministry of Defence, in 2024 there were 32 applications for alternative service of which 27 were approved and 5 rejected. Between 2013 and July 2024, 561 citizens were assigned to alternative civilian (labour) service.

The decisions of the commission can be countered with an administrative appeal, or a judicial appeal. Referring to the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) is also possible, provided that no application has been submitted to a court.

Upon approval by the commission, individuals may be assigned to one of the following forms of alternative service:

Alternative military service

Performed within the armed forces in the form of economic or maintenance-related tasks within the military unit (e.g. in kitchens, warehouses, or construction squads) without participating in combat duty, carrying or using weapons, for a duration of 30 months.

In that case they receive a monthly monetary allowance equal to that of conscripts.

Alternative civilian (labour) service

Performed outside the armed forces in civilian institutions for a duration of 36 months. In that case they receive a monthly monetary allowance of no more than AMD 30,000 (~67€).

Such institutions can be care centers, nursing homes, boarding houses for the elderly, psychiatric hospitals and dispensaries, orphanages or centers for persons with disabilities, emergency rescue service units, or sanitation

¹³³ Law HO-405-N of 16 December 2025. <https://www.arlis.am/en/acts/218365/latest>

¹³⁴ <https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015>

¹³⁵ Law HO-195-N of 15 November 2017, as amended.

¹³⁶ <https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015>

¹³⁷ Law HO-6-N of 17 December 2003, as amended.



and communal services. Placements are assigned by the Republican Committee without the applicant being able to freely choose.

The place of service must be within a distance of 30 km from the person's place of registration.

Individuals who perform alternative service are supervised by the healthcare and social institutions (daily work of the serviceman, maintain attendance logs, ensure labour discipline), whereas the police and the Ministry of Justice have supervisory powers to ensure that they do not abandon the place of service and fulfill their duties; in the event of violations, they prepare the necessary materials for legal liability.

Persons who refuse both mandatory military and alternative service face criminal liability under Article 461 of the Criminal Code, punishable by imprisonment for 3 to 6 years.

Voluntary recruitment

Voluntary and contract service in Armenia are mainly regulated by the Law "On Military Service and the Status of a Serviceman" and the Law "On Defence".

The duration of contract service is 5 years, of women's voluntary service is 6 months, and of reserve officers is 24 months.

Following the introduction of the "Defender of the Homeland" ("Pashtpan Hayrenyats") programme, there has been an increased interest in contractual service. This is largely attributable to the opportunity, after completion of the first six months of compulsory military service, to transfer to contractual service offering significantly higher remuneration (up to AMD 400,000–500,000, depending on location and combat duty) and a one-time bonus of AMD 5 million (~11,200€) upon completion of a five-year service term.

The "Pativ Unem" programme grants participants the right to deferment from compulsory military service, and full reimbursement of tuition fees for higher educational institutions. After completing university and military training as such, the recruit is awarded the rank of lieutenant and a contract as a junior officer. Graduates of military educational institutions are provided with free education and preferential housing programs.

The "Affordable Housing for Servicemen" mortgage programme provides state subsidies for interest rates and part of the down payment.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for those serving military service. Same applies to reservists.

Militarisation of the education system

Pre-military training is conducted in general education schools, primary vocational (vocational) and secondary vocational educational institutions.

The curriculum of all general education schools includes "Initial Military Training" (usually in grades 8-12) as a mandatory subject, including events carried out within its framework such as visits to military units or events aimed at promoting a military career. The subject is taught by military leaders, i.e. reserve officers or individuals with military service experience, who are permanently employed with schools.

According to Article 20 of the Law "On Defence", officials of educational institutions are obliged to: 1) maintain a register of conscripts, submit lists of persons subject to military registration to the military commissariats of their place of registration, as well as provide information on deregistration from the community's place of residence or admission to work (educational institution), transfer, dismissal, 2) notify conscripts of being called up to the military commissariat at the commissariat's request, 3) dismiss conscripts from work or education for the necessary period specified in the notification of compulsory military service or the military commissariat.



2.4. AUSTRIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1955	National Service Act 1955 (unarmed military service) Civilian Service Act (Zivildienstgesetz) 1974 (alternative civilian service)	
Current provisions	Zivildienstgesetz 1974, last amended as Act 106/2005		
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	6 months	9 months (150%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions.	
Minimum recruitment age			
Military expenditure ¹³⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	6,353m (+11.1%)	\$697	1.1%

2.5. AZERBAIJAN

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1995	Constitution, Article 76. Implementing legislation not yet promulgated (see Annual Report 2024)	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	18 months	None available	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18	Admission to military schools at 17	
Military expenditure ¹³⁹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	4,939m (+23.7%)	\$476	6.5%

¹³⁸Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹³⁹Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.6. BELARUS

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1994	Constitution, Article 57 Alternative Service Law, 2015	
Current provisions	Alternative Service Law, 2015		
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	18 months	36 months (200%)	
	12 months for graduates	24 months for graduates (200%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted (even for reservists)		
Minimum recruitment age	18	Admission to military academies from 16	
Military expenditure ¹⁴⁰	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,939m (+21.5%)	\$215	2.4%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory in terms of duration (twice that of military service) and recognition is restricted to religious grounds only.
- The process for recognition of conscientious objectors is not under civilian control and lacks independence and impartiality from military bodies.
- No recognition of conscientious objection during or after military service or for military personnel.
- Stricter criminalisation of draft evasion.
- Non-compliance to international recommendations.
- Persecution of human rights defenders who protect the rights of conscientious objectors
- Exposure of minors to military programs and trainings.

As reported by EBCO's Lithuanian member, Our House:¹⁴¹

Developments

2025: amendments to criminal liability legislation

On 17 February 2025, the President signed the Law "On Amendments to the Codes on Criminal Liability".¹⁴² The changes affected, inter alia, the approach to liability under **Article 435 of the Criminal Code** (evasion of conscription-related obligations / military duty), and resulted in **stricter liability** for failure to appear at military commissariats and harsher penalties.¹⁴³

The **tightening of the law-enforcement context** continues: amendments to criminal legislation (including provisions on evasion of conscription) and public statements by the state leadership indicate an increased emphasis on the compulsory nature of military service and discipline, without parallel guarantees for freedom of conscience.

The **lack of transparent statistics persists**: in 2025, official data continued not to be published on:

- the number of applications for alternative service and the outcomes of their consideration;
- attempts to refuse military service on grounds of conscience after the commencement of service;
- criminal prosecutions taking into account motives of conscience.

The **gap with international standards remains**: recommendations of international bodies (UN and human rights mechanisms) recognising conscientious objection as an independent right have not been implemented.

Conscription provisions and procedures

Compulsory military service (conscription) remains in force in Belarus, and conscription campaigns are conducted on a regular basis.

The key legal framework includes:

- **Constitution, Article 57**: establishes the duty to defend the state and stipulates that the procedure for military service, as well as the grounds and conditions for exemption or replacement by alternative service, are determined by law.¹⁴⁴
- **Law "On Military Duty and Military Service"** (No. 1914-XII of 5 November 1992, as amended): the

¹⁴⁰ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹⁴¹ More info about the organisation at: <https://news.house/>

¹⁴² [Новое в уголовном законодательстве](#)

¹⁴³ [Important Change For Conscripts Introduced In Belarus - Belarusian News - Charter'97](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Ст. 57 Конституция РБ Защита Республики Беларусь](#)



basic law regulating military duty, types of military service (including compulsory service and service in the reserve), conscription procedures, and related matters.¹⁴⁵

- **Presidential Decrees on the conduct of regular conscription campaigns** (usually issued separately for the spring and autumn conscription periods). For example, **Presidential Decree No. 302 of 12 August 2025** sets the framework for conscription and specifies that citizens who have reached the age of 18 by the day of conscription and who do not have, or have lost, the right to deferment are subject to conscription.¹⁴⁶
- **Law “On Alternative Service”** (No. 276-Z of 4 June 2015; in force since 1 July 2016), which regulates the replacement of military service with alternative civilian service.¹⁴⁷

The minimum age for conscription is 18 years (with the overall conscription age range being 18–27).¹⁴⁸

Compulsory military service generally lasts **18 months**, and **12 months** for citizens with higher education.¹⁴⁹

The total number of men conscripted per call-up is approximately **10,000**.¹⁵⁰ Women serve only on a contract basis. Conscripts are men aged **18–27**, and in practice those most frequently conscripted are young men closer to **18–20 years of age**.

Reserve service

Reserve obligations apply and are mandatory.

Under current legislation, after completing compulsory military service, citizens — including those who have completed alternative service — are placed in the reserve and continue to bear military obligations until reaching the maximum reserve age, which depending on the category may be up to **60 years**, and for certain categories up to **65 years**.¹⁵¹¹⁵²

The duration of reserve service is defined in legislation¹⁵³:

- **3 training years** — for citizens without higher education;
- **2 training years** — for citizens with higher education;

- **1 training year** — for those who completed training at military departments or faculties and passed the relevant examinations to obtain junior commander or officer skills.

The call-up procedure is carried out through military commissariats; **written summonses as well as SMS notifications** are permitted.¹⁵⁴¹⁵⁵

The system of military registration includes the **expanded collection of personal data** on reservists (place of work, education, family ties) by military commissariats and the **KGB**,¹⁵⁶ which is used for planning reserve and mobilisation measures.

Draft evasion

The most commonly applied criminal provision for evasion of conscription-related obligations is **Article 435 of the Criminal Code**. Previously, the sanctions under this article included a fine among other penalties; however, **by the Law of 17 February 2025 No. 61-Z**, the penalty of a fine was excluded from Part 1 of Article 435 of the Criminal Code.¹⁵⁷ Currently, penalties under this article include arrest, restriction of liberty, or imprisonment within the limits set by the sanction of the article.

It is not possible to accurately determine the number of persons prosecuted specifically for evasion of conscription-related obligations since the website of the Supreme Court only publishes general summary statistical data.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

The Law on Alternative Service provides for the replacement of military service with alternative service in cases where a person has **religious beliefs** that prevent them from performing military service or using weapons (for example, Jehovah’s Witnesses). **Non-religious beliefs** (pacifist or ethical convictions) are **not covered by the law**.¹⁵⁸

In Belarus, applications for refusal of military service on grounds of conscience are considered within the

¹⁴⁵ [Law of the Republic of Belarus "About conscription and military service"](#)

¹⁴⁶ [Decree No. 302 of 12 August 2025 On retiring and drafting personnel for active military service and reserve service | Official Internet Portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Альтернативная служба](#)

¹⁴⁸ [Decree No. 302 of 12 August 2025 On retiring and drafting personnel for active military service and reserve service | Official Internet Portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus](#)

¹⁴⁹ [Срочная военная служба — Военный информационный портал Министерства обороны Республики Беларусь](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Belarus Starts Sending Conscripts To The Army - Belarusian News - Charter'97](#)

¹⁵¹ [«О судебной практике по делам о преступлениях против порядка исполнения воинской обязанности, направления и прохождения альтернативной службы»](#)

¹⁵² [Предельный возраст состояния в запасе. Разряды запаса](#)

¹⁵³ [«О воинской обязанности и воинской службе» – тематические подборки НПА на Pravo.by](#)



procedure for replacing military service with alternative service. An application is submitted by the conscript to the conscription commission at the place of military registration **before the start of conscription**. The decision is taken by the conscription commission, which assesses the stated beliefs and decides either to assign the applicant to alternative service or to refuse the application; refusals may be appealed in court. Grounds for replacement of military service are recognised only in cases of **religious beliefs**,¹⁵⁹ and in practice access is limited to a narrow range of religious communities whose pacifist beliefs are recognised by state authorities (for example, Jehovah's Witnesses).¹⁶⁰

Decisions on applications for recognition of refusal on grounds of conscience are taken by conscription commissions which include representatives of local authorities, the military commissariat, medical institutions, internal affairs bodies, the **KGB**, and other state bodies.¹⁶¹ Such decisions are subject to judicial appeal.¹⁶² However, in practice, appealing such decisions is **virtually impossible** due to pressure exerted on those who attempt to appeal.

Applications are generally rejected where the stated beliefs are **not of a religious nature**, are considered insufficiently substantiated, or where the statutory deadlines and procedures for submitting an application have not been complied with.

Statistics

The only available reference points are the numbers of persons actually performing alternative service (for example, **13 persons in 2017; 75 persons by March 2024; 110 persons by August 2025**),¹⁶³ but these figures do not provide a complete picture of all applications submitted and decisions taken.

Terms of service

Alternative service is performed in **civilian state and municipal institutions** (healthcare, social services, housing and communal services, etc.) and lasts:

- **36 months**: for persons without higher education;

- **24 months**: for persons with higher education.¹⁶⁴

compared to the military service which is:

- **18 months**: for persons without higher education;
- **12 months**: for persons with higher education.¹⁶⁵

Places of alternative service in Belarus are assigned by local executive authorities; persons performing alternative service **do not have the right to choose** their place of service.¹⁶⁶ **No guarantees** exist for the possibility of performing alternative service at one's permanent place of residence; assignment is carried out by local executive authorities and may involve service in a different locality.¹⁶⁷

Persons performing alternative service receive remuneration in the form of wages at the place of service, not lower than the statutory minimum wage, with taxes and mandatory deductions applied.¹⁶⁸ As a rule, this is **minimum-level remuneration**. Conscripts receive **significantly lower monetary allowance**, however these payments have a different legal nature.^{169 170}

The system of alternative service in Belarus operates under the authority of the **Council of Ministers** and is implemented through local executive authorities, outside the system of the armed forces.¹⁷¹

Access to information

Information on the possibility of applying for alternative service in Belarus is provided to conscripts in a limited manner — primarily during conscription procedures through military commissariats, without an obligation on the state to proactively and in advance explain the procedure for recognition of refusal on grounds of conscience.

Refusal to perform alternative service

Persons who refuse to perform alternative service after it has been assigned are held liable under the legislation, including **criminal liability** for evasion of the duties of alternative service.¹⁷²

¹⁵⁴ [Оповещение граждан — Военный информационный портал Министерства обороны Республики Беларусь](#)

¹⁵⁵ [Belarusians Subject To Military Duty Receiving Summonses En Masse - Belarusian News - Charter'97](#)

¹⁵⁶ [BELARUS: The brutal trap: How Belarus turns young men into hostages of the military machine | Human Rights Without Frontiers](#)

¹⁵⁷ [Закон Республики Беларусь от 17.02.2025 г. № 61-З «Об изменении кодексов по вопросам уголовной ответственности» – Pravo.by](#)

¹⁵⁸ [Forum 18: BELARUS: UN appeal for fined conscientious objector - 11 January 2022](#)

¹⁵⁹ [Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by](#)

¹⁶⁰ [international_fellowship_of_reconciliation_belarus.pdf](#)

¹⁶¹ [Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by](#)

¹⁶² [Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by](#)

¹⁶³ [Альтернативная служба | Министерство труда и социальной защиты Республики Беларусь. Официальный сайт](#)



Voluntary recruitment

The main legal act regulating voluntary enlistment (contract-based service) is the **Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” No. 1914-XII** (as amended),¹⁷³ supplemented by presidential decrees on conscription and subordinate regulations of the Ministry of Defence and/or the Government specifying the procedures for service.

The main incentives for voluntary (contract-based) service in the Armed Forces include:

- financial payments and allowances, including regular remuneration and bonuses;¹⁷⁴
- social benefits after service (inclusion of service in employment record, benefits for applicants to educational institutions);¹⁷⁵
- opportunities for career advancement and stability;¹⁷⁶
- state awards for merit and exemplary service.¹⁷⁷

Initial contracts for voluntary (contract-based) service are usually for a duration of 2–5 years.¹⁷⁸

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Belarusian legislation does not provide for the discharge of military personnel on grounds of conscience after the commencement of service. In such cases, the provisions of the Law “On Military Duty and Military Service”, as well as disciplinary or even criminal legislation, apply; the Law on Alternative Service does not apply.

Imprisonment penalties for desertion are **2–7 years** for ordinary desertion and **8–15 years** for desertion in conditions of war or armed conflict.

Militarisation of the education system

Elements of preparation for military service are integrated into the secondary education system.

For upper secondary school students, compulsory classes and activities are предусмотрены (for example, initial/pre-conscription military training, military-patriotic education activities, meetings with military personnel), which are considered part of the curriculum, even if certain formats are formally organised as courses or activities outside regular classroom lessons.¹⁷⁹

Temporary programmes for persons under the age of 18 are also available, providing insight into military service and careers, military-patriotic activities, handling weapons, conducted by military personnel.¹⁸⁰ These programmes are implemented as part of the state policy on military-patriotic education.¹⁸¹

The armed forces (through military commissariats) and the KGB (state security committees) have access to the personal data of pupils of conscription age, mainly males from the age of 16, within the framework of military registration. Schools and other educational institutions are obliged to transfer data like the full name, date of birth, address, information on education.¹⁸²

¹⁶⁴ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁶⁵ «О воинской обязанности и воинской службе» – тематические подборки НПА на Pravo.by

¹⁶⁶ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁶⁷ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁶⁸ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁶⁹ «О воинской обязанности и воинской службе» – тематические подборки НПА на Pravo.by

¹⁷⁰ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁷¹ Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁷² Закон Республики Беларусь от 04.06.2015 г. № 276-З «Об альтернативной службе» – Pravo.by

¹⁷³ Закон-О-voinskoj-objazannosti-i-voinskoj-sluzhbe.pdf

¹⁷⁴ Денежное довольствие и иные выплаты — Военный информационный портал Министерства обороны Республики Беларусь

¹⁷⁵ Какие льготы в Беларуси предусмотрены для отслуживших в армии, рассказали в Минобороны: новости, беларусь, армия, вооруженные силы, министерство обороны, льготы, новости беларуси, общество

¹⁷⁶ Служба в Вооруженных Силах Республики Беларусь - ВГУ имени П.М. Машерова - ВГУ имени П.М. Машерова

¹⁷⁷ Орден «За службу Родине» (Беларусь) — Википедия

¹⁷⁸ Ст. 46 Закон РБ О воинской обязанности и воинской службе Сроки контракта о прохождении военной службы 1914-XII от 5.11.1992 г. Закон Республики Беларусь О воинской обязанности и воинской службе Статья 46 Комментарий - Законодательство Беларуси 2025 год

¹⁷⁹ Допризывная подготовка — Военный информационный портал Министерства обороны Республики Беларусь

¹⁸⁰ Белорусские военнослужащие активно участвуют в военно-патриотическом воспитании молодежи — ВАЯР

¹⁸¹ Программа-патриотического-воспитания-населения-РБ-на-2022-2025-годы.pdf

¹⁸² Prilozhenie_2.pdf



2.7. BELGIUM

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended by law on 31 December 1992. Last conscripts were demobilised in March 1995. Could be reinstated, but only by law.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1964	Law of 3rd June on Status of Conscientious Objectors	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provision. Early release can be sought but may be denied for operational reasons.	
Minimum recruitment age	18 (nominally)	The formal requirement is to have completed mandatory education thus in fact a small number of 17 year olds are recruited each year.	
Military expenditure¹⁸³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	14,532m (+58.7%)	\$1,237	2.0%

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection for professional soldiers or reservists.
- No full guarantee of international protection for conscientious objectors to military service who are at risk of persecution in their country of origin.
- Exposure of minors to military programs and training.

Based on replies to EBCO's questionnaire by the Ministry of Defence and public information:

Developments

By the end of 2025, all 17-year-olds had received a letter from the Ministry of Defence informing them of the possibility of enlisting for a year of voluntary military service with an income of 2000€/month. It will start in September 2026 for a selection of 500 young people (men and women). After their service, they will be member of the military reserve for a period of 10 years.¹⁸⁴

Voluntary recruitment

Total first-time military recruitment in the years 2023 to 2025 is shown in the table below.¹⁸⁵

Age	2023	2024	2025	Total
17	8	7	5	20
18	359	384	365	1108
19	484	472	453	1409
20	369	373	319	1061
21	279	253	267	799
22	207	197	201	605
23	195	193	158	546
24	159	190	147	496
25	143	171	170	484
26	113	150	139	402
27	99	125	122	346
28	49	82	110	241
29	59	70	61	190
30	45	69	44	158
31	26	44	33	103
32	16	31	34	81
33	14	23	29	66
34	1	1	0	2
35	0	0	1	1
36	1	0	0	1
40	0	0	1	1
Total	2626	2835	2659	8120

Gender	2023	2024	2025	Total
Female	362	411	404	1177
Male	2264	2424	2255	6943
Total	2626	2835	2659	8120

¹⁸³Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹⁸⁴<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/04/08/belgium-to-follow-dutch-example-and-introduce-voluntary-military-service>



2.8. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2005 Conditions for reinstatement unknown	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1996	Parallel Defence Acts in the Federation and the Republika Srbska	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ¹⁸⁶	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	231m (-1.2%)	\$73	0.7%

2.9. BULGARIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2008 by amendment of the Defence and Armed Forces Act. May be reinstated in the event of declaration of state of war, martial law or a state of emergency pursuant to Article 116 of the Act. ¹⁸⁷	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1991	Constitution, Article 59.2 First implemented under Law for Replacement of Military Service with Alternative Service, 1998	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions. Early release may be requested (see below).	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ¹⁸⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	2,589m (+9.3%)	\$384	2.0%

Principal EBCO concerns

In accelerated procedures of consideration of asylum applications there is a risk that well-founded applications of conscientious objectors might be automatically rejected

Asylum for conscientious objectors

According to UNHCHR, in addition to asylum seekers from Morocco, Egypt and other countries from North Africa, cases of applicants from Afghanistan, Iraq and the Russian Federation are often processed under accelerated procedures with a presumption that they are often manifestly unfounded applications, even where applicants made claims raising issues such as ongoing armed conflict. 1525 individuals, including applicants from the Russian Federation, were rejected in accelerated procedures as manifestly unfounded, and 1615 were rejected in regular procedures.¹⁸⁹ The

¹⁸⁵The numbers are different from those provided by the Ministry and included in the 2024 Annual Report. The Ministry has not provided an explanation for the discrepancy.

¹⁸⁶Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹⁸⁷<https://ebco-beoc.org/sites/ebco-beoc.org/files/attachments/2023-01-31-Bulgaria-gov-reply.pdf>

¹⁸⁸Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹⁸⁹<https://reliefweb.int/report/bulgaria/bulgaria-protection-brief-international-protection-procedures-january-2025>



Bulgarian Government maintains access to people displaced from Ukraine through its borders, granting temporary protection to more than 220,800 refugees since March 2022 until October 2025.¹⁹⁰

On 15 April 2025 the Administrative Court of Sofia City canceled a decision to deny refugee status to a conscientious objector from the Russian Federation who was summoned for conscription and refused to follow "criminal orders" to seize foreign territories or kill Ukrainians, citing personal pacifist and political convictions¹⁹¹. He claimed that returning would result in immediate arrest and forced deployment to the front lines. The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) denied an asylum request claiming that Russian soldiers who refuse to fight are not criminally prosecuted. The Court pointed out that Russia introduced prison sentences (up to 15 years) for refusing to participate in military actions and cited the UNHCR Manual, noting that protection should be granted if military service conflicts with a person's genuine political, religious, or moral convictions; according to the judgment, the SAR failed to ask the applicant specific questions about his convictions or investigate whether his forced participation in the war would lead to the commission of war crimes.

2.10. CROATIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	Reinstated 2024, was previously suspended since 2008.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1991	Constitution, Article 47.2 Defence Law, 1991	
Current provisions	Defence Act, Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia.		
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	2 months	3 months in civil protection bodies. 4 months in local and regional self-government units.	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ¹⁹²	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	2,102m (+11.5%)	\$544	2.0%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory in terms of duration (50% to 100% longer than military service).

Based on reporting by the Croatian Youth Network (Mreža mladih Hrvatske)¹⁹³ and public information:

Developments

On 24 October 2025, Croatia's parliament approved the reintroduction of compulsory military service, reversing a 2008 decision to abolish conscription.¹⁹⁴

The legislative changes within the last year included:

- a. There was a change of the Defence Act¹⁹⁵
- b. There was a change of Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/bulgaria/bulgaria-2025-q4-protection-profiling-and-monitoring-brief-10-october-202>

¹⁹¹ <https://search-sofia-adms-g.justice.bg/Acts/GetActContent?BlobID=45fe5fff-886a-4839-9981-cfb97039a847>

¹⁹² Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

¹⁹³ More info about the organisation at: <https://mmh.hr/>

¹⁹⁴ See <https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2025/croatia-reintroduces-conscription-concerns-raised-conscientious-objectors>

¹⁹⁵ Defence Act: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/334/zakon-o-obrani>



There is no reported or known legal initiative undergoing at the Parliament or any other state body concerning the military service or the right to conscientious objection at the moment.

Conscription provisions and procedures

The legislative provisions regulating conscription and the procedures include:

- a. Article 47, Paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia¹⁹⁷
- b. Defence Act.¹⁹⁸
- c. Rulebook on the manner of keeping records of conscripts and performing military duty.¹⁹⁹
- d. Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia.²⁰⁰

According to Article 21.m of the Defence Act, the basic military training lasts for two months.

The reservist obligations apply and are regulated under Article 25a - 25.o of the Defence Act.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

The provisions regulating the exemption of conscientious objectors include:

- a. Article 47, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia
- b. Article 24.a - 24.r of Defence Act

A request for civilian service may be submitted to the competent regional department of defence affairs after an assessment of the applicants' suitability for military service.

As regulated by the Defence Act, when entering the military register, the competent regional department for defence affairs is obliged to inform the conscript of the right to submit a request for civilian service on the basis of conscientious objection.

A request for conscientious objection is decided by the state administration body responsible for civil protection, i.e. the Ministry of the Interior, upon the proposal of the civil service committee of that Ministry, within 30 days of the date of submission of the request.

The Civil Service Commission may reject the application or deem it invalid for the following reasons:

- a. If a final court decision has established that [the applicant] committed criminal acts using weapons or force.
- b. If [the applicant] own[s] a weapon (except as a souvenir with a firearms license).
- c. If [the applicant] did not state that [he is] requesting civilian service due to religious or moral views even after the deadline for supplementing the application (The Commission sends a call for such supplement).
- d. If the application for civilian service was not submitted for religious or moral reasons.
- e. If [the applicant] filed a conscientious objection when registering in the military registry (which is not a call for military service) - since in practice it is considered that an objection is not necessary due to inactive compulsory military service

An appeal against the decision of the Civil Service Commission can be filed with the Appeals Commission within 15 days of receipt, and in most cases (except for the one from Article 31 of the Civil Service Act) it will postpone the execution - that is, the applicant will not need to respond until the Commission's decision.

According to Article 24 of the Defence Act, the civil service lasts three months when performed in civil protection bodies or four months when performed in local and regional self-government units.

Those who also refuse to perform alternative service are subject to a fine of 500 euros to 5000 euros, which is regulated by Articles 119, 119a, 119b of the Defence Act. If the refusal is repeated, the fine ranges from the amount of 1500 euros to 6630 euros.

Voluntary recruitment

Regulated by Law NN 22/2023.²⁰¹ The minimum age for recruitment is 18 and the initial duration of service required is 40 days.

The incentives or measures used by the national armed forces to encourage voluntary recruitment include (As listed on the official website of the Ministry of Defence):²⁰²

¹⁹⁶ Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia: <https://www.zakon.hr/z/327/zakon-o-sluzbi-u-oruzanim-snagama-republike-hrvatske>

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/94/ustav-republike-hrvatske>

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/334/zakon-o-obrani>

¹⁹⁹ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2025_12_155_2330.html

²⁰⁰ <https://www.zakon.hr/z/327/zakon-o-sluzbi-u-oruzanim-snagama-republike-hrvatske>

²⁰¹ https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2023_02_22_375.html

²⁰² <https://www.morh.hr/kljucne-prednosti-programa-tvo/>



- a. Eight weeks of experience for a lifetime
- b. Salary around €1,100 per month
- c. Enrollment in work experience
- d. Paid transportation expenses
- e. Paid leave
- f. Advantage in employment in state and local bodies
- g. Possibility of career development in the Croatian Armed Forces
- h. Acquiring basic skills of self-defense, orientation, assistance
- i. Strengthening physical and mental strength
- j. Making new friendships and team spirit
- k. Training with modern technology and top instructors
- l. Use of modern military technologies
- m. Sense of belonging and national identity

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Article 24 of the Defence Act applies in cases of serving members of the armed forces applying for conscientious objection.

The procedure for getting recognition as a conscientious objector is the same as described above.

The competent regional department for defence affairs is obliged to inform the serving personnel of the right to conscientious objection.

The same reasons listed above are provided as grounds for rejection in cases where an application for conscientious objection by a serving member is rejected.

The same regulations apply to the case of a reservist who applied for recognition as a conscientious objector.

2.11. CYPRUS

[See country page on EBCO website]

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	National Guard Act, 2/1992 (unarmed military service) Civilian alternative service finally became available in about 2005.	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	14 months	19 months (136%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted	Release from reserve service now possible.	
Minimum recruitment age	17	"Voluntary" early performance of military service – way of calculating age means that enrolment may actually be at 16	
Military expenditure ²⁰³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	663m (+6.0%)	\$486	1.6%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory, inter alia, in terms of its nature, cost, and duration.
- Conscientious objectors are not recognised prima facie. The process has yet to be placed under the full control of civilian authorities.

²⁰³Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



“Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	
Conscientious objection first recognised	No recognition	
Current provisions		
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)
	12 months	None available
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted	
Minimum recruitment age	18	

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection despite repeated condemnations from international courts.

Developments

In 2025, EBCO and three other international organisations raised the case of conscientious objector Hasan Rahvancıoğlu and his prosecution by the authorities in the self-declared state of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).²⁰⁴

Rahvancıoğlu is facing three separate cases for refusal to comply with a mobilisation call. He has peacefully and publicly declared his conscientious objection to military service, stated that he will not pay any fines imposed by the court, meaning he faces imprisonment simply for exercising his freedom of thought, conscience, and belief.

His trial was initially scheduled for 27 November 2025 before the Security Forces Court, then rescheduled for 22 January 2026, then 12 March 2026, and still pending.

On the domestic level, the Constitutional Court and Military Court of Appeals in the “TRNC” have recognised the right to conscientious objection but in the absence of legislative reform, conscientious objectors continue to be criminalised.

The situation is a repeat of the previous treatments of Halil Karapaşaoğlu,²⁰⁵ Mustafa Hürben, and Murat Kanatlı, whose case led to a landmark ruling at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), delivered

in 2024 but still pending implementation.²⁰⁶ In March 2025, Türkiye in its communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe about the case, noted the legislative amendment submitted to the “TRNC” Parliament in January 2024 by the opposition, but without mention to the stalling of the bill by the ruling majority who turned down a motion for urgency and has not advanced the bill since to enact it into law.²⁰⁷

2.12. CZECHIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2004 by amendment of the Military Act. May be reinstated in a situation of threat or wartime.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Civilian Service Act (of Czechoslovakia) No. 18/1992	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	“An administrative procedure with a possibility of judicial review”. No details known.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ²⁰⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
		7,052m (-0.4%)	\$660 1.8%

²⁰⁴ <https://ebco-beoc.org/press-release/2025-11-24-joint-press-release-stop-prosecuting-hasan-rahvancioglu>

²⁰⁵ <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/627>



2.13. DENMARK

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1917	Alternative Service Act of 13th December	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	4 months	4 months (100%) but see below	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions. Even those who terminate their service contracts retain reserve liability.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ²⁰⁹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	14,949m (+46.1%)	\$2,495	3.2%

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection for professional soldiers.

Based on replies to EBCO's questionnaire by the organisation Aldrig Mere Krig:²¹⁰

Developments

From August 2026, women will be conscripted equally with men, also sharing rooms and showers at the barracks. Some groups will start already at February 2026. The change was suddenly moved forward, originally planned to start in 2027.

The military lacks policies addressing pregnancies and infant care for conscripts, and equipment remains poorly sized for women.²¹¹

The new conscription system will see an increase of conscripts from 4,700 to 6,500 a year (plus 1,000 in the Emergency Management Agency). Temporary barracks have been put up due to lack of beds, while a lack of instructors is planned to be addressed by drafting among the conscripts.

An increase of duration from 4 to at least 11 months will also take effect in 2026. The recruits start with basic education for the first five months, followed by six months in more operational roles such as "staffing air defence systems or volunteering into NATO's emergency forces".

Conscripts will for now not be ordered for missions abroad, outside the defence of Denmark or NATO's deterrence. The Minister of Defence can change this decision in case of a worsening security policy situation.

Civilian service for conscientious objectors remains an option, though there is little preparation for it. Even though the Ministry has advertised 1,200 placements and expects the numbers of applicants for civilian service to rise after 2026, many of the providers have complained that they have not received newer information. In the last ten years, only few places have been needed.^{212,213}

Voluntary recruitment

After the new changes, women are now only 16 percent of the voluntary part of conscription, down from about 25 percent earlier. It looks like there could be enough volunteers to fill the conscription service for 2026 - mostly with men.

Militarisation of the education system

Twelve high schools are planned to offer a Defence Studies programme. Since the first one in 2023, five of them have already started. In the span of three years, "students [will] gain knowledge and understanding of defence and security policy as well as society's overall preparedness". There is close cooperation with the Danish Armed Forces and the schoolwork includes training in military uniform with soldiers at the barracks. Most of those schools have only attracted 10-16 students on each level, about half or less of a normal class.

²⁰⁶European Court of Human Rights, Murat Kanatlı v. Türkiye, Application no. 18382/15

Available at: HUDOC, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-231540>

²⁰⁷<https://search.coe.int/cm/eng?i=09125948802649cd>

²⁰⁸Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²⁰⁹Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²¹⁰More info about the organisation at: <https://aldrigmerekrig.dk>

²¹¹<https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2025-11-20-markant-fald-i-kvinder-til-ny-varnepligt>

²¹²<https://www.fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2025/fuld-ligestilling-i-varnepligten-fremrykkes/>

²¹³<https://www.forsvaret.dk/da/opgaver/varnepligt-og-tjeneste-pa-varnepligtslignende-vilkar/>



2.14. ESTONIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1991	Constitution, Article 124. Military Service Act, 1994.	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	8 months	12 months (150%)	
	11 months in some cases		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No release during a state of emergency.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ²¹⁴	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,576m (+1.0%)	\$1,164	3.4%

Based on information from EBCO's Finnish member, AKL (Asestakieltäytyjäliitto - the Finnish Union of Conscientious Objectors):²¹⁵

Developments

A government proposal adopted by the Estonian Ministry of Defence plans to extend compulsory military service to a uniform 12-month period for all conscripts starting January 1, 2027, replacing the current mixed system of 8- and 11-month periods.²¹⁶

In late 2025, the Estonian parliament approved a change to the Military Service Act requiring conscripts to have at least B1 level Estonian language skills to be called up. Those without the required proficiency may defer service until age 28 and remain in conscript status with adjusted reserve placement terms.²¹⁷

In public debate, several politicians have raised the possibility of assigning conscripts who do not have sufficient language skills to perform military service, to

alternative service, which is currently only available to conscientious objectors.^{218,219}

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Unlike in previous years, no precise information on the number of applicants and those accepted for alternative service in 2024 and 2025 appears to be available from public sources.

An opinion text in Estonian media claimed that there are over 800 reservists of military age in Estonia who have completed alternative service. According to the same article, over 100 applications are submitted each year, but only 40-80 people are selected for service.²²⁰ AKL couldn't verify the numbers from more reliable sources but previous reports support that they are approximately correct.

According to the Estonian Defence Resources Agency (Kaitseressursside Amet), "As of January 1, 2021, there were 70 persons in alternative service, which is 30 more than in the same period in 2019. In 2020, interest in completing alternative service remained high. A total of 174 applications for alternative service were submitted, which is similar to the previous reporting period (170 applications were submitted in 2019 and 174 in 2018). **Due to budgetary constraints, only 74 persons were allowed to perform alternative service.**"²²¹

In 2023, the difference between the number of applicants and those accepted for alternative service was even greater: according to the same agency's annual report, 171 applications were received at that time, but only 43 people performed the service. The annual report did not comment on why not all applicants performed the service.²²²

Under Estonian conscription law, the Defence Resources Agency may verify alternative service applications by requesting explanations from the applicant and inquiring into their place of study or work, as well as the religious organisations they have cited.²²³ While public sources contain no documented cases of rejected applications resulting from these inquiries, such rejections cannot be ruled out.

²¹⁴Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²¹⁵More info about the organisation at: <https://akl-web.fi>

²¹⁶ERR News, 11 December 2025. Estonia plans to extend military service to 12 months from 2027. <https://news.err.ee/1609882429/estonia-plans-to-extend-conscription-to-12-months-from-2027>

²¹⁷ERR News, 27 November 2025. Non-Estonian speakers excluded from conscription call-up from 2026. <https://news.err.ee/1609869276/estonia-excludes-non-estonian-speakers-from-conscription-call-up-from-2026>



Militarisation of the education system

Estonia maintains voluntary cadet and defence clubs that introduce youth to military and defence topics, but these are non-mandatory and remain extracurricular.²²⁴

2.15. FINLAND

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1931	Alternative Service Act of 4th June	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	165 days	347 days for all (209%)	
	225 or 347 days in some roles		
CO release of professional soldiers	No specific provisions		
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ²²⁵	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	8,082m (+17.1%)	\$1,437	2.6%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory in terms of longer duration (more than 2x that of military service).
- Poor availability of information about the right to conscientious objection.
- Reports that conscripts are deterred by military officers from applying to be transferred to alternative service.
- Plans to reform non-military service and steer towards “comprehensive security” and “preparedness”.

²¹⁸Uued uudised, 18 December 2025. Varro Vooglaid: kui kutsealune ei suuda riigikeelt selgeks saada, tuleb ta saada asendusteenistusse. <https://uueduudised.ee/varro-vooglaid-kui-kutsealune-ei-suuda-riigikeelt-selgeks-saada-tuleb-ta-saata-asendusteenistusse/>

²¹⁹ERR Uudised, 15 December 2025. Stoicescu: president mõistab ajateenijate keelenõude vajadust. <https://www.err.ee/1609885729/stoicescu-president-moistab-ajateenijate-keelenoude-vajadust>

²²⁰Äripäev, 13 April 2025. Olav Kersen: 800 meest ootab juhiseid ja väljaõpet, et panustada laiapidndesse riigikaitse. <https://www.aripaev.ee/arvamused/2025/04/13/olav-kersen-800-meest-ootab-juhiseid-ja-valjaopet-et-panustada-laiapidndesse-riigikaitse>

²²¹Estonian Defence Resources Agency (Kaitseressursside Amet). 2021.

Aruanne kaitsevääkohustuse täitmisest ja kaitsevääteenistuse korraldamisest 2020. aastal. https://kra.ee/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/aruanne_kaitsevaekohustuse_taitmisest_riigis_2020.pdf

²²²Estonian Defence Resources Agency (Kaitseressursside Amet). 2024. Aruanne kaitsevääkohustuse täitmisest ja kaitsevääteenistuse korraldamisest 2023. aastal. https://kra.ee/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/20240513_VVAruanne23.pdf

²²³Riikikogu 2012. Military Service Act. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/519092014003/consolide>

²²⁴Riigiportaal Eesti.ee 2025. Women's and youth organisations of the Estonian Defence League.

<https://www.eesti.ee/eraiisik/en/artikkel/security-and-defense/voluntary-participation-in-national-defence/womens-and-youth-organisations-of-the-estonian-defence-league>

²²⁵Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



- Plans to introduce an obligatory national defence day for 17 year-olds. Military courses already offered to 16-17 year-olds.
- No full guarantee of international protection for conscientious objectors to military service who are at risk of persecution in their country of origin.

Based on the reply of the Ministry of Defence to the EBCO questionnaire and reporting by EBCO's Finnish member, AKL (Aseistakieltäytyjäliitto - the Finnish Union of Conscientious Objectors)²²⁶:

Developments

Effective 1 January 2026, the maximum age for liability of reservist duties is raised from 60 to 65 (rank-and-file reservists in the actual reserve could previously serve up until the age of 50). Non-military service liability has been aligned accordingly where reservist objectors belong to the additional reserve and need to perform a 3-day-long supplementary service until the age of 65.²²⁷

In 2026, the government is planning to establish a reform to the Non-Military Service Act which is planned to enter into force in the beginning of 2027. In preparation to that, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM), together with several ministries and the Non-Military Service Centre, prepared an assessment memorandum on developing non-military service and possible legislative amendments as part of a Government Programme project to link the system more closely to "comprehensive security."²²⁸ service).

The memorandum recommends retaining the current structure (short training followed by a long work placement), while steering placements increasingly toward tasks considered central to preparedness. It also outlines alternative organisational models (e.g., longer training, preparedness-oriented content), while acknowledging risks such as higher costs and reduced placement options.

Currently the reform of the Non-Military Service Act is being prepared by a working group with participation from the Ministry of Defence. At the same time, a civil society representative of conscientious objectors (AKL) was excluded from the working group just before its

work began.²²⁹ AKL states that this raises concerns about meaningful participation and civilian oversight.

From a human rights perspective, AKL highlights the following:

- Reforms must not narrow alternative service into "security-critical" functions that undermine access for a broad range of religious, ethical and political convictions protected by freedom of conscience.
- Application processes should remain clear, accessible, and independent of military command.
- AKL welcomes the memorandum's recommendation to allow switching between military and non-military service while preserving credit for days already served. Removing day-credit would make alternative service more punitive and deter in-service conscientious objection.²³⁰
- Any such training for non-military service must remain civilian in purpose, content, and command, and must not impose coercive duties that conflict with conscience or discriminate compared with reservist obligations.
- The memorandum does not recommend extending conviction investigations to supplementary-service applications in normal circumstances. AKL warns that expanding such procedures would significantly restrict practical access to conscientious objection; if used, they must be independent of military influence, accessible, and subject to effective review and appeal.

The public discussion on broadening the call-up base to conscription to the entire age cohort continues.²³¹

Conscription provisions and procedures

According to Ministry of Defence figures, under 2% of conscripts sign up for subsequent voluntary service annually (no more than 600).

Regarding reserve service, refresher training orders are compulsory, normally notified ≥3 months in advance. Maximum cumulative days are 200 for officers/NCOs, 150 for demanding rank-and-file, and 80 for other rank-and-file.

²²⁶ More info about the organisation at: <https://akl-web.fi/en>

²²⁷ Government of Finland / Ministry of Defence 22 Dec 2025. Finland to raise reservist age limit to 65 years as of 2026. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/236553176/finland-to-raise-reservist-age-limit-to-65-years-as-of-2026>

²²⁸ Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM) 2025. Development of Non-Military Service (TEM102:00/2024). <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/hanke?tunnus=TEM102:00/2024>

²²⁹ Helsingin Sanomat 23 May 2025. Aseistakieltäytyjät suljettiin ulos työryhmästä. <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000011251315.html>

²³⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/ccprcfinc07-concluding-observations-seventh-periodic-report>

²³¹ Yle 6 Dec 2025. Puolustusvoimain kommentaja asevelvollisuudesta ikäluokkien pienentyessä: "Mistä muualta se otetaan kuin naisista?" <https://yle.fi/a/74-20197945>



In specific border-security disturbances, shorter-notice call-ups are possible by law (amendment to Conscription Act §532, 48).

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Applications of conscientious objectors for non-military service are decided upon by the Regional Offices in peacetime, whereas in special circumstances, cases may go to the Board for the Examination of Conscript Convictions established under the Non-Military Service Act.

During war, the body comprises mainly civilians appointed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Justice, the Helsinki University, and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. There is also a member representing the Non-military Service Centre and one representing the Defence Forces.

There are around 2000 applications per year (not including reservist applications which range from 1500 to 3800 in recent years), all of which are accepted. Decisions can be appealed to an Administrative Court; further leave-to-appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court). During war, appeals must be given priority in Courts.

The non-military service includes a 4-week basic training at the Non-military Service Centre, and subsequently work service at approved non-profit/public service locations (~1,500 nationwide), generally state and municipal authorities and wellbeing services. COs have relatively free choice for placements, and the process resembles regular job recruiting with placement applications sent to approved organisations.

Total objectors, i.e. those who refuse to perform both military and non-military service, face imprisonment equal to half of the remaining service time (Non-Military Service Act §74). Their number was 25 in 2025 (up from 16 in 2024).

Voluntary recruitment

Women's voluntary service is governed by the Act on Voluntary Military Service for Women (194/1995).

In recent application rounds: 1,448 women applied for voluntary military service in the round ending Jan 15, 2025.²³² 1,360 women applied in the round ending Jan 15, 2026.²³³ Once the initial 30 days pass, women are

treated as conscripts and have the same liabilities as other conscript categories.²³⁴

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Almost half of non-military service applications (approx. ~1000 annually) are made during military service, indicating ongoing information barriers. Finnish law requires authorities to provide sufficient information on applying for and performing non-military service. In practice information is often limited or uneven during call-ups.²³⁵ Apparently, that leads to a high rate of applications during military service.

Moreover, during military service, conscripts who seek to change to non-military service may face pressure and/or delays, despite the legal requirement that applications be processed without delay.²³⁶ These practices undermine the effective accessibility of conscientious objection.

Asylum for conscientious objectors

Cases involving conscientious objection grounds occur in practice: Yle reported a case from November 2025 of a Russian draft-evader seeking asylum in Finland who fears return because of opposing war and draft policies; he received a negative decision and faced transfer to Lithuania under the Dublin system. In Lithuania, he was further at risk of being deported to Russia, because his way of arriving in the country was seen as illegal from the Lithuanian perspective.²³⁷

Finnish authorities have returned or are returning families who cited draft-avoidance and political opposition as reasons for asylum claims.²³⁸ A substantial number of Russian nationals have sought asylum invoking fear of mobilisation and service; decisions have been mixed and many applications remain pending for extended periods. Local reporting indicates extended processing times beyond legal limits, causing stress and claims of underestimation of risk by authorities.²³⁹

Militarisation of the education system

The proposal from a governmental working group to introduce a National Defence Day, or Call-up Information Day, for all 17-year-olds in secondary education has yet to become law.²⁴⁰

Voluntary military-style introductory courses for minors (from age 16 and up) offered by the Association for

²³²Finnish Defence Forces 15 Jan 2025. 1,448 women applied to voluntary military service. <https://maavoimat.fi/-/yli-1400-naista-haki-vapaaehtoiseen-asepalvelukseen>

²³³Finnish Defence Forces 15 Jan 2026. Altogether 1,360 women applied to voluntary military service. <https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/-/1950813/altogether-1360-women-applied-to-voluntary-military-service>



National Defence Education, which proponents promote as familiarisation with military life, continue.^{241,242}

2.16. FRANCE

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 1997 under Law 97-1019	
		Conditions for reinstatement unclear.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1963	Act No 1255/63 of 21st December.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure²⁴³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	68,008m (+1.5%)	\$1,021	2.0%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Military-themed programmes form obligatory parts of the education curriculum (Day of Defence and Citizenship).

Voluntary recruitment

President Macron announced a plan to increase military reserves from 45,000 in 2024 to 105,000 by 2035 incentivising young citizens aged 18-25 to undergo voluntary military service, offering salary €800 per month and other benefits including privileges in education and employment.²⁴⁴

2.17. GEORGIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Military Service Act, Article 12.	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	12 months	18 months (150%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions	
Minimum recruitment age	18	Admission to Military Technical School from 16	
Military expenditure²⁴⁵	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	658m (+18.4%)	\$173	1.8%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Strict time limitations for raising conscientious objection claims, first-stage consideration by military conscription commissions and lack of clear safeguards against arbitrary denials.
- Punitive and discriminatory length of the alternative civilian service.
- No specific provisions for professional members of the armed forces.
- Juvenile military training involving the handling of firearms.
- Deportation of Russian antiwar activist Nikolai Belikov.

²³⁴ Finnish Defence Forces n.d. Voluntary military service for women. <https://intti.fi/en/voluntary-military-service-for-women>

²³⁵ Aseistakieltäytyjäliitto (AKL) n.d. Experiences of providing information during call-ups. <https://akl-web.fi/fi/posts/kokemuksia-siviilipalveluksesta-tiedottamisesta-kutsunnoissa>

²³⁶ Aseistakieltäytyjäliitto (AKL) n.d. Experiences of delays in processing non-military service applications. <https://akl-web.fi/fi/posts/kokemuksia-viivytelystä-siviilipalvelushakemuksen-käsittelyssä>

²³⁷ Yle 6 Dec 2025. Russian draft evader asylum case. <https://yle.fi/a/74-20191649>

²³⁸ Yle 9 Jan 2026. Asylum case involving return citing draft avoidance. <https://yle.fi/a/74-20202864>

²³⁹ Yle 2024. Russian asylum seekers and mobilisation. <https://yle.fi/a/74-20122140>

²⁴⁰ Government of Finland 31 Jan 2024. Working group proposes a national defence day and pre-health checks for the entire age cohort. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/1410845/kutsuntatyoryhma-ehdottaa-yhteista-maanpuolustuspaivaa-ja-ennakkoterveystarkastuksia-a-koko-ikaluokalle>

²⁴¹ Association for National Defence Education (MPK) n.d. Course calendar (minimum age 16). <https://koulutuskalenteri.mpk.fi/Default.aspx?tabid=1054&id=181035>

²⁴² Association for National Defence Education (MPK) n.d. Youth training information. <https://mpk.fi/koulutukset/nuorten-koulutus/>

²⁴³ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²⁴⁴ <https://www.connexionfrance.com/news/voluntary-national-military-service-to-return-to-france/755793#:~:text=Taking%20the%20place%20of%20conscription,is%20currently%20seeing%20a%20revamp>

²⁴⁵ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



Developments

In 2025 started the full implementation of the new Defense Code²⁴⁶, which closed the so-called Girchi loophole named after a libertarian party that supported creation of an Evangelical Church of Biblical Freedom allowing thousands of young men to become pastors and claim exemptions from conscription in 2017-2024. Under new legislation, very few of the Biblical Freedom priests were recognized as conscientious objectors and allowed to alternative service.

According to the Public Defender of Georgia, out of 81 clergymen called up for non-military, alternative labor service during 2025, there were 22 Jehovah's Witnesses, 57 Evangelicals from the Church of Biblical Freedom, and 2 Muslims; no Orthodox clergymen were called up. In total, 561 conscientious objectors were directed to non-military alternative labor service in the year²⁴⁷.

The World Evangelical Alliance in 2025 reported "unequal religious landscape": clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church remained completely exempt from both military and alternative service, while clergy from all other religious denominations were required to perform 18-months alternative service²⁴⁸.

Another major development in 2025 was a change in rules related to draft notices, which are legally considered as delivered 7 days after the publication on the website of the army and supposed submission of the conscription call-up via SMS and email. Recipients of such notices need to appear before conscription commission within 10 days (that could be burdensome for those who are abroad) or face various penalties, including prohibition to travel abroad, restrictions on assets, driving and professional licenses, administrative fines or criminal liability in case of a "repeated offence".

Since the normal term of conscription service is 6 months and of alternative service is supposed to be 11 months (currently some persons serve 18-months term), the latter is almost twice longer.

Connection e.V. reported on the implementation of the right to conscientious objection to military service with a particular focus on the punitive and discriminatory length of the alternative civilian service and the lack of provisions for professional members of the armed forces. The report addresses also the issue of juvenile military training involving the handling of firearms and it further examines the need to amend the Criminal

Code by explicitly criminalizing the recruitment and use in hostilities of children below the age of 18 years by the armed forces and non—state armed groups²⁴⁹.

Conscription provisions and procedures

According to the Defence Code, compulsory service in the National Military Service for Conscripts is subject to a person aged 18 to 27 who is registered for military conscription and does not have grounds for exemption from or postponement of service in the National Military Service for Conscripts. The terms of National Military Service for Conscripts are: for service in a combat unit – 6 months; for service in a combat support or combat service support unit – 8 months; for a junior command position, staff position, or a position requiring a predetermined speciality – 11 months²⁵⁰.

Under Article 356 of the Criminal Code of Georgia 'evasion of military service by a person subject to military service' and 'evasion of an alternative labor service by a person subject to military service' are prohibited. These acts committed during a war or emergency shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of two to five years, and in peacetime by a fine or imprisonment for up to three years.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

According to the Law of Georgia on "Non-Military, Alternative Labour Service", the term of non-military, alternative labour service is 11 months. Statements of conscripts regarding refusal to fulfil military obligation through military service should be sent for consideration to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia which is responsible for the conscription of persons for non-military, alternative labour service, as well as the registration, conscription, and call-up of persons enrolled in the non-military, alternative labour service reserve. Non-military, alternative labour service is defined as a socially useful civilian service that replaces military service and is based on the substantiation of refusal to fulfil military obligation through military service on the grounds of freedom of belief, confession and conscience²⁵¹.

Conscientious objectors are required to apply for alternative service to conscription commission within the 10 days after the legal "delivery" of draft notice²⁵², so the late applications (e.g. when people did not receive

²⁴⁶ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5916285>

²⁴⁷ <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2026040108450417707.pdf> (Annual Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia – 2025, p. 214)

²⁴⁸ <https://un.worldidea.org/georgia-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-report-to-the-upr-51st-session/>



the draft notice because of change of phone or email, or missed it in the spam folder) could be automatically dismissed contrary to international standards.

The applications are considered according to procedure approved by the Government²⁵³. The conscription commission submits the application to the State Commission for Conscription into Non-Military, Alternative Labor Service, consisting of officials of several ministries, that issues a conclusion on the basis of which a minister makes the final decision, which could be a subject to judicial review. In 2025, the monthly salary of the conscripts on alternative service was 200 GEL (approx. 60 Euro)²⁵⁴.

Among 1195 individuals applied for alternative service in 2024-2025, the documentation of 561 applicants was forwarded to the State Agency for Employment Promotion for consideration of their non-military, alternative labor service; 560 individuals were granted a deferment due to health conditions; and 74 individuals refused (changed their decision) to undergo non-military, alternative labor service²⁵⁵.

Voluntary recruitment

The 2025 amendments to Defense Code increased salaries and housing benefits for contract-based (voluntary) soldiers and incentivised students using their right to deferral to volunteer in summer military training. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended Georgia to amend the Criminal Code by explicitly criminalizing the recruitment and use in hostilities of children below the age of 18 years by the armed forces and non-State armed groups.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Contract servicemen, conscripts and reservists are not allowed to be discharged on the grounds of conscience.

Asylum for conscientious objectors

New immigration and protection laws that came into effect on 1 October 2025 established more strict rules for asylum seekers, tightening appeal deadlines. Foreigners

shall not be deported to a country where they are persecuted, including for their political beliefs, as well as for reasons related to peacekeeping, 'progressive social and political' activities, scientific and creative work. The risk of life and health or potential torture are among the exceptions as well. In addition, the amendments will increase fines for foreigners who violate the rules of stay in the country, while the procedure for deporting foreigners residing illegally in Georgia will be simplified²⁵⁶. Russian refugee Nikolai Belikov was arrested for antiwar expression during an opposition rally and received a deportation notice with a five-year ban from entering Georgia²⁵⁷.

Militarisation of the education system

The government in 2025 launched a "radical reform" of the higher education system reducing the university autonomy, which includes an increased emphasis on "patriotic education" and closer ties between the Ministry of Defense and universities to facilitate recruitment. Students are encouraged to volunteer to summer military training program that counts as a part of performing military duty.

²⁴⁹ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4646>

²⁵⁰ Response of the Ministry of Defence of Georgia to EBCO questionnaire.

²⁵¹ Response of the Ministry of Defence of Georgia to EBCO questionnaire.

²⁵² Article 7 of the Law of Georgia "On Non-Military, Alternative Labor Service", <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/28294>

²⁵³ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6149087>

²⁵⁴ [https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/117838/GEO-117838%20\(APPENDIX%20A\).pdf](https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/117838/GEO-117838%20(APPENDIX%20A).pdf)

²⁵⁵ <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2026040108450417707.pdf> (Annual Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia – 2025, p. 214-215).

²⁵⁶ <https://commerciant.ge/en/news/society/what-changes-will-come-into-effect-in-georgia-from-october-2025>

²⁵⁷ <https://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/71260>



2.18. GERMANY

[See country page on EBCO website]

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2011 under Act Amending the Law on Military Service (BT-Drs 17/2841) Could be reinstated in time of war.		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1949	Grundgesetz Article 4 Law on Military Service, 1956		
CO release of professional soldiers	Yes	The Conscientious Objection Act applies equally to conscripts and professional soldiers. However in some circumstances release may bear a financial penalty.		
Minimum recruitment age	17	For voluntary service		
Military expenditure²⁵⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	113,586m (+23.9%)	\$1,346	2.3%	

EBCO concerns

- Plans for reintroduction of conscription.
- No full guarantee of international protection for conscientious objectors to military service who are at risk of persecution in their country of origin.

Based on reporting by EBCO's German member, the Protestant Association for Conscientious Objection and Peace (EAK).²⁵⁹

Developments

In October 2025, the Parliament debated the reform of compulsory military service. A few days earlier, Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul publicly questioned the voluntary nature of military service agreed in the coalition agreement, which led to noticeable controversy within the coalition.

On December 5, the Bundestag finally debated the issue and passed the following regulation, which came into force on January 1, 2026: The law provides for compulsory medical examinations for young men born in 2008 or later. Initial contact will be made via questionnaires, which will be sent out starting in January. Men must fill them out, while women may do so. The questionnaires will ask for personal details, health information, and willingness to perform military service. The nationwide medical examination will formally begin when the law comes into force on January 1, but it will be adapted to the actual capacities that are currently being established. The German federal government expects that the number of conscientious objectors will continue to rise once the Military Service Modernisation Act comes into force. Accordingly, the Federal Office for Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions (BAFzA), which is responsible for approving conscientious objection applications, was granted 72 additional staff positions during the latest consultations on the 2026 federal budget.²⁶⁰

As the specialist organization of the Evangelical Church (EKD) responsible for conscientious objection issues, EAK recorded a significant increase in inquiries in 2025.²⁶¹

The new EKD peace memorandum of November 2025 once again emphasizes "the assurance, which is indispensable from a Protestant perspective, provided by Article 4 (3) of the Basic Law that it is possible to be exempted from compulsory service in the armed forces" as well as the task of "keeping the issue of conscientious objection to military service present in society." Among other things, the memorandum addresses the politically controversial question of how to deal with conscientious objectors from countries that have to defend themselves against a war of aggression that violates international law. It concludes: "If the attacked state does not allow participation in the legitimate defense of one's own country other than through military service, the granting of asylum is indispensable on ethical grounds."²⁶²

EBCO's member organisation German Peace Society-United War Resisters (DFG-VK) also reported more than 850.000 visits in 2025 to its special website www.dfg-vk.de.

²⁵⁸ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²⁵⁹ More info about the organisation at: <https://www.eak-online.de/>

²⁶⁰ Rheinpfalz, November 26, 2025

²⁶¹ <https://www.evangelische-friedensarbeit.de/epd-meldungen/theologin-diffuse-sorgen-bei-beratungen-zu-kriegsdienst-verweigerung>, September 13, 2025 (in German)
<https://www.evangelische-friedensarbeit.de/epd-meldungen/wehrdienst-reform-beratungsstellen-verzeichnen-mehr-anfragen>, October 18, 2025 (in German)

²⁶² Welt in Unordnung – Gerechter Friede im Blick. Protestant peace ethics in the face of new challenges. A memorandum from the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany. Published by the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), Leipzig 2025; quotations from paragraph 170, p. 135f. https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/denkschrift-welt-in-unordnung-EVA-2025.pdf

²⁶³ <https://dfg-vk.de/neuer-hochststand-steigende-kriegsdienstverweigerungen-zeigen-wachsende-ablehnung-von-zwangsdiensten/>

²⁶⁴ <https://kdv-kongress.dfg-vk.de/archiv/>



[verweigern.info](https://www.verweigern.info) providing information and advice on how to be recognised as a conscientious objector.²⁶³ DFG-VK organised in June 2025 a national congress on conscientious objection.²⁶⁴

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Official data about applications of conscientious objectors:²⁶⁵

Year	Non-serving persons	Reservists	Serving soldiers	Total
2025 (data until end of November)	5,096	1,460	183	6,739
2024	1,811	1,029	158	2,998
2023	1,431 (total non-serving and reservists)		178	1,609

Voluntary recruitment

As of July 31, 2025, there are 11,334 volunteers serving in the German Armed Forces. In addition, there are approximately 58,000 professional soldiers and just under 114,000 temporary soldiers.²⁶⁶

Conscientious objection during and after military service

As shown above, the Armed Forces received applications for recognition of conscientious objection from 183 serving soldiers from January to November 2025.

Asylum for conscientious objectors

From early 2022 to April 2025, 6,374 Russian men between the ages of 18 and 45 applied for asylum in Germany. 349 of them were recognised as refugees or entitled to asylum, received subsidiary protection, or were subject to a ban on deportation. However, the majority

of asylum applications were rejected or dismissed, according to the information provided.²⁶⁷

Since the summer of 2024, connection e.V., a registered charity, has been supporting six Russian deserters in their asylum process. Having stayed in Germany despite the Dublin criteria, which for two of them was only possible thanks to receiving church asylum in a church in Baden (south-western Germany), all of them have now had their second hearing. Two have been rejected, one of whom is severely traumatised and had a certificate from the hospital stating that even his return to Croatia was unreasonable.

Militarisation of the education system

In 2025, there were 5,527 visits by so-called youth officers from the German Armed Forces to German schools.²⁶⁸

In contrast, the work of the Peace Education Service Center of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg must be highlighted,²⁶⁹ which includes a DFG-VK representative appointed by the Ministry of Culture to its board, and offers numerous training courses and school events that focus on how peace can be achieved and safety ensured.

Another example of such nationwide initiatives is the Ulli Thiel Peace Prize in Baden-Württemberg,²⁷⁰ in which many school classes have been participating over the past years.

²⁶⁵ <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/personal/faktencheck/kdv-antraege-5647366>

²⁶⁶ <https://www.das-parlament.de/inland/verteidigung/die-bundeswehr-in-zahlen#:~:text=Im%20vergangenen%20Jahr%20begannen%2020.250,und%202023:%2018.740%20Personen>

²⁶⁷ "Conscientious objection: 'Shamefully low number' – Germany rejects the majority of asylum applications from young Russians - WELT, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article256112618/Kriegsdienstverweigerung-Beschaemend-niedrige-Zahl-Deutschland-lehnt-Grossteil-der-Asylantraege-junger-Russen-ab.html>

²⁶⁸ <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/wehrdienst-bundeswehr-verdoppelt-ihre-besuche-an-schulen-in-kuerzester-zeit-a-ea5285d6-b8db-483a-a91a-7e6b8231124b>

²⁶⁹ <https://www.friedensbildung-bw.de>

²⁷⁰ <https://www.ulli-thiel-friedenspreis.de>



2.19. GREECE

[See country page on EBCO website]

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1997	Law No. 2510/97	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	12 months	15 months (125%–167%)	
	9 months in some cases depending on unit, location, or age	There is a complicated tariff of shorter service periods depending on family circumstances	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ²⁷¹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	8,388m (+5.6%)	\$842	3.0%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative service is punitive and discriminatory, inter alia, in terms of longer duration, discriminatory geographical restrictions, compensation being below the poverty threshold, and remains under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence.
- Conscientious objectors are subjected to inquiry and are discriminated against when applying on ideological grounds. The process has yet to be placed under the full control of civilian authorities.
- Punishment of certain categories of conscientious objectors continues, in violation of international law.

Such punishment may also be repeated in violation of *ne bis in idem*.

- Non-compliance to the UN Human Rights Committee decision on Petromelidis v. Greece.

As reported by Georgios Karatzas:

Developments

Regressions in legislation

Following some public consultation which was largely ignored,²⁷² and discussions in the Parliament since December 2025,²⁷³ on 10 January 2026, Law 5265/2026 was enacted which replaces a wide range of military legislation. Most of the provisions about conscientious objectors remain unchanged, (which means no progress and compliance with the Human Rights Committee recommendations²⁷⁴), but there is also some **deterioration**.²⁷⁵

Increase in buy out amount while discrimination against COs remains

The amount of money required to buy out the rest of military or alternative service obligations (after serving a minimum of 20 days) for those above 40 years of age (previously set to 33 years) was increased significantly from 810 to 1500 euros per month of service. **This is discriminatory for people of lower income, but it also deepens further the discrimination against conscientious objectors**, which had been previously highlighted, inter alia, by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.²⁷⁶ As conscientious objectors are required to buy out months of alternative service which is usually 3 months longer, they were previously required to pay (up to) $3 \times 810 = 2,430$ euros more than conscripts buying out military service. According to the new law, from 2031, they will be required to pay (up to) $3 \times 1500 = 4,500$ euros more than conscripts²⁷⁷, for buying out the same obligation.

Limitation on administrative appeal deferments for CO applications

The provision stipulating that in case of administrative appeal of an applicant against the rejection of their

²⁷¹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

²⁷² 20 November – 5 December 2025. <https://www.opengov.gr/mindefence/?p=7457>

²⁷³ https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou?law_id=8496c10a-135a-435f-94f4-b3b400ba9834

²⁷⁴ UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Greece, (CCPR/C/GRC/CO/3), 28 November 2024, paras. 28-29. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/ccpr/C/GRC/CO/3>

²⁷⁵ This part is largely based on the submission of the Association of Greek Conscientious Objectors (AGCO) to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the quadrennial analytical report on conscientious objection to military service. <https://antirrisies.gr/2026-01-15-ypomnima-tetraeti-ekthesi-ohe-antirrisi-syneidisis/>

²⁷⁶ OL GRC 3/2019, 11 July 2019, p. 3. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=24700>

²⁷⁷ Law 5265/2026, art. 223 and art. 230.

²⁷⁸ Law 5265/2026, art. 228, para. 4.



application for CO status, a deferment is necessarily granted (until the decision on the administrative appeal is issued), was amended and such deferment now can only be granted **once**.²⁷⁸

Mandatory disclosure of CO status in certificates of military status

Concerning the certificate of military status, despite a previous decision of the Hellenic Data Protection Authority²⁷⁹ [see “Protection from discrimination and personal data” in War Resisters International’s previous submission²⁸⁰], which was even highlighted by the Greek Ombudsman²⁸¹ and the Scientific Service of the Greek Parliament,²⁸² the new law provides that the certificate will indicate that someone has served alternative service,²⁸³ i.e., that they are a conscientious objector, thus rendering them vulnerable to discrimination, especially in terms of employment.

Removal of protections from (repeated) prosecutions of COs

A previous provision²⁸⁴ stipulating that those convicted for refusing military service after serving a prison term equal to, or greater than, the duration of alternative service are exempted from further call-ups for military service was **abolished**.²⁸⁵ This is a **reform completely opposite to the recommendations to stop repeated prosecutions and punishment of conscientious objectors in violation of the *ne bis in idem* principle**, that went ahead despite the intervention of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights.²⁸⁶

Another provision for cessation of prosecutions, expungement of criminal records and lifting legal repercussions for those declared insubordinate who subsequently transition to an exemption status (e.g. due to disability, as fathers of three or more children) was similarly **abolished**.²⁸⁷

In general, the new stricter provisions, *inter alia*, for those declared insubordinate, those residing abroad, medical

exemptions on psychiatric grounds etc., could indirectly affect many conscientious objectors to military service.

Prohibition of second application incorporated in the legislation

A provision which essentially prohibits a second (or further) similar application for conscientious objector status has been incorporated in the new legislation. The provision stipulates that an application for recognition as conscientious objector similar to a previous one which has been already rejected on the merits, is not accepted.²⁸⁸ It is equivalent to a provision which was previously included in a decision of the Minister of National Defence arranging the details about alternative civilian service.²⁸⁹ Such provision meant in practice that second applications were being rejected by the recruiting authorities themselves without even being forwarded to the (anyway problematic) Special Committee, which is competent to examine applications and recommend to the Minister of National Defence about granting or not CO status.

In previous years, the Council of State, Greece’s Supreme Administrative Court, has ruled in favour of individuals whose second applications have been rejected without being examined on the merits, (i.e., without being examined by the Special Committee and the Minister of National Defence), on the basis that the (previous) legislation was not authorising the Minister of National Defence to issue such a provision rejecting (*a priori*) second applications.²⁹⁰ Therefore, the fact that the relevant provision is now incorporated in the main legislation, voted in the Parliament, possibly reflects an attempt to circumvent the decisions of the Council of State, and “legitimise” the rejection of second applications by the recruiting authorities. This possibly constitutes a serious negative development insofar *military* authorities could be considered to be now “lawfully” authorised to reject second applications. The least that someone would expect would be for the second applications to be

²⁷⁹ Hellenic Data Protection Authority, Decision 3/2022, 13 January 2022, Available in Greek at: https://www.dpa.gr/sites/default/files/2022-01/3_2022%20anonym.pdf

²⁸⁰ War Resisters’ International, Conscientious Objection to Military Service 2017-2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/WRI-HRC50.pdf>, 22 March 2022, p. 2.

²⁸¹ Greek Ombudsman, Comments on the draft law, p. 6. Available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/el/category/default/post/parathrhseis-or-sxedio-nomoy-xarths-metabashs-twn-enoplwn-dynamewn-sth-nea-epoxh>

²⁸² Scientific Service of the Greek Parliament, Report on the draft law, p. 38, para. 26. Available in Greek at: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/7b24652e-78eb-4807-9d68-e9a5d4576eff/13166405.pdf>

²⁸³ Law 5265/2026, art. 238, paras. 3-4.

²⁸⁴ Law 3421/2025, art. 65, para. 1.

²⁸⁵ Law 5265/2026, art. 243.

²⁸⁶ Greek National Commission for Human Rights, Comments on the draft law, p. 11. Available in Greek at: https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/antirisisis_suneidisis/_19122025.pdf

²⁸⁷ Law 5265/2026, art. 181, para. 4. Compare to Law 3421/2005, art. 13, para. 9.

²⁸⁸ Law 5265/2026, art. 225, para. 4.

²⁸⁹ Decision of the Minister of National Defence Φ.420/79/81978/Σ.300 (Government Gazette vol. B’ 1854/29.12.2005), article 1, para. 3.

²⁹⁰ E.g. Decisions of the Council of State A3505/2014, A880/2017.



examined by the body competent to examine applications (even if this, for the time being, is problematic in Greece) in order to examine whether new elements are included which could render a second application different, and therefore admissible and perhaps worthy to be accepted.

Other changes

Registration for those liable for military service is, in essence, moved to 17 years of age (previously 18), i.e. minors will be registered.²⁹¹

Voluntary military service for women is introduced,²⁹² but without possibility for conscientious objection.

Reserve duties, previously until 45 years of age, are now extended to 60 years of age.²⁹³

A previously criticised provision that punished those performing alternative service with additional service time whenever they engaged in “union activities” was abolished. Participation in strikes still results in extended service time.²⁹⁴

Trial and sentencing of a total objector by military court

According to information from his lawyer, a total objector, V. M., was summoned to trial by the Military Court of Athens, in June 2025. In this case, the total objector was charged twice for insubordination, corresponding to two periods of insubordination later merged in one trial, related to his same and constant refusal to perform both the military and the (punitive) alternative civilian service.

This case illustrates several violations of human rights of conscientious objectors, including: violation of the right to conscientious objection to military service, for refusing to perform a punitive alternative civilian service; trials of conscientious objectors, including total objectors, by Greek military courts, in violation of the right to fair trial; repeated trials and punishment for the same “offence” in violation of the *ne bis in idem* principle; (and even arrests of conscientious objectors, including total objectors, in violation of the right to liberty, as it had previously happened in this case too).

The trial was postponed and finally took place in January 2026 when the total objector was sentenced to a **suspended sentence of 16 months of imprisonment** in total (combined, for both periods of insubordination).

Arrests of civilians for insubordination

According to official police reports,²⁹⁵ in 2025, police continued to arrest civilians for insubordination, i.e. for draft evasion. It appears that most such arrests were random, in the context of broader police operations. In one case, a person was arrested while entering the country.²⁹⁶ It is worth noting though that an arrest for insubordination has been reported also by the Hellenic Coast Guard. A 32-year-old Greek citizen was arrested in the port of Patras during checks before the departure of a passengers ship to Italy, when it was discovered that the administrative measure of prohibition from leaving the country had been imposed to him.²⁹⁷

News report about imprisonment for insubordination in time of peace

In February 2025, the news website of a local journalist in the city of Larissa published a report about the sentencing of a 34-year-old resident of the prefecture of Larissa to a prison sentence of 18 months for insubordination in time of peace, which was not a suspended one, and without even the appeal having a suspending effect, resulting in his arrest and transfer to the prison of Larissa. The article noted that the judgement was heavily discussed even among policemen and that people working on such issues considered it very harsh, creating a new situation.²⁹⁸ The exact circumstances of the case are not known to EBCO.

Conscientious objector unable to continue the punitive alternative service lodges petition to the Supreme Administrative Court

In a case which began in 2025 and continues in 2026, Zacharias Piazas an officially recognised conscientious objector to military service initiated the (punitive and discriminatory) alternative civilian service in an institution for chronic medical conditions in Thessaloniki, away from the region of his permanent residence, but soon found himself forced to temporarily depart because of the harsh financial conditions. The institution informed the military authorities which summoned the conscientious objector to provide explanation for his absence – a standard procedure before the revocation of conscientious objector status. In his written replies, the conscientious objector explained how the institution did not provide him housing and minimum resources for covering his

²⁹¹ Law 5265/2026, art. 178, para. 1.

²⁹² Law 5265/2026, arts. 269-277.

²⁹³ Law 5265/2026, art. 216, para. 2.

²⁹⁴ Law 5265/2026, art. 229, para. 8.



basic living needs, which meant that he had to find housing by himself, which proved to be impossible. As EBCO has repeatedly pointed out, conscientious objectors performing alternative civilian service in Greece are either provided with food and housing inside the institutions in which they are appointed to, without receiving any money whatsoever, or they are entitled to receive an amount of money (223.53 euros per month, unchanged since 2005) which is well below the threshold of poverty, and with which they have to cover all their needs and expenses, including housing. This situation has become even more unbearable in the midst of a housing and cost of living crisis in recent years.

It is worth noting also that the conscientious objector has been recently unemployed and that the relevant state agency (Public Employment Service – DYPA) informed him that since the date of initiation of alternative civilian service he is considered unable to search for employment, and therefore he lost the status of unemployed person and was removed from the Record of Unemployed Persons.

In his written replies to the military authorities, the conscientious objector explained that his temporary departure is not a refusal to perform the alternative civilian service, neither a disciplinary disobedience, but rather a matter of factual inability. He also claimed that failing to ensure minimum conditions of living for conscientious objectors during alternative service, contrary to the provisions for conscripts performing military service, constitutes discrimination on grounds of belief. Furthermore, he challenged the competence of the military authorities to summon him, arguing that conscientious objectors should not fall under the jurisdiction of the military, and it's rather the institution an objector is appointed to which is responsible for any disciplinary offences.

A complaint (petition for annulment) to the Council of State (Greece's Supreme Administrative Court) is pending by the time this report is published. In this complaint, the conscientious objector describes the punitive and discriminatory conditions of alternative civilian service in Greece and claims, *inter alia*, violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to freedom from discrimination.

It is worth noting that both in the written replies to the military authorities, as well as in the complaint to the Council of State, the conscientious objector makes reference to EBCO's pending complaint to the European Committee of Social Rights,²⁹⁹ and its argumentation.

Problematic decision of the ECtHR in a case of a conscientious objector on religious grounds

In November 2025, the third section of the European Court of Human Rights issued a decision on the case of *Tsiliggros v. Greece*,³⁰⁰ declaring the application inadmissible. The case concerns a monk of the religious community of the True Orthodox Christians – Old Calendarists of Lamia, who can be considered as a conscientious objector on religious grounds, insofar he claimed, *inter alia*, that “military service would have prevented him [...] from following the sacred laws and traditions of his community and his vows as a monk, which required him to refrain from joining the military and carrying a weapon” (para. 13). He didn't apply for alternative civilian service, but rather for an exemption as a monk, (equivalently to monks belonging to Mount Athos), but his request was rejected by the Conscription Service of Western Greece on the grounds that, under domestic law, only monks belonging to Mount Athos were exempt from military service. He initially faced criminal charges and a fine for desertion, but later (after he had lodged the complaint to the ECtHR) the fine was annulled,

²⁹⁵ E.g. reports of [22 March 2025](#), [28 March 2025](#), [16 April 2025](#), [26 April 2025](#), [3 June 2025](#), [13 June 2025](#), [17 July 2025](#), [5 August 2025](#), [6 August 2025](#), [4 September 2025](#), [11 October 2025](#), [17 October 2025](#), [18 October 2025](#), [1 November 2025](#), [29 November 2025](#), [30 December 2025](#).

²⁹⁶ Report of [19 April 2025](#).

²⁹⁷ <https://www.hcg.gr/el/epikairothta/synexeia-enhmerwshs-anaforika-me-thn-ptwsh-epibatidas-eg-og-ploioy-sth-8alassia-perioxh-toy-sarwnikoy-kolpoy-thn-12032025-by8ish-ak-skafoys-sthn-kalymno-syllhpsh-hmedapoy-sthn-patra-diakomides-as8enwn/>

See also relevant article in Greek, dated 14 March 2025, on the website of the local newspaper Peloponnisos: <https://pelop.gr/synelifthi-anypotaktos-stin-patra-prospathise-na-taxidefsei-sto-exoteriko/>

²⁹⁸ “Σκληρή απόφαση: Στη φυλακή 34χρονος για ανυποταξία σε καιρό ειρήνης” [“Harsh decision: A 34-year-old in prison for insubordination in time of peace”], *paidis.com*, 12 February 2025. Available in Greek at: <https://paidis.com/%cf%83%ce%ba%ce%bb%ce%b7%cf%81%ce%ae-%ce%b1%cf%80%cf%8c%cf%86%ce%b1%cf%83%ce%b7-%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b7-%cf%86%cf%85%ce%bb%ce%b1%ce%ba%ce%ae-34%cf%87%cf%81%ce%bf%ce%bd%ce%bf%cf%82-%ce%b3%ce%b9%ce%b1/>

The article was reproduced also on another local news website: <https://www.onlarissa.gr/2025/02/13/sti-fylaki-34chronos-larisaiois-gia-anypotaxia-se-kairo-eirinis/>

²⁹⁹ ECSR, Complaint No. 242/2024 European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) v. Greece. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/-/no.-242/2024-european-bureau-for-conscientious-objection-ebco-v-greece>

³⁰⁰ ECtHR, *Tsiliggros v. Greece*, Application no. 51957/15, Decision of 4 November 2025. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-247535>



the criminal charges against him were dropped and he was finally exempted for medical reasons.

It appears that the Court rejected the complaint mainly because of the special legal status of Mount Athos (para. 26). It is particularly concerning that the Court avoided to examine on the merits an important argument of the applicant, (i.e. that a legislative amendment which extended the exemption from military service to monks and novitiates belonging to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem revealed that the instituted exemptions had not been justified on the basis of the special legal status of Mount Athos but rather constituted special privileges to certain religious communities) (para. 21), by rejecting it for reasons of admissibility, i.e. non-exhaustion of domestic remedies (paras. 22-23). It is also concerning that the Court took into consideration that “Articles 59-65 of Law no. 3421/2005 provide for a system of alternative service for conscientious objectors to military service, including for reasons relating to religious beliefs. However, although the applicant’s submissions further touched upon the issue of conscientious objection, he did not seek to avail himself of that option under national law” (para. 17), but the Court did not take into consideration that such alternative service is punitive and discriminatory, including according to the Human Rights Committee. While it is true that it does not appear that the applicant has raised this specific argument, nevertheless, insofar it is the Court itself which invokes the existence of alternative service, it should have examined whether this is genuinely an option or just a mere punishment for conscientious objectors.

Finally, it is also generally concerning that the Court essentially decided on a conscientious objector’s case on the merits but pretended to decide on admissibility, finding most parts of the complaint “manifestly ill-founded”.

By this decision, the Court failed to address an obvious discrimination between different groups of monks in Greece.

The decision is also negative, in the sense that a different one would have given the opportunity for more exemptions of monks from compulsory military service. However, given the fact that it was based mainly on the special legal status of a particular area, it is not necessary that it will have major repercussions to other aspects

concerning conscientious objectors in Greece, and much less in other countries.

ECSR unanimously considers admissible EBCO’s complaint

See the relevant paragraph in the Council of Europe chapter.

Council of State annuls rejection of application for CO status

In a case which has been supported by EBCO and other international organisations,³⁰¹ according to information from his lawyer, in January 2026, the Council of State, Greece’s Supreme Administrative Court, accepted the appeal and annulled the decision of rejection of the 2022 application for conscientious objector status of Thomas Katsaros. However, this merely means that most certainly his application will have to be examined again in the same problematic system which has been criticised, *inter alia*, by the Human Rights Committee.

International organisations express serious concerns about composition of the Special Committee examining applications

In May 2025, four international organisations, Connection e.V., Conscience and Peace Tax International, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection and War Resisters’ International, after noting Greece’s failure to implement the recommendation of the UN Human Rights Committee that it “should also consider placing the assessment of applications for conscientious objector status under the full control of civilian authorities”, further expressed “extreme disquiet at the revision of Special Committee’s membership in December 2024, which calls further into question the independence and impartiality of the Committee, rendering suspect any rejections which it issues.” The four organisations highlighted that (a) a recently retired military officer was appointed as one of the “civilian” members of the Special Committee, (b) the Chair of the Special Committee before her first appointment as regular Chair she had represented the Ministry of Defence in a legal case against a conscientious objector before the Council of

³⁰¹“Greece: Give Thomas Katsaros a fair examination of his grounds for conscientious objection”, Joint Public Statement, Amnesty International, Connection e.V., War Resisters’ International, International Fellowship of Reconciliation and European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, 3 March 2023, (Index: EUR 25/6508/2023). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/6508/2023/en/>

See also: EBCO annual report 2022-23, p. 42. https://ebco-beoc.org/sites/ebco-beoc.org/files/attachments/2023-05-12-EBCO_Annual_Report_2022-23.pdf

³⁰²<https://ebco-beoc.org/press-release/2025-05-21-joint-statement-examination-conscientious-objectors-greece>



State, the supreme administrative court (which found for the objector)³⁰².

Conscientious objector refusing punitive alternative civilian service declared insubordinate

A conscientious objector to military service, Loren Pashollari, has published a declaration³⁰³ stating his refusal, on grounds of conscience, to perform military service but also the (punitive and discriminatory) alternative civilian service, considering it a punishment and coercion. He also rejected the idea of pretending to have a medical condition in order to seek medical exemption, as well as the scheme of buying out (alternative or military service for those above 33 years of age), refusing to pay money in order to avoid violation of his human rights. According to information received by EBCO, he has been declared insubordinate and consequently has been prohibited from leaving the country and the Greek authorities refused to issue him a passport. In addition to the above, an administrative fine of 6,000 euros has been imposed to him for insubordination, which is increased every month that it is not paid. Furthermore, the conscientious objector denounces a number of due process violations in his case, but his relevant complaints have been so far rejected by the domestic authorities.

His case illustrates the numerous violations of human rights suffered by conscientious objectors in Greece, including, *inter alia*, the right to conscientious objection to military service inherent to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to freedom from discrimination and the right to freedom of movement which includes the right to leave any country including their own.

Greek Ministry of National Defence continues to disregard both international law, standards and recommendations as well as domestic court judgements

In its response to an EBCO questionnaire, dated 8 December 2025,³⁰⁴ the Ministry of National Defence (MoND), despite obvious efforts to portray the situation

in Greece as in conformity with international human rights law, in fact it rather continues to show contempt both for international human rights law and standards, as reflected in the recommendations of international bodies, as well as for judgements of domestic courts. For example, the MoND claims that the alternative service is not punitive, contrary to the findings of the Human Rights Committee.³⁰⁵

The MoND continues to conflate the possibility for the professional members of the armed forces to resign for whatever reasons, which in certain cases, though, entails serious financial consequences for those resigning, as they have to pay heavy compensations to the state,³⁰⁶ with the right to conscientious objection for professional members of the armed forces, which should not entail any consequence whatsoever.

As for the assessment of applications for conscientious objector status, the MoND continues to disregard the judgements of the Council of State. (Greece's Supreme Administrative Court). The MoND once more stated:

"The usual reason for which applications for eligibility for conscientious objector status and to perform alternative service are rejected is, mostly, because those interested do not support some **specific ideology**, which impedes them from performing armed military service, nor they associate their internal esprit with **activities** corresponding to their beliefs in order to be recognized as conscientious objectors and to perform alternative service. Specifically, the inability to perform military service on ideological or religious grounds is not proven, they just express their wish to perform alternative service".³⁰⁷ (emphasis added)

However, the Council of State, in its judgements 2263/2023 and 2264/2023 has ruled that: a) it is not necessary for the conscientious objection to derive from affiliation to a specific religious or other system, b) it is not necessary to be combined with relevant activity or specific actions.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Available in Greek at: <https://antirrisies.gr/loren-pasolari/>

³⁰⁴ Ministry of National Defence, "Conscientious Objectors", (Φ.429/9/161525 Σ. 23277), 8 December 2025.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. para. 2.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. para. 1(στ)-(f).

³⁰⁷ Ibid. para. 1(ε)-(e).

³⁰⁸ See EBCO Annual Report, "Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2023/24", p. 87. Available at: https://ebco-beoc.org/sites/ebco-beoc.org/files/2024-05-15-EBCO_Annual_Report_2023-24.pdf



CO status statistics

According to the official data provided to EBCO by the Greek Ministry of National Defence:³⁰⁹

Statistics of applications for conscientious objector status in 2025 (until 8 December 2025)

Category	Examined	Approved	Rejected
Ideological beliefs	2	1	1
Religious beliefs	114	113	1
TOTAL	116	114	2

Statistics of administrative appeals on applications for CO status in 2025 (until 8 December 2025)

Category	Examined	Approved	Rejected
Ideological beliefs	1	1	0
Religious beliefs	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	1	1

Furthermore, the MoND has stated that in the decade 2015-2025 there were 4 applications of reservists for conscientious objector status which were all approved.³¹⁰ It appears that all 4 were registered in 2024, therefore, there was no application in 2025.

Article reveals granting of asylum to persons evading conscription in Syria and Eritrea

In the summer of 2025, an article in a law journal by Stamatia Kalogirou, a judge and member of the 20th (formerly 21st) Independent Appeal Committee of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum, revealed that, in recent years, refugee status was granted in Greece to persons from Syria (in the era of the previous regime) and Eritrea evading conscription in these countries. The relevant part of the article, in a rough translation, reads as follows:

“Furthermore, men and boys of age eligible for conscription in Syria, as well as persons who have evaded the military service or the deserters constitute a particular social group. To the above-mentioned group belong also persons who evade enlistment in the Syrian governmental forces as reservists, to which, first of all, an opposition to the regime can be attributed and they can be subjected, in case of return to Syria, to a particularly great risk of cruel ill-treatment, especially if they have resided for a certain period of time in areas which were under the control of the opposition. Furthermore, the above persons, in case of their return, there is a strong possibility, in the context of fulfilling their duties as members of the Syrian armed forces, to be forced, to be ordered to shoot civilians and protesters, including women and children, while a possible refusal to obey such orders can lead to detention, beatings, torture or even their killing.³¹¹ For these reasons it has been found that the compulsory conscription of these persons would entail their coercion to committing war crimes, such as violence to life and person, of persons taking no active part in the hostilities, (article 3 § 1 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which has been ratified by law 3481/1955 Government Gazette Issue (FEK) A' 3), therefore, these persons can be included in the particular social group of persons who refuse the compulsory conscription, with all the consequences deriving from their membership in it.³¹² The family members of the persons who have evaded compulsory conscription belong also to a particular social group.³¹³ Finally, for the same above-described reasons it has been found that men of Eritrean origin who refuse to be conscripted and fight constitute particular social group.^{314/315}

³⁰⁹Ministry of National Defence, “Conscientious Objectors”, (Φ.429/9/161525 Σ. 23277), 8 December 2025, Annexes A and B.

³¹⁰Ibid. para. 1(ζ)-(g)

³¹¹[Note in the original] See the preamble of the new [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1347](#) (§38), where it is cited that “Acts of persecution might take the form of disproportionate or discriminatory prosecution or punishment. Such disproportionate or discriminatory prosecution or punishment might arise, inter alia, in situations where an applicant refuses to perform military service on moral, religious or political grounds or due to belonging to a particular ethnic group or holding a particular citizenship.”

³¹²[Note in the original] See decisions 579200/17.9.2024 and 161222/8.3.2024 of the 21st Committee.

³¹³[Note in the original] See decisions 190425/26.3.2024, 64617/30.1.2024 of the 21st Committee.

³¹⁴[Note in the original] See decision IP/68269/31.1.2024 of the 21st Committee.

³¹⁵Stamatia Kalogirou, “Η ένταξη σε ιδιαίτερη κοινωνική ομάδα ως λόγος χορήγησης προσφυγικού καθεστώτος στη νομολογία των ελληνικών διοικητικών δικαστηρίων και των Ανεξάρτητων Επιτροπών της Αρχής Προσφυγών” [“Membership to a particular social group as ground for granting refugee status in the jurisprudence of the Greek administrative courts and the Independent Committees of the Appeals Authority”], *Διοικητική Δίκη [Administrative Trial]*, vol. 4/2025(37), July/August 2025, pp. 574-575.



Greek Ombudsman insists on his objections concerning the current regime for conscientious objectors

In the replies to EBCO's questionnaire, the Greek Ombudsman referred to his extensive comments concerning the bill, which was subsequently adopted as Law 5265/2026. In these comments,³¹⁶ the Ombudsman referred, *inter alia*, to longstanding suggestions concerning the **duration of alternative service** (noting a European Parliament's decision about equal duration between military and alternative service³¹⁷), the **supervising authority** (i.e., which should be independent from the military), the **procedure** for granting CO status, the **disqualifying conditions**, the **nature of duties** for those performing alternative service, and the **procedure for revocation** of CO status. But most importantly the Ombudsman criticised the introduction in the legislation of the **prohibition for second application**, as well as the provisions for the **certificates of military status**, suggesting that such certificates should rather include only the information of whether someone (still) has or has not military duties, and referring to decisions of the Hellenic Data Protection Authority.

In the replies to EBCO's questionnaire, the Greek Ombudsman reiterated his objections concerning the current regime for conscientious objectors in Greece. Such objections include the **procedure** for granting conscientious objector status (Annual Report 2013: "Personal interview as a mean to ascertain reasons of conscience is controversial per se insofar it submits an internal esprit to an examination of sincerity. [...] They are required to reply to questions concerning sensitive personal data."), as well as the **sanctions for insubordination**, especially the **disproportionate** amount of money of the **administrative fine**, its **repeated** imposition, as well as the fact that conscientious objectors are summoned to **trials before military courts**.

2.20. HUNGARY

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2005 by constitutional amendment. Could be reinstated in time of emergency (see below).		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1989	Constitution, Article 70.		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No release during state of emergency.		
Minimum recruitment age	18			
Military expenditure ³¹⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	5,002m (-2.4%)	\$518	2.0%	

Principal EBCO concerns

- No release of professional soldiers, on grounds of conscience, including during a state of emergency.
- No full guarantee of international protection for conscientious objectors to military service who are at risk of persecution in their country of origin.
- Militarisation of education³¹⁹ and no updated information on the implementation of the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to "ensure that children are not subjected to military training that involves the use of firearms".³²⁰

³¹⁶Greek Ombudsman, Comments on the draft law, pp. 5-6. Available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/el/category/default/post/parathrhseis-or-sxedio-nomoy-xarths-metabashs-twn-enoplwn-dynamewn-sth-nea-epoxh>

³¹⁷https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-5-2003-0012_EN.html (§ 42)

³¹⁸Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³¹⁹<https://ebco-beoc.org/hungary/2023>

³²⁰CRC/C/HUN/CO/6, 3 March 2020, para. 43(b). <https://docs.un.org/en/CRC/C/HUN/CO/6>



2.21. ICELAND

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	No regular armed forces despite NATO membership and base. Paramilitary coastguard of approx. 250
Conscientious objection first recognised		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	
Minimum recruitment age		

2.22. IRELAND

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Has never existed. Could be imposed in emergency under Article 54 of the 1954 Defence Act.	
Conscientious objection first recognised		No provision ever made, but has co-sponsored CO resolutions in the UN Human Rights Council.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	“Discharge by purchase” possible, but not during state of emergency.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³²¹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,551m (+9.8%)	\$272	0.2%

2.23. ITALY

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended under Law 226/2004. Last conscripts demobilised 2005.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1972	Act No. 772/1972	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³²²	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	48,144m (+20.1%)	\$812	1.9%

2.24. KOSOVO

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No		
Conscientious objection first recognised		Voluntary paramilitary service since independence. CO provisions never introduced.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No provisions.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³²³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	235m (+31.1%)	\$140	1.8%

³²¹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³²² Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³²³ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.25. LATVIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	Suspended 2006. Reinstated 2024 under National Defence Service Law of 25th April 2023.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1990	Law on Substitute Service of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic Law on Alternative Service, 2002	
Current provisions		National Defence Service Law of 25th April 2023.	
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	11 months	11 months (100%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provision. No release during state of emergency.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³²⁴	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,732m (+11.1%)	\$929	3.6%

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection during military service or for military personnel.

Based on replies by the Ministry of Defence of Latvia to EBCO’s questionnaire:

Developments

The Ministry reports that there are “informal discussions” about expanding the civilian institutions where the alternative service can be performed.

Conscription provisions and procedures

Conscription was reintroduced in 2023 and became compulsory on 1 January 2024.³²⁵

Most servicemen are males between the ages 18 and 19. The statistics are following:

- 2023: 253 persons (all volunteers);
- 2024: 561 persons (498 volunteers / 63 conscripts);
- 2025: 949 persons (773 volunteers / 176 conscripts).

There is no possibility in the National Defence Service to sign up for a second period. However, after 6 months of service, soldiers can sign up for the professional military service.

Reserve service

Each year, a selected number of reserve soldiers are called up for a two-week reserve soldier’s exercise. Although the exercise is considered mandatory, reserve soldiers will not face any sanctions if they fail to attend these exercises. At the same time, all Latvian adult citizens may voluntarily apply for a three-week reserve soldier’s exercise and learn the necessary skills for state defence.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

In 2024 the Conscription Control Commission received and approved 1 application for alternative service. However, the applicant was later fully exempted from the performance of alternative service duties due to health conditions.

In 2025, 3 applications were submitted for alternative service. Two of the applications were rejected as “unfounded”, one because “during the application review meeting, the applicant expressed dissatisfaction with the sudden change of his life plans rather than with the pacifistic beliefs mentioned in the application” and the other because “the applicant had misconceptions that people with Christian faith could not perform military service, moreover, it became clear that the applicant had not developed a strong religious conviction.”

The remaining one application is still under consideration, as not all required information has been received. None of these decisions were appealed in court.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for servicemen after they are conscripted or for military personnel to be released.

The Ministry reports that no such cases have been recorded.

³²⁴ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³²⁵ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the provisions for the military service: <https://ebco-beoc.org/latvia/2024>



2.26. LIECHTENSTEIN

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription never imposed. No armed forces.

2.27. LITHUANIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	Suspended 2009. Reinstated 2015.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1990	Law on Substitute Service of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic Constitution, 1992, Article 139 Law on National Conscription, 1996	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	9 months	12 months (133%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions, but grounds of conscience would be considered valid. Refusal could be appealed to court.	
Minimum recruitment age	18	Conscription from 19	
Military expenditure ³²⁶	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	2,952m (+1.7%)	\$1,035	3.1%

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for reservists, conscripts or military personnel during or after their service.
- Asylum applications of foreign nationals claiming fear of persecution due to their conscientious objection in countries like Belarus or Russia are rejected.

Based on replies by the Parliamentary Ombudsperson’s Office of Lithuania, EBCO’s Lithuanian member, Our House Lithuania,³²⁷ and public information:

Developments

Amendments to legislation on alternative service were adopted in 2025 and entered into force on 1 January 2026:

- **Civilian model:** According to the government, a civilian model has been implemented where the alternative service has become of “genuinely civilian nature

³²⁶Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³²⁷More info about the organisation at: <https://news.house>



independent from control and supervision of the military”.³²⁸ The administration of alternative service has indeed been transferred to a civilian institution (Agency of Youth Affairs), the previous terminology of “conscripts” changed to “draftees to perform alternative national defence service”, and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour was empowered by law to issue further Resolutions for the implementation of the alternative service.

- **Health checks:** Draftees to alternative service are no longer required to meet military health requirements and be examined by military committees. Only health requirements as in other spheres of employment apply and are to be checked in public healthcare.
- **Inclusion of NGOs:** Service can now also be performed in public benefit non-governmental organisations, in addition to state and municipal institutions. Representatives of NGOs participate in the committee deciding on alternative service applications.
- **Increased duration:** From 10 to 12 months.

The amendments also included changes to the military service which:^{329,330}

- provide for conscription to compulsory initial military service of young people immediately after school (18–22 years), with medical examination and military registration at the age of 17;
- revise age limits and deferment conditions for conscription, including for students;
- extend the age limit for voluntary service up to 39 years;

The need to reform the alternative service system and to recognise conscientious objection were previously highlighted in judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the cases of *Teliatnikov* and *Rutkauskas*, with the court issuing its decision on the latter in August 2025 (see the Council of Europe chapter for details).

Conscription provisions and procedures

Initial military service is compulsory, reinstated in 2015, and governed by Law “On the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service”³³¹ which regulates:

- the types of military service
- the procedure for fulfilling military service obligations,
- the specifics of civil service.

Criminal law consequences for evasion are established in articles 314–316 of the Criminal Code.³³²

Men of age 18–23 are liable for conscription³³³ with lists being formed annually with a lottery system that picks a subset of those eligible;³³⁴ in certain cases, obligations may remain until the age of 26, including due to deferments related to education.³³⁵ Those who do not report for duty, as well as conscripts who have acquired professions (qualifications) that are in short supply in the Lithuanian army, will be called up until they reach the age of 31.

The typical duration is 9 months (76% of conscripts liable in 2026). A duration of 3 months is offered to conscripts with “qualifications that are lacking in the Armed Forces” (2% of conscripts in 2026). Students at higher education institutions can serve under junior officer leader training programmes, which last 160–200 days split in parts across a time span no longer than 3 years (13% of conscripts in 2026). Conscripts can also serve under basic military training or military specialty qualification programmes, lasting 90–120 days and similarly split in parts across a time span no longer than 3 years (9% of conscripts in 2026).³³⁶

Reserve service

There are two types of reserve service: active reserve service and other reserve service.

The duration of active reserve service is 15 years from the date of assignment to the active reserve. Conscripts assigned to the active reserve (up to the age of 65)³³⁷

³²⁸ Communication from Lithuania concerning the group of cases of *Teliatnikov v. Lithuania* (Application No. 51914/19), DH-DD(2026)208, 06/02/2026. Available through: <https://search.coe.int/cm?i=09125948802a909d>

³²⁹ Nine key changes coming into effect in Lithuania in 2026, LRT, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2794135/nine-key-changes-coming-into-effect-in-lithuania-in-2026>

³³⁰ Lithuanian military publishes this year’s conscription list, LRT, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2457222/lithuanian-military-publishes-this-year-s-conscription-list>

³³¹ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/TAR.E9CE9C91C255/WSNKNUOrjQ>

³³² <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/TAR.2B866DFF7D43/asr>

³³³ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2457222/lithuanian-military-publishes-this-year-s-conscription-list>

³³⁴ <https://www.karys.lt/en/military-service/conscript-service/conscripts/400>

³³⁵ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2296482/lithuanian-parliament-adopts-conscription-reform>

³³⁶ <https://www.karys.lt/en/communicate/news/list-of-conscripts-for-this-year-published-on-karys.lt/765>

³³⁷ <https://www.karys.lt/en/military-service/conscript-service/active-reserve/403>



participate in training or exercises for 20 to 90 days and perform military service during mobilisation and wartime.

Other reserve service may last up to 14 days per year and involves participation in training or exercises, or military service during mobilisation and wartime.

Draft evasion/refusal

Latest data from 2023 shows 14,000 fines applied for “evasion/violations of military service obligations”, more than 450 pre-trial investigations, and 5 conscripts having faced criminal liability.³³⁸

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Following the legislative amendments, secondary legal acts to implement the reform of the alternative service are expected from the Ministry of Social Security and Labor with a first draft being shared at the end of 2025.³³⁹

Application procedure

Applications for civil service must be sent before the deadline specified in the annual conscription list to the regional unit of the Military Conscription and Recruitment Service, setting out the reasons for refusal which must be based on “religious or pacifist beliefs that prevent the person from performing service involving the use of weapons, special means, or coercion”³⁴⁰ accompanied with supporting information. Decisions are taken by the Commission for the Examination of Applications by Conscripts for Alternative National Defence Service,³⁴¹ comprising representatives of religious communities, higher education and science institutions, and non-governmental organisations.³⁴² No data is available on statistics and grounds of rejections.

The Commission's decisions may be reviewed administratively upon receipt of additional information about new circumstances that may affect the decision. Challenging a decision is also possible with a direct complaint to an administrative court.³⁴³

Terms of alternative service

The alternative service is administered by the Agency of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Social Security and Labor. It lasts 12 months, compared to 3-9 months in the military.

According to the Ombudsperson's Office, a monthly allowance of 4.6 times the basic social benefit (BSI) ($4.6 \times 74\text{€} = 340.4\text{€}$ in 2026)³⁴⁴ is provided for living expenses, accommodation if the place of the service is outside the municipality of permanent residence, and cash compensation for food expenses for each day of the health check. Conscripts similarly receive a monthly allowance of 4.6 BSI (340.4€) but may also receive monthly top-ups of 2 to 4 BSI (148-296€) depending on the evaluation of their service whereas other bonuses exist if the conscript enlists voluntarily before their call-up or after completing the service with an “excellent” evaluation. These bonuses are not available to those performing alternative service.

Service is performed in state or municipal institutions or agencies and also, since 1 January 2026, in non-governmental organisations of public benefit working in the fields of protection of persons with disabilities, reduction of social exclusion, promoting education and culture, providing humanitarian aid, protecting health, and civic education, or performing work that is beneficial to society and not related to the use of weapons, special measures, or violence.

The place of service is selected in the municipality of actual or registered residence of the objector or their family members, or in case of persons residing outside of Lithuania and without family members in Lithuania, in a place of choice. No choice is given for the institution where service will be performed.

Refusal to perform

The amended Criminal Code that came into force on 1 January 2026 introduced separate provisions regulating the evasion of alternative service. Similarly to the evasion of military service, it is now punishable by arrest or

³³⁸ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2213659/14-000-fines-issued-for-dodging-military-service-in-lithuania-in-2023>

³³⁹ Draft order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania on the

Implementation of The Law on Conscription And Alternative National Defence Service Of The Republic Of

Lithuania, registered on 31 December, 2025, No. 25-19742, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/b64d14d0e65c11f0948bfb5fa1e0c51b?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUId=f2a42e9f-b959-4ea2-a52b-417755b6545b>

³⁴⁰ Law on Conscription, Article 12(1). <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.E9CE9C91C255/asr>

³⁴¹ Order of the Minister of the National Defence “On the Regulation of the Commission for the Examination of Applications by Conscripts for Alternative National Defence Service”, May 5, 2022, No. V-367, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/a5aaffe0cc5011ec8d9390588bf2de65>

³⁴² <https://www.zmogausteisiugidas.lt/en/themes/civic-participation/military-service/refusal-to-perform-military-service-and-alternative-service>

³⁴³ <https://www.zmogausteisiugidas.lt/en/themes/civic-participation/military-service/how-to-complain>

³⁴⁴ <https://madeinvilnius.lt/en/news/Lithuanian-news/The-government-has-approved-new-basic-support-amounts--various-payments-will-increase-next-year/>



imprisonment for up to three years if carried out by means of deception. Avoidance of alternative service during wartime may be punished by imprisonment of five to eight years, depending on whether it is carried out by means of deception.³⁴⁵

Voluntary recruitment

Voluntary enlistment into regular 9-month initial military service is possible for men, if not selected in the conscription list, and women, with a 30% allowance bonus provided. In 2025, over 700 people volunteered to serve alongside 3,865 conscripts.³⁴⁶

Citizens of ages 18-65, men and women, can also join the National Defence Volunteer Forces with a contract of up to 4 years with service usually organised on weekends with an average of 20 to 50 days of service per year.³⁴⁷

Incentives are provided in the form of monetary allowances (as mentioned in “Terms of alternative service” above), deferring housing loan payments, career and educational advantages (e.g. permanent contract in the armed forces, or security/defence-related structures, grants to employers who hire persons who completed military service).

The government also promotes voluntary service through official websites and social media of the Armed Forces,³⁴⁸ campaigns emphasising “civic duty”, “self-realisation”, and “skills and career”,³⁴⁹ and participation of representatives of the armed forces or the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union in public events, career fairs and career days.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for reservists, conscripts or military personnel during or after their service.

Asylum for conscientious objectors

According to Our House’s reporting, Lithuania has become a country of destination for citizens of Belarus and Russia who have left their countries due to conscientious objection to military service or

unwillingness to participate in armed conflicts. For many of them, seeking asylum in Lithuania is linked to a well-founded fear of criminal prosecution, long-term imprisonment or other serious human rights violations in their countries of origin. Despite this, migration authorities often refuse to grant international protection to such applicants.

Applications are frequently rejected on the grounds that compulsory military service constitutes a general civic duty and does not, in itself, amount to persecution. This approach contradicts the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,³⁵⁰ and fails to take into account the nature and severity of penalties for refusal of service in Belarus and Russia, as well as the link between persecution for refusal of military service and protected grounds, including freedom of conscience and political opinion. Particular concern is raised by the practice of qualifying conscientious objectors as posing a “threat to national security”.³⁵¹ Even in cases where courts conclude that there is no individual threat posed by the applicant and annul the relevant decisions, state security authorities retain the possibility to reinstitute similar assessments within migration procedures.

Documented cases show that such parallel and unsynchronised application of migration and “security” mechanisms may lead to prolonged legal confrontation without a final determination of the applicant’s legal status, especially in cases where applicants have previously undergone military service or training. Such decisions are often taken without transparent criteria and individualised assessment, which may restrict access to asylum procedures and effective judicial review.

In addition, in practice, access to effective legal remedies in such cases is significantly limited by financial barriers. Since 2025, free legal aid in Lithuania has been provided to asylum seekers only at the first stage of appeal. In the event of an unsuccessful appeal, the applicant is left without legal support, and further defence is possible only through paid legal services, which are often inaccessible to citizens of Belarus and Russia due to their high cost.³⁵²

³⁴⁵ Article 314. <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/en/legalAct/TAR.2B866DFF7D43/asr>

³⁴⁶ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2457222/lithuanian-military-publishes-this-year-s-conscription-list>

³⁴⁷ <https://www.karys.lt/en/military-service/optional-methods-of-service/national-defence-volunteer-forces/402>

³⁴⁸ <https://kariuomene.lt/en/structure/other-units/military-conscription-and-recruitment-service/23687>

³⁴⁹ <https://www.karys.lt/tarnybos-budai/savonoriska-nenuolatine-karo-tarnyba/40>

³⁵⁰ [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_2200A\(XXI\)_civil.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_2200A(XXI)_civil.pdf)

³⁵¹ <https://ebco-beoc.org/press-release/2025-02-14-protection-of-russian-belarusian-conscientious-objectors-in-the-eu>

³⁵² <https://teisesvartai.lt/advokatu-kainos/>

³⁵³ <https://objectwarcampaign.org/2023/08/17/report-on-the-situation-of-belarusian-conscientious-objectors-and-draft-evaders-in-lithuania/>



As a result, some conscientious objectors have been placed in detention or have faced the risk of removal to their country of origin, i.e. Belarus or Russia.³⁵³ These practices create a real risk of violation of the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to countries where they face persecution, torture or other serious human rights violations. International standards, including UNHCR guidelines, explicitly recognise conscientious objection to military service as a possible ground for refugee status.

It is important to note that after a final refusal of asylum, a person is obliged to leave Lithuania. In cases of refusal of asylum in Lithuania, there are no instruments for legalisation of the applicant by any other means. At the same time, in April 2023 Lithuania adopted a law on restrictive measures, after which restrictions were introduced on the issuance of visas and certain other statuses for citizens of Belarus and Russia.³⁵⁴ Taken together, these factors significantly narrow alternative pathways to lawful status after an asylum refusal.

Militarisation of the education system

From the 2024–2025 school year, a three-day Civics and Defense Skills Course (PG[K] organised by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union became mandatory for all 7-9th grade students in general education schools, aiming at "civic and patriotic education" and "preparedness for emergencies and crises."³⁵⁵ It is planned to expand to grades 5–6 from 2028-2029.³⁵⁶

The military does not organise programs for students under the age of 18. However, a voluntary "Youth Riflemen" programme is available within the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union for young people aged 11–18.³⁵⁷

A Cadet Education Programme was introduced in 2024 to allow municipal and state gymnasiums to offer cadet education including "training in basic national defense skills" based on practices by existing schools like the General Povilas Plechavičius Cadet Lyceum.³⁵⁸

2.28. LUXEMBOURG

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	First introduced 1944 Abolished 1967		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1963	Act of 26th July, Article 8		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions – no instances ever recorded.		
Minimum recruitment age	18			
Military expenditure³⁵⁹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	855m (+29.7%)	\$1,264	0.8%	

³⁵⁴ https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=2&p_t=284347

³⁵⁵ <https://www.gssc.lt/en/publication/citizens-first-total-defense-always-an-interview-with-colonel-linas-idzelis-on-the-lithuanian-riflemens-union-lfpr-vol-44-2026/>

³⁵⁶ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/svietimas/45/2597312/seime-pirmas-zingsnis-plesti-pilietiskumo-ir-gynybos-igudziu-kursa>

³⁵⁷ <https://www.sauliusajunga.lt/en/frequently-asked-questions>

³⁵⁸ https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_to_allow_all_willing_gymnasiums_to_offer_cadet_education/

³⁵⁹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.29. MALTA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Has never existed	
Conscientious objection first recognised		No provision ever made but has co-sponsored CO resolutions at the UN Human Rights Council.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provision	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure³⁶⁰	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	125m (+24.8%)	\$230	0.4%

Conscientious objection during and after military service

No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for those enlisted in voluntary service, reserve service, or the military personnel.

Requests for discharge go up the chain of command with the final decision being taken by the Commander of the Armed Forces.

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection exists for those enlisted in voluntary service, reserve service, or the military personnel.

Based on the Ombudsman of Malta's reply to EBCO's questionnaire and public information:

Conscription provisions and procedures

No conscription exists. The armed forces operate on a voluntary recruitment basis, while a voluntary reserve service also exists.

Voluntary recruitment

Voluntary recruitment is regulated by the Malta Armed Forces Act (Chapter 220, Laws of Malta)³⁶¹ and the Appointments and Conditions of the Regular Force Regulations (S.L.220.03).³⁶²

The minimum age of recruitment is 18 years and the initial duration required is for 3 years of service.

In 2025, 73 recruits signed up (10 women and 63 men), and in 2026 the number was 84 (9 women and 75 men).

Financial incentives are given as well as the benefit of retiring with a service pension after 25 years. Educational and technical courses are also offered relevant to the service.

³⁶⁰ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁶¹ <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/220/eng/pdf>

³⁶² <https://legislation.mt/eli/sl/220.3/eng/pdf>



2.30. MOLDOVA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	Government Decision 601/2018 regarding the Programme "Professional Army 2018-2021" has not yet been implemented and currently is uncertain.		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Law on Religions 979/1992		
Current provisions				
Duration		Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
		12 months	12 months (100%)	
		6 months for graduates	6 months for graduates	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provision – would ultimately be decided by courts.		
Minimum recruitment age	18	Enrolment in military schools from 17		
Military expenditure ³⁶³		\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
		113m (-6.0%)	\$38	0.6%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Conscientious objectors are subjected to enquiry and are discriminated against when applying on grounds other than membership to specific religious denominations.
- No recognition of right to conscientious objection during or after military service or for serving personnel.

Based on the reply of the Moldovan People's Advocate Office (Ombudsman) to EBCO's questionnaire:

Developments

The Ministry of Defense is planning to amend the legislation regarding military service, defense of the homeland, etc., but it is not known whether the concerns around conscientious objection will be addressed. Although the Military Strategy has been approved, these observations are not found in its content, which means that, most probably, they will not be reflected in the legislation on military service either.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

In November 2023, the Ombudsman elaborated the Follow-up Visit Report to the "Moldova" Motorized Infantry Brigade from the municipality of Bălți, *section I. The situation of conscientious objectors*.³⁶⁴

Following the visit and the findings made, the Ombudsman noted the existence of serious deficiencies in the recruitment mechanism, manifested by the enlistment into the National Army of persons who have clearly expressed their conscientious objection, as well as of persons who invoke reasons related to religious, philosophical convictions, sexual orientation or other relevant personal circumstances. According to the Ombudsman "this practice contravenes both national legislation and the international commitments assumed by the Republic of Moldova and constitutes a violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

The Ombudsman's position is that "the simple declaration of a person regarding the moral impossibility of bearing arms or performing military service is sufficient to activate the mechanism of referral to civil (alternative) service, without the need to prove it through certificates or other supporting documents. The recruitment commissions must not question or countermand the option of the recruit, but must start from the premise of respecting his or her right to conscientious objection.

At the same time, the Ombudsman finds that the lack of an effective mechanism for the protection of conscientious objectors not only generates violations of human rights, but also creates additional difficulties in the process of training and integration of conscripts, affecting the proper functioning of the military institution. A modern and professional army must be based on the freely expressed will of candidates and on the conscious assumption of military service, not on coercion.

Moreover, the Ombudsman draws attention to discriminatory and unprofessional approaches manifested towards persons of different sexual orientation, which indicate the persistence of stereotypes and of an institutional culture incompatible with human rights standards.

In this context, the Ombudsman reiterates the recommendation addressed to the Ministry of Defense to urgently review the mechanism of enlistment into the Armed Forces, so that it is centered on respecting

³⁶³ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁶⁴ <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/raport-in-baza-vizitei-de-follow-up-efectuate-la-brigada-de-infanterie-motorizata-moldova-din-municipiul-balti-la-data-de-20-noiembrie-2023/>, p. 12.



conscientious objection and other well-founded personal circumstances, to prevent abusive recruitment and to ensure the effective application of the right to civil (alternative) service, in accordance with international standards and national legislation.”

The Ombudsman has also expressed positions on the topic of “conscientious objectors” in the Special Report on ill-treatment based on discrimination in a military unit: the Pavlescu case (ex officio notification no. 07-10/1 of 17/01/2022).³⁶⁵

At recruitment, young people are required to certify that they belong to a religion other than the majority one, under the “religion” criterion. In the absence of a “certificate”, they are declared fit for recruitment. There are some denominations that issue such certificates, and, depending on them, in the “eyes” of the members of the Recruitment Commission, young people are accepted or rejected. There are not many such cases, but the problem persists.

As regards “conscience”, for example the refusal to hold a weapon, the Commissions do not take this will seriously, including due to the lack of written proof. In addition, national legislation does not provide clear criteria for non-admission to military service of persons who invoke conscientious motives.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Military legislation does not provide for the “release from military service” of persons who have taken the oath and who later realize that they “do not want to hold a weapon in their hands”, for pacifist, educational, conscientious or religious reasons.

2.31. MONACO

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription never existed. No regular military forces. Defence is the responsibility of France.

2.32. MONTENEGRO

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Abolished 2006 (on independence) by Presidential decree. May be reinstated in time of war (see below)		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Constitution of Serbia and Montenegro, Article 58 (preserved in Article 48 of the 2007 Montenegro Constitution)		
CO release of professional soldiers	Not known			
Minimum recruitment age	18			
Military expenditure ³⁶⁶	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	177m (+8.5%)	\$277	1.9%	

³⁶⁵ https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Raport_Special_cazul_pavlescu_FINAL-3.pdf

³⁶⁶ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.33. NETHERLANDS

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 1997. Could be reinstated in war; military registration still enforced.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1922	Constitutional amendment	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	May apply under general Act on Conscientious Objection to Military Service. Legal appeal possible in case of refusal.	
Minimum recruitment age	17	Voluntary recruitment	
Military expenditure³⁶⁷	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	28,944m (+14.5%)	\$1,582	2.2%

2.34. NORTH MACEDONIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2007	
Conscientious objection first recognised	2001	Defence Act, Article 8.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure³⁶⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	375m (+15.6%)	\$206	2.0%

2.35. NORWAY

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1903	Internal military regulations 1922 Amendment to Military Penal Code	
Current provisions	Act on Military Service		
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	12 months (up to 19 months in some posts)	Abolished in 2012	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions Termination of contract possible	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³⁶⁹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	17,034m (+49.0%)	\$3,040	3.3%

Asylum for conscientious objectors

The Norwegian government declared 14 Ukrainian regions are “safe” despite ongoing Russian aggression³⁷⁰ and decided that Ukrainian men aged 18-60, with certain exceptions, will no longer be granted temporary collective protection in Norway³⁷¹. Certain politicians explicitly called to deny asylum to those who list “avoiding mobilization” as the reason for seeking protection³⁷².

³⁶⁷ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁶⁸ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁶⁹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁷⁰ <https://www.udi.no/en/important-messages/more-areas-excluded-from-the-right-to-collective-protection/>

³⁷¹ <https://www.udi.no/en/information-ukraine-and-russia/ukraine/>

³⁷² <https://www.mojanorwegia.pl/en/ukrainian-men-of-draft-age-to-the-front-norwegian-party-calls-for-forced-deportation-25227.html>



2.36. POLAND

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2009 by constitutional amendments Could be reinstated in mobilisation or war.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1988	Constitution, Article 85£	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted	No specific provisions. Repayment of training and accommodation costs would be required, perhaps in advance.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³⁷³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	46,760m (+23.4%)	\$1,219	4.5%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Although conscription is suspended, Poland has provisions whereby civilians may be allocated to perform “personal services for defence,” under the direction of the military in the event of war or general mobilisation.
- No explicit provisions exist for the release of serving military personnel or reservists who develop conscientious objections. Prosecutions may result from refusing on grounds of conscience to comply with call-up to reserve service.
- “Security education”, including marksmanship is a compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum.
- Defence programmes presented by military personnel are offered in schools, including primary schools.

Based on the Ministry of Defence’s reply to EBCO’s questionnaire and public information:

Developments

In March 2025, Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced plans for “large-scale military training for all adult males,” causing speculation about restoring compulsory military service. A month later, it was clarified that the goal is to train 100,000 volunteers annually starting in 2027.³⁷⁴

Poland committed to defence spending of 4.7% of GDP in 2025, the highest in NATO,³⁷⁵ while the President proposed a constitutional amendment that would establish a minimum of 4%.³⁷⁶

The country withdrew from the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention, alongside Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland,³⁷⁷ with the government also considering withdrawing from the Convention on Cluster Munitions.³⁷⁸

Conscription provisions and procedures

Conscription is suspended since 2009.³⁷⁹

Military registration is still conducted, and registration cannot be refused on grounds of conscience. Registration is required from the age of 18.

Reserve drill requirements are in place without recognition for the right to conscientious objection.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Conscientious objection is recognised under Article 85(3) of the Polish Constitution.

An individual interested may apply for alternative service at the military qualification stage, to be performed should conscription be reactivated, or pending receipt of a mobilisation card.³⁸⁰

Information available

According to the Ministry of Defence, “information on this subject is included for each citizen in publicly available legal acts,” and “persons reporting for military qualification and expressing the intention to apply for substitute service are informed about” the relevant Homeland Defence Act articles.

This falls short of international standards that such information should be properly disseminated to the public and that persons should be informed of their rights when notified of their call-up or prospective call-up.³⁸¹

Refusal to perform alternative service

Those who refuse to perform the alternative service are faced with penalties of fine, restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to 2 years according to Article 145 of the Penal Code.

³⁷³Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.
³⁷⁴<https://english.elpais.com/international/2025-06-15/weekend-military-training-for-civilians-in-poland-i-want-to-learn-things-that-will-be-useful-in-case-of-war-its-my-patriotic-duty.html>



Voluntary recruitment

Voluntary military service is governed by the Homeland Defence Act, Section VII,³⁸² as well as regulations and decisions of the Minister of National Defence, which detail the recruitment procedures, medical and psychological examinations performed, presentation of required documents by volunteers, dates and places of training.

Since 2024, a one-month basic voluntary military training programme has been implemented, which is completed with an oath. Recruits can voluntarily continue into a 11-month specialised training in order to join the active army, a decision taken by 48% of recruits.

Those who complete the training programme and do not become professional soldiers are transferred to the passive reserve.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

In all forms of active military service where it is voluntary, it is possible to request for discharge.³⁸³

A case of Jehovah's Witness reserve soldier who was denied discharge revealed that the legislation did not provide for the possibility of a reservist applying for recognition as a conscientious objector.³⁸⁴

In its 2024 correspondence with the Commissioner for Human Rights who handled the case, the Ministry of Defence expressed intent to amend the legislation so as to "expand the list of individuals eligible to submit applications for alternative service, including reserve soldiers whose religious beliefs and worldviews prevent them from serving on active duty, regardless of whether they have previously served."

It is unclear whether this was followed through in 2025. In its response to this year's questionnaire, the Ministry repeated that such cases can be handled by classifying individuals into the "Ineffective Resources" subgroup of military records by the head of the Military Recruitment

Centre. It also reported that the number of such cases is "marginal" and that no statistics are kept.

Militarisation of the education system

The "safety education" course in the core curriculum for primary and secondary schools includes marksmanship skills and weapons handling as well as practical training on the firing range.

Other voluntary programmes like "Education with the Army", "Preparedness" universal training, "Military Preparation Units (MPU)", "Cyber.Mil", and "Vocational School Military Units (VSMU)", open days of military units, equipment demonstrations, meetings with soldiers or pro-defence

workshops, are available to underage persons in enrolled schools, mainly conducted by military personnel.³⁸⁵

³⁷⁵ <https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7786/artykul/3472198,polish-president-signs-2025-budget-into-law>

³⁷⁶ <https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7784/Artykul/3493698,polish-president-pushes-for-constitutional-amendment-on-defence-spending>

³⁷⁷ https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/202520E#a6

³⁷⁸ <https://odessa-journal.com/poland-plans-to-withdraw-from-conventions-banning-anti-personnel-mines-and-cluster-munitions>

³⁷⁹ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the legal provisions and practices around conscription: <https://ebco-beoc.org/poland/2024>

³⁸⁰ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the legal provisions and practices around conscientious objectors: <https://ebco-beoc.org/poland/2024>

³⁸¹ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/41/23>, para. 17-20

³⁸² <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20220000655>

³⁸³ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the practices around conscientious objectors during or after military service: <https://ebco-beoc.org/poland/2024>

³⁸⁴ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for more details on the case: <https://ebco-beoc.org/poland/2024>

³⁸⁵ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the mandatory and voluntary programmes present in the education system: <https://ebco-beoc.org/poland/2024>



2.37. PORTUGAL

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 1999 (Military Service Law 174/99). Last conscripts demobilised 2004. Could be reinstated in emergency under articles 34 and 36. Military registration still enforced		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1976	Constitution, Articles 41(6) and 276 Military Service Law (No. 174/99) Law on Conscientious Objection, 7/92		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions, but should be authorised under constitutional recognition of right		
Minimum recruitment age	18			
Military expenditure ³⁸⁶	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	5,861m (+21.7%)	\$562	1.7%	

2.38. ROMANIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended under Article 2 of Act 395/2005. Last conscripts demobilised 2007. Could be reinstated in time of war (see details below).	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1996	Act 46/1996, Art 4 “on governing preparation of the population for defence”	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions (see below)	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ³⁸⁷	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	9,725m (+5.9%)	\$513	2.3%

³⁸⁶Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁸⁷Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.39. RUSSIAN FEDERATION (FORMER MEMBER STATE)

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1993	Constitution, Article 59.3 Law on Conscription Obligation and Military Service, 1998 Effective only from 1st January 2004 under Law on Alternative Civilian Service	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	12 months	21 months (175%) Unarmed military service 18 months	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18	Admission to some military schools from 16	
Military expenditure ³⁸⁸	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	190,417m (+5.9%)	\$1,318	7.5%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Alternative civilian service is punitive and discriminatory, inter alia, in terms of duration.
- No right to conscientious objection exists for serving military personnel, mobilised persons, or reservists.
- Forced recruitment of vulnerable groups and foreign nationals into military service. Systematic coercion of conscripts to sign military contracts through deception, threats, and violence.
- Repression against human rights defenders assisting conscientious objectors, Elena Popova, Maria Bontsler, Artem Klyga.

As reported by EBCO’s Russian member, the Movement of Conscientious Objectors.³⁸⁹

Developments

“Year-round” conscription

The traditional spring and autumn cycles have been fundamentally altered. From 1 January 2026, medical examinations and draft boards operate throughout the year, although physical deployment to military units remains limited to April–July and October–December. Draft decisions are now valid for one full year.

Digital registry

Following its launch in July 2025, the Unified Military Register became fully operational. Digital summonses are now sent on a mass scale through the *Gosuslugi* portal, triggering immediate legal restrictions and travel bans in cases of non-appearance.

Further restrictions on medical exemptions

Amendments to the Schedule of Diseases significantly weakened health requirements for military service. A number of psychiatric conditions were removed from Category “D” (unfit for service), and persons with hypertension and certain infectious diseases became eligible for service. At the same time, the authority of independent medical commissions was reduced, making it extremely difficult to challenge health categories in court.

Repression against human rights defenders

The state intensified pressure on those defending the rights of conscripts.

Elena Popova of the Movement of Conscientious Objectors was charged in August 2025 with spreading “fake” information about the army in connection with a human rights livestream.

Maria Bontsler, a 64-year-old veteran lawyer, was arrested in May 2025 on accusations of passing information to “unfriendly states”; colleagues viewed this as retaliation for her long-standing human rights work.

Artem Klyga, a lawyer representing conscientious objectors was officially designated as “foreign agent”.

- Forced recruitment and the “contract in exchange for passport” scheme: By early 2025, voluntary interest in contract military service had reportedly fallen tenfold compared with 2024. In response, the authorities turned to coercive methods.

³⁸⁸ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁸⁹ More info about the organisation at: <https://stoparmy.org>



- Foreign nationals: most foreigners, except Belarusians, are now in practice unable to obtain a residence permit or Russian citizenship without signing a military contract.
- Vulnerable groups: aggressive recruitment practices target prisoners, debtors, homeless persons, and people suffering from addictions.

Conscription provisions and procedures

In 2025, fixed-term compulsory military service remained mandatory in the Russian Federation.³⁹⁰ Mobilisation for military service in the combat zone of the armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, announced on 21 September 2022, also remained in force.

Systematic pressure is placed on conscripts to sign contracts on their first day of service through deception, threats of being sent into “meat-grinder” assaults, or physical violence.

Reserve service

Up to 2025, failure to appear for reserve training after receiving a summons entailed administrative liability only, punishable by a fine. Since the autumn of 2025, additional restrictions apply to those who fail to appear after receiving a summons. These include prohibitions on: registering property rights to real estate, driving motor vehicles, registering vehicles, obtaining loans or credits, registering as self-employed or as an individual entrepreneur.

Such restrictions are imposed by military commissariats, although the state bodies responsible for implementing them (tax authorities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, banks, etc.) have not yet developed operational systems to enforce them effectively. It is expected that the system will be fully operational in 2026.

Draft evasion

In 2024, 924 persons were convicted under Article 328(1) of the Criminal Code (evasion of conscription), according to statistics from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. Most defendants were sentenced to fines ranging from 5,000 to 100,000 roubles (~50 to 1,000 euros). Although the law allows imprisonment or compulsory labour for up to two years, custodial sentences are rarely imposed. Only 21 individuals received fines exceeding 100,000 roubles.

There is still no official data for 2025.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

In 2025, the increase in the number of citizens performing alternative civilian service in Russia continued.³⁹¹

Based on the official data available at state level, it may be concluded that 3,212 persons were performing alternative civilian service by the end of 2025. This is the highest figure recorded in the last 14 years.

The general duration of alternative civilian service is 21 months. For citizens assigned to organisations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, military formations and bodies, the duration is 18 months. In practice, however, assignment to organisations within the Armed Forces is no longer used. In contrast, compulsory military service lasts 12 months.

As of 2025, a person performing alternative civilian service receives a salary according to the wage system of the institution where they are assigned. The minimum wage in Russia, as of January 1, 2025, is 22,440 roubles (€221.49) per month.

Military conscripts receive 2,750–2,800 roubles (approximately €25.92–€26.39) during the first 11 months of service and 5,550–5,600 roubles (approximately €52.31–€52.78) during the final month.

The list of positions and organisations for alternative service placements was expanded in 2025 and included 271 professions and around 1,600 organisations across the country.

Voluntary recruitment

In 2025, two conscription campaigns were conducted for men aged 18–30.³⁹²

Spring draft (1 April – 15 July): 160,000 persons

Autumn draft (1 October – 31 December): 135,000 persons.

Total: 295,000 conscripts.

Official data on the number of volunteers signing contracts in 2025 have not been published. However, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated that 422,704 people signed contracts during that year.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

Servicemen, whether performing compulsory conscription service or serving under a contract, including

³⁹⁰ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on legal provisions for conscription: <https://ebco-beoc.org/russia/2024>

³⁹¹ Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the legal provisions and practices around alternative civilian service: <https://ebco-beoc.org/russia/2024>

³⁹² Cf. EBCO Annual Report 2024 for details on the legal provisions around voluntary service: <https://ebco-beoc.org/russia/2024>



those mobilised for the war in Russia and Ukraine, cannot ask for release on grounds of having developed conscientious objection due to lack of legislation, and such applications will be denied.

A key feature of 2025 was the tightening of sentences and the effective absence of any mechanism for exercising the right to refuse service on grounds of conscience for serving military personnel.

According to data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation and independent monitoring summaries, more than 11,500 cases relating to various forms of evasion of military service were brought before military courts in 2025.

Article 337 (unauthorised absence): more than 10,000 cases. This was the dominant offence. In most cases, the conduct was classified under Article 337(5), that is, absence from a unit during mobilisation or hostilities for a period exceeding one month.

Article 338 (desertion): between 750 and 900 cases. The relatively lower number is explained by the difficulty of proving the required direct intent to abandon service permanently.

According to our estimates, persons expressing anti-war or religious convictions accounted for 15–20% of all defendants in cases concerning refusal of service. In judicial practice, a substitution trend was observed: cases involving persons openly declaring conscientious or religious objections were often reclassified from evasion-related offences to Article 332 of the Criminal Code (failure to obey an order). This allowed the investigation to disregard arguments based on conscience and instead treat the conduct as a disciplinary breach in conditions of hostilities.

Attempts by mobilised citizens, including representatives of Protestant denominations and Jehovah's Witnesses, to obtain judicial recognition of a right to substitute service with alternative civilian service were rejected in the overwhelming majority of cases in 2025, approximately 98%.

By the end of 2025, the courts had shifted to a policy of "zero tolerance", which was reflected in sentencing patterns.

Reservists

In Russia, there is no separate legislation governing refusal of reserve service on grounds of conscience.

The Federal Law No. 113-FZ "*On Alternative Civilian Service*" applies only to conscripts and not to reservists. However, in principle, Article 59(3) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation may be interpreted as allowing such an application.

For example, the Ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation of 23 November 1999 No. 16-P states that the constitutional right to alternative civilian service is directly applicable and does not require additional legislative implementation. Nevertheless, this ruling has had no practical impact on judicial practice concerning reservists objecting on grounds of conscience, despite the formal status of Constitutional Court rulings as directly binding and not requiring confirmation by other authorities or officials under Article 79 of the Federal Constitutional Law of 21 July 1994 No. 1-FKZ "*On the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation*".

In practice, there have been reservists who applied for alternative civilian service upon being summoned for military training exercises.

While such an application does not prevent the imposition of a fine for failure to appear, or the forcible delivery to the military commissariat for transfer to military training, in some cases we have observed that the military commissariat made no further attempts to summon such reservists.

2.40. SAN MARINO

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription never existed. There are no regular military forces and defence is the responsibility of Italy.

However, there are some Military Corps, such as a Military Ceremonial and a Military Band.³⁹³

³⁹³ <https://esteri.sm/pub2/EsteriSM/Corpi-Militari/Corpi-militari.html#blocco2>



2.41. SERBIA

[See country page on EBCO website]

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended in 2011.		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Constitution of Serbia and Montenegro, Article 58 (guaranteed unarmed military service only) Regulation on Civilian Service 37/2003		
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions beyond constitutional guarantees (see below)		
Minimum recruitment age	18			
Military expenditure³⁹⁴	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP	
	2,781m (+6.3%)	\$414	2.8%	

party in Serbia, pledged not to vote in parliament for reintroduction of conscription.³⁹⁸

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

General Milan Mojsilović, Chief of the General Staff, said that the term of compulsory military service would be 75 days and conscientious objectors "who would not be trained to shoot" would be in military service for 155 days.³⁹⁹

Principal EBCO concerns

- It is unclear if and how the law on alternative service would apply to an event of reintroduction of conscription or emergency mobilisation.
- The law on alternative service lacks basic guarantees to the rights of conscientious objectors, such as accessibility to all without discrimination, full control of civilian authorities.
- 155-days military service without weapons replacing 75 days of armed service, discussed as arrangement for conscientious objectors after reintroduction of conscription planned in 2027 or 2028, does not satisfy human rights standards

Conscription provisions and procedures

The budget law passed in 2025 allocates €86.5mn to preparations for reintroduction of conscription in 2026-2028 according to a decision of the government announced in 2024³⁹⁵. A planned term of compulsory military service is 75 days.³⁹⁶ The 2025 poll found that 61% of youth are against reintroduction of conscription³⁹⁷. Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, a regionalist political

³⁹⁴ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

³⁹⁵ <https://www.intellinews.com/serbia-allocates-90mn-to-restart-mandatory-military-service-413589> ; https://www.mod.gov.rs/multimedia/dodaci/prilog_izvod_iz_srednjorocnog_plana_mo_2026_2028_1770300360.pdf ; <https://forbes.n1info.rs/novac/deo-kasarni-prodat-deo-van-funkcije-koliko-drzavu-kosta-uvodjenje-vojnog-roka/>

³⁹⁶ <https://www.nin.rs/english/news/97044/return-of-mandatory-military-service-between-the-military-and-politics>

³⁹⁷ <https://www.krug.rs/kako-mladi-vide-srbiju-2025-protesti-politika-i-planovi-za-buducnost/>



2.42. SLOVAKIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2005 (Act 569/2005) Could be reinstated in time of war or emergency	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1992	Civilian Service Act (of Czechoslovakia) No. 18/1992	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure⁴⁰⁰	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	3,118m (+3.0%)	\$568	2.0%

2.44. SPAIN

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended with effect from 2002 (Royal Decree 247/2001)	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1978	Constitutional amendment.	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions. Training expenses would have to be repaid.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure⁴⁰²	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	40,212m (+49.6%)	\$839	2.1%

2.43. SLOVENIA

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Suspended 2003. Could be reinstated in war time.	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1991	Military Service Act, No. 18/1991	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure⁴⁰¹	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	1,222m (+16.7%)	\$577	1.5%

³⁹⁸ <https://gradsubotica.co.rs/pastor-o-uvodjenju-obaveznog-vojnog-roka/>

³⁹⁹ <https://vreme.com/en/vesti/sta-ce-podrazumevati-75-dana-u-vojsci/>

⁴⁰⁰ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

⁴⁰¹ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

⁴⁰² Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



2.45. SWEDEN

[See country page on EBCO website]

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes	Suspended 2010 Reinstated from 1st January 2018	
Conscientious objection first recognised	1920	Alternative Service Schemes Act, 21st May	
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	11 months	11 months (100%)	
CO release of professional soldiers	–	No specific provisions.	
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ⁴⁰³	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	16,474m (+24.1%)	\$1,549	2.5%

Based on the reply of the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society to EBCO's questionnaire.⁴⁰⁴

Developments

In December 2025, the Swedish government announced that civil duty will be broadened to include services within surveillance, electronic communications, network and information systems as well as cyber security. The previous system was limited to a small number of placements within municipal emergency services and the electricity supply sector.

This further implies that from 2026 and on, Swedish citizens are obliged to complete a longer basic education within the civil defence, in a similar way to military service.⁴⁰⁵

According to the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, an increasing number of young people contacting the organisation in recent years have displayed signs of

mental illness, with several describing strong discomfort related to practising shooting at human-like targets and some stating that they have lost hope, no longer feel joy or have lost their will to live. Many are not aware of their right to obtain weapon-free status or that mental illness may entitle them to interrupt their military service.

An investigative documentary released in 2025 covered a case of 2023 of the suicide of a young woman five months into conscription. Findings pointed at anxiety and mental illness caused by her time in military service and fear of imprisonment if she did not complete her service.⁴⁰⁶ This increased prominence of critical perspectives in the public debate around conscription.

Conscription provisions and procedures

Conscription legislation remains the same. Citizens turning 18 are obliged to provide the Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket) with information as well as muster and undergo military training if called to do so.⁴⁰⁷

In 2025, 8,251 individuals were enrolled for military service, which is 825 more than the previous year. Out of those, 7,258 (88%) were called in accordance with the conscription law, while 992 (12%) applied for enrollment themselves. Of the total of 110,740 18 year olds who received the enlistment document, 98% responded. 28,184 were eligible and could be summoned to muster.⁴⁰⁸ Of those who responded, 60,866 answered negatively regarding their interest and motivation to undergo military training (1-3 on a motivation scale up to 9).⁴⁰⁹ That means that more than half (55%) of the 18 year olds do not want to enlist. Women generally have a less positive attitude towards doing military service than men. In 2025, it was concluded that 7 out of 10 women did not want to do military service, while 4 out of 10 men were negative towards enlisting.⁴¹⁰

According to the Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency, 98 conscripts have been reported to the prosecutor's office for breaking the general law of compulsory military service in 2025. Among those, 93 were reported due to absence when they were called to muster, i.e. military

⁴⁰³ Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

⁴⁰⁴ More info about the organisation at: <https://www.svenskafreds.se/>

⁴⁰⁵ The Swedish Government: <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2025/12/regeringen-breddar-civilplikten/>

⁴⁰⁶ <https://www.sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/almas-dod-i-lumpen>

⁴⁰⁷ The law of conscription, Lagen (1994:1809) om totalförsvarsplikt. <https://rkrattsbaser.gov.se/sfst?bet=1994:1809>

⁴⁰⁸ The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket) <https://www.pliktverket.se/om-myndigheten/kontakt/press#/embedded/release/4101317/8-251-personer-inskrivna-till-grundutbildning-2025?publisherId=3235997&lang=sv>

⁴⁰⁹ The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket), E-mail contact

⁴¹⁰ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/majoritet-av-unga-kvinnor-vill-inte-gora-varnplikten>

⁴¹¹ The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket), E-mail contact

⁴¹² The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket), E-mail contact



selection tryouts, and 5 due to interrupted military service without permission (including not showing up, intentional deviation and refusal).⁴¹¹ 601 people interrupted their military training in 2025, mostly due to health reasons.⁴¹²

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Those who receive weapon free status can be called for civil conscription, meaning that they can be placed within the civil defence.

Application statistics

The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency reports that 113 conscripts applied for weapon free status in 2025, compared to 145 in previous year. 107 out of 113 applications were approved and 5 were rejected. One application was dismissed.⁴¹³

There is no clear conclusion to draw from reading the applications that were rejected. Some referenced a religious conviction, some a sense of fear of weapons. Others expressed a decrease in mental health, with suicidal thoughts. Compared to the applications that were approved (of which we were allowed to examine ten), the ones who were denied generally had shorter answers. But considering the small sample of approved applications there is no certain conclusion to be drawn. However, applications written thoroughly with detailed examples are in general more likely to be approved. It is also clear that in order to get the application approved, the applicant needs to explain that there are no situations in which the applicant could ever use armed violence.

There is currently no actual weapon-free service, but those who receive weapon-free status can be called for civil conscription further on to be placed within the civil defence. Civil conscription was activated on December 21 2023, after being deactivated since 2010. Civil duty does not, however, necessarily mean being free from handling weapons. In 2024 and 2025, civil conscription placements were limited to a small number within municipal emergency services and to the electricity supply sector but the system will be expanded into more sectors (see Developments).

2.46. SWITZERLAND

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised			
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	245 days	368 days (150%)	
	Or longer depending on rank		
CO release of professional soldiers	Covered under the general law on alternative civilian service.		
Minimum recruitment age	18		
Military expenditure ⁴¹⁴	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	7,591m (+9.4%)	\$849	0.8%

As reported by EBCO member organisation CIVIVA Switzerland:

Developments

Conscription provisions and procedures

In June 2025, both chambers of parliament accepted a motion to introduce a security duty. This means that the civil service and civil protection will merge into a security duty, effectively abolishing the civil service. The federal council now has two years to present a legislative proposal to parliament for implementation.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

In June 2025, a proposal was submitted to the federal council to reintroduce the examination of conscience. Until 2009, if you had a conscientious objection, you were required to appear before a committee and undergo an examination of your conscience. The parliament has now tasked the federal council with drafting a report on how to reinstate this committee and examination.

⁴¹³The Swedish Defense Recruitment Agency (Plikt- och prövningsverket), E-mail contact

⁴¹⁴Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



Conscientious objection during and after military service

In 2025, a package of six measures was voted on and passed by both parliamentary chambers. A referendum against this proposal was initiated, and enough signatures were collected by January 2026. On June 14, 2026, the Swiss population will vote on the following six measures.

1. a minimum number of 150 days of alternative service (irrespective of the number of days already served in the military prior to application for CO status)
2. the application of the 1.5 ratio of the duration of alternative service to that of military service to officers and NCOs, whose periods of military service are longer than those of the rank and file.
3. no placements that require a degree in human, dental or veterinary medicine
4. no admission of members of the armed forces with 0 remaining days of military service
5. a tightening of the rules regarding the timing of alternative civilian service, requiring that a placement be taken up within the year of admission.
6. likewise, in the case where the application was submitted during military basic training period (recruit school), an obligation to complete the long period of service within the calendar year following the legally binding admission.

2.47. TÜRKİYE

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	Never recognised		
Current provisions			
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	6 months	Not available	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	19		
Military expenditure ⁴¹⁵	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	29,987m (+7.2%)	\$342	1.9%

Principal EBCO concerns

- No recognition of the right to conscientious objection. Prolonged violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the ICCPR, and relevant rulings.
- Prosecution and punishment of conscientious objectors with interference to a wide range of human rights amounting to civil death, and repeated punishments in violation of *ne bis in idem*.
- Criminalisation of acts deemed to “alienate the public from military service.”

As reported by EBCO’s Turkish member, the Conscientious Objection Watch:⁴¹⁶

Developments

Constitutional Court ruling: In 2025, the Court decided that repeated prosecutions of draft evaders, including of conscientious objectors, do not violate the *ne bis in idem* principle.⁴¹⁷ This ruling effectively legitimised the practice of subjecting objectors to multiple prosecutions and sentences for the same underlying refusal, contradicting international human rights standards under the ICCPR and ECHR.

⁴¹⁵Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

⁴¹⁶More info about the organisation at: <https://vicdaniret.org>

⁴¹⁷<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2025/12/20251229-20.pdf> [in Turkish]

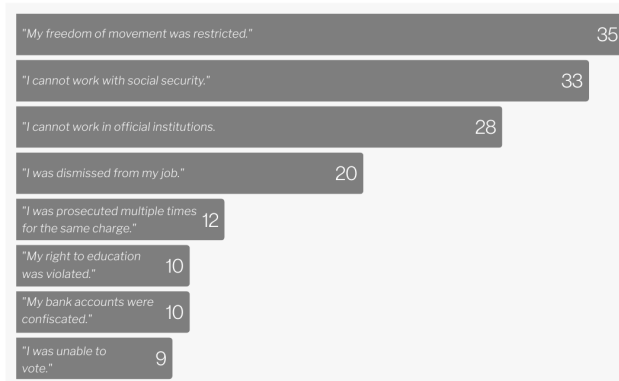


Escalation of repeated prosecutions: Multiple objectors, including Kamil Murat Demir,⁴¹⁸ Çınar Koçgiri Doğan,⁴¹⁹ and İnan Mayıs Aru,⁴²⁰ received new prison sentences in 2025, often after having already served previous sentences for the same refusal. Courts explicitly cited their persistent conscientious objection as criminal behavior.

Continued reliance on restrictive provisions: Articles 318 and 217 of the Turkish Penal Code remain in force, criminalising expressions that “alienate the public from military service” or “incite disobedience.” These provisions continue to be applied against objectors and anti-militarist activists, despite ECtHR jurisprudence finding them incompatible with freedom of expression. In this context, Şendoğan Yazıcı⁴²¹ was sentenced to seven months and fifteen days’ imprisonment for expressions related to conscientious objection. His case remains pending on appeal.

Economic punishment and financial coercion: Objectors such as lawyer Gökhan Soysal⁴²² faced severe fines (over 210,000 TL) and confiscation of bank accounts, preventing them from exercising their professions and meeting basic living expenses.

Civil death continues: Objectors remain excluded from public employment, social security, higher education, voting rights, and freedom of movement. In 2025 alone, 45 individuals reported to Conscientious Objection Watch that they were unable to exercise basic rights due to their CO status.



*These rights violations were reported by 45 individuals who filled out the form between January and December 2025.

**Respondents indicated that they were subjected to multiple types of rights violations.

Parliamentary activity: Questions concerning individual objectors continue to be dismissed with formulaic references to the Law on Military Service, reflecting a deliberate refusal to engage with the substance of conscientious objection claims.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Domestic law still provides no mechanism for conscientious objectors to apply for recognition or to perform civilian service. Paid military service remains the only alternative, but it requires one month of basic military training.

State institutions continue with punitive practices:

- Military recruitment offices issue negative responses to conscientious objection petitions, citing the absence of any legal basis for exemption.
- Courts increasingly rely on prior convictions of objectors as evidence of a “tendency to commit crimes,” thereby justifying harsher sentences and refusing reductions or suspension measures.
- Administrative bodies have expanded the use of financial sanctions, including fines and freezing of bank accounts, as a form of coercion against objectors.

⁴¹⁸Tunceli 1st Criminal Court of First Instance, 2025/104 E., Pertek Criminal Court of First Instance 2025/384 E.

⁴¹⁹3 Sivas 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance, 2023/276 E; and 2025/18 E.

⁴²⁰Kütahya 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance, 2025/169E., and 2025/504 E.

⁴²¹Borçka Criminal Court of First Instance, 2024/233 E

⁴²²Sivas Military Recruitment Office, No:2025/6154, 28.05.2025

⁴²³<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-72146>



The landmark *Ülke v. Türkiye* case⁴²³ remains unimplemented in substance. Osman Murat Ülke continues to be classified as a deserter and subjected to repeated notifications and threats of prosecution, demonstrating Türkiye's ongoing failure to comply with binding ECtHR rulings.

Despite recent calls by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the UN Human Rights Committee to end the violation of Articles 3 and 9 of the ECHR and Articles 18 and 14 of the ICCPR that comes from refusing to recognise conscientious objection, the state has taken no steps to bring domestic law in line.

This legal gap has produced a persistent pattern of harassment, with conscientious objectors subjected to long-lasting cycles of prosecutions, convictions, and re-prosecutions. The Constitutional Court's ruling institutionalising such repeated punishment marks a serious regression, legitimising judicial harassment and reinforcing "civil death" that excludes objectors from civil, political, and social life.

2.48. UKRAINE

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	Yes		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1991	Alternative (Non-Military) Service Law No. 1975-XII of 12th December 1991	
Current provisions	Not recognised	Alternative service was suspended under martial law, attempts to reintroduce it were blocked by MoD.	
Duration	Military service	Civilian service (% of military)	
	Indefinite (under martial law)	None	
CO release of professional soldiers	Not permitted		
Minimum recruitment age	18 (voluntary), 25 (compulsory)	Admission to the state military HEIs from 17 (considered military service), to military lyceums from 6-7	
Military expenditure ⁴²⁴	\$ (% change from 2024)	Per capita	% of GDP
	84,109m (+19.7%)	\$2,197	39.6%

Principal EBCO concerns

- Immediate release is called for all conscientious objectors currently imprisoned, detained, or convicted solely for their religion or belief.
- Stalling of proposed legislation for alternative non-military service during wartime.
- Objectors face severe persecution, discrimination, torture, and hostile media campaigns, Supreme Court rulings treat conscientious objection as draft evasion, disobedience and a criminal offence, and appeals to Constitutional Court suffer judicial delays.
- Violent "busification" (forcible conscription) practices and military registration enforcement by Territorial Conscription Centers (TCC) and police lead to arbitrary detentions incommunicado, beatings, cruel treatment and deaths, restrictions in access to work, education, and public services.
- Ukrainian refugee males face deportation or return threats.

⁴²⁴Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.



- Russian occupation involves military recruitment and forced indoctrination measures violating IHL and detentions of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As reported by EBCO's Ukrainian member, the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement:⁴²⁵

Developments

At least 110 religious objectors were jailed by court decisions violating human rights, and thousands are being forcibly held in military units, many suffered arbitrary detention and torture, while legislation to protect the human right to conscientious objection to military service during wartime is still not adopted because of the pressure by the army⁴²⁶.

On 24 November 2025, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine responded to a questionnaire of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection asserting its position that conscientious objection to military service should not be allowed in wartime and that is the ministry's position in the interdepartmental communications on reforms of legislation.

The Government in May 2025 adopted the Rule of Law Roadmap formally committing to adopt legislation allowing conscientious objection in wartime and alternative service for religious objectors, with commitment to draft and adopt the amendments in the second quarter of 2026. However, during interdepartmental consultations Ministry of Defense insisted that conscientious objection should not be allowed during the war. The State Agency of Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience (DESS) tasked to draft the law pointed out lack of powers and suggested that Ministry of Economy should draft the relevant amendments. As of the end 2025, the amendments were not drafted. Because of the lack of public discussion (the topic of conscientious objection remains taboo), no public participation in the interdepartmental consultations, and since the suggestions of the Ministry of Defense is usually taken as ultimate necessity by all branches of power, possibility of amending law to allow conscientious objection remains questionable.

On 27 October 2025, the Supreme Court in a landmark judgment of a joint chamber of 7 judges upheld a conviction of Jehovah's Witness Vitalii Kruyshenko stating there is no right to conscientious objection in wartime on the basis of three highly questionable legal fictions

(fiction of national interest in compelling all citizens to perform military duty; fiction of possibility of military service without weapons; and fiction of equivalence of a religion or belief incompatible with military service to a criminal intent to evade it)⁴²⁷; the Supreme Court also noted that it is inevitable that beliefs of conscientious objectors must change to perform military duty. Two judges dissented pointing out international standards and that principle of rule of law was not observed. Cases of objectors Serhii Nechayuk, sentenced for "draft evasion" to 3 years of prison, and Tymur Chyzhov and Vasyl Volosheniuk, sentenced for 5 years of prison for "disobedience", were referred to the Grand Chamber (GC); in the last case, the GC refused to consider the case suggesting it sees no reasons to change practice of the joint chamber, with five judges dissenting, and the Nechayuk's case still pending before the GC. Institute of Peace and Law submitted amicus curiae briefs to GC and panel of judges of the Supreme Court in these cases pointing out legal grounds for requesting an advisory opinion of the European Court of Human Rights regarding a right to conscientious objection in wartime.

In October 2025, seventh-day Adventist Andrii Skliar who was forcibly mobilised, tortured, and arbitrarily detained in 2024, was charged along with 14 other conscientious objectors with disobedience to an order to train in shooting and take an oath with a weapon and were placed in pretrial detention, awaiting trial on charges that could entail sentences of 5 to 10 years in prison.⁴²⁸

Automatic military registration is introduced by the Decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No 1203 of 25.09.2025 and 1632 of 05.12.2025, transferring data from the Unified State Demographic Register and other information systems to the Ministry of Defense to conduct conscription of all men in age from 18 to 60. The Decree No 916 of 30.07.2025 introduces automatic military registration of women with medical and pharmacy education, also provides for automatic military registration of men in age from 25 years with military rank "soldier (sailor) in reserve".

A control of military registration compliance by employers was intensified with adding to Territorial Conscription Centers (TCCs) in commissions conducting the control representatives of the State Tax Service and the State Labor Service according to Decree No 892 of 16.07.2025.

⁴²⁵ More info about the organisation at: <https://pacifism.org.ua/>

⁴²⁶ <https://www.civilni.media/622/>

⁴²⁷ <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/399720158>

⁴²⁸ <https://www.civilni.media/514/>



Legislation was adopted to simplify administrative responsibility procedures, such as fines and administrative warrants and arrests for non-compliance with military registration regulations, by the Law No 4316-IX of 13.03.2025.

From 1 September 2025, all students of higher education institutions are obliged to undergo basic military training and could be expelled for refusal to do so; the basic military training is also required for public service employment.⁴²⁹

Conscription provisions and procedures

All men in age 18-60 are required to bear military registration documents which could be checked at any time by TCC, police, border guard, etc. In practice, it means that such men need to install Reserve+ application on smartphone that shows electronic military ID. Functions of the application and governmental degree regulating it are secret. TCC could add a record that a person is wanted, which means a warrant for administrative arrest and forcible transportation to the TCC usually with official reason "update military registration data"; in such case a red warning is indicated also in Reserve+, and in many cases people are allowed to recognize their guilt and pay fine through Reserve+ app to remove indication of warrant, which however could be arbitrarily reissued again any time. Regular practices are violent transportation to TCCs using minibuses and similar vehicles ("busification"), arbitrary detention and cruel treatment. Media reported tens of cases of death in custody of TCCs. The TCCs can't detain people officially, but usually do it unofficially.

According to Minister of Defence Mykhailo Fedorov, 2 millions Ukrainians are declared wanted by TCCs and 200 000 leaved military units without authorization in 2025. In October 2025, there were reported 4 500 proceedings per month to seize debts by TCC fines for violations of military registration. The Office of Prosecutor General stopped

publishing statistics of crimes related to absents without leave (AWoL) and desertions for reasons of national security. When discussed on Suspilne TV, the number 300 000 was said.

Conscientious objectors are not exempted from conscription and military registration but may obtain deferrals on the rare grounds not related to military registration, such as severe health problems. Limited number of clergy are reserved from conscription as essential workers, their churches are obliged to send chaplains to army as prerequisite to deferral, that is used by DESS as instrument of leverage on clergy to force churches to make doctrines compatible with military service.

The status of wanted by TCC is an obstacle to obtain deferrals, that was mitigated only for arms industry by the Law No 4630-IX of 9.10.2025.

Conscientious objection provisions and procedures

Conscientious objectors are continued to be forcibly conscripted, cruelly treated by TCCs and military units, and punished for conscientious objection, as reported by the OHCHR⁴³⁰, European Commission⁴³¹ and CoE⁴³², part of incidents with cruel treatment and punishment instead of alternative service was reported even by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman of Ukraine), despite the Commissioner's Secretariat usually denies in consideration of complaints of conscientious objectors referring to preeminence of military duty⁴³³ and wrote to EBCO that the right to conscientious objection could be considered only after restoring the territorial integrity of Ukraine; according to the Ombudsman's annual report for 2025, he received 1 669 appeals from conscientious objectors who were sent to military units⁴³⁴. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 16 prisoners of conscience⁴³⁵ during 2025, 5 of them were released on bail or after mitigation of verdict as in

⁴²⁹ <https://mod.gov.ua/news/bzvp-u-zakladah-vishhoyi-osviti-shho-potribno-znati>

⁴³⁰ <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/reports>

⁴³¹ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/ukraine-report-2025_en

⁴³² <https://rm.coe.int/memorandum-on-human-rights-elements-for-peace-in-ukraine-by-michael-o-1680b678ec>

⁴³³ For example, in 2025 the Secretariat of Ombudsman Lubinets refused to consider complaints of two Quakers, Oleksandr Ivanov (forcibly conscripted and detained in military unit for a month) and Yuri Sheliazhenko in danger of forcible conscription (Lubinets personally signed a final denial on 23 March 2026, four days after the forcible conscription and torture of Sheliazhenko); for details, see <https://ebco-beoc.org/press-release/2026-01-23-yurii-sheliazhenko-conscientious-objector-to-military-service-and-human-rights-defender-under-immediate-threat> and <https://www.pressenza.com/2026/04/yurii-sheliazhenko-the-world-will-be-better-without-armies-and-wars/>

⁴³⁴ <https://www.ombudsman.gov.ua/storage/app/media/uploaded-files/1-22042026-0951-angl-shchorichna-dopovid-2025.pdf> (the Ombudsman avoid terms "conscientious objection", "torture", etc.; page 99 says about complaints of conscientious objectors: "Violations of rights are reported in 1,669 appeals from individuals who, despite their religious convictions, were sent to military units, contrary to Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which provides grounds for replacing military duty with alternative (non-military) service";).

⁴³⁵ <https://www.jw.org/en/news/global/jehovahs-witnesses-in-prison/>

⁴³⁶ <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/134688351>



the case of Kruyshenko. According to their submission to the Supreme Court quoted in a ruling⁴³⁶, there are 1044 criminal proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses regarding their conscientious objection, and during the period of martial law 2119 Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to military units against their will, of whom at least 31 were subjected to ill-treatment. Adventists informed us about 4 known prisoners of conscience, one conditionally released (Zelinsky); one of them, Andrii Skliar, was arbitrarily detained near for year in military unit before official pretrial detention on charge of "disobedience", and tortured during forcible conscription. Also, hundreds are detained in military units.

There are 110 known cases of detention for conscientious objection by judicial decisions that came into legal force, including verdicts and rulings on pretrial detention; in several cases, courts of appeal reversed verdicts of acquittal and passed prison sentences with disregard to international human rights standards cited in the verdicts.

Complaints of conscientious objectors Vitalii Alekseienco, Serhii Ivanushchenko, and Dmytro Zelinsky on legislation allowing to deny in recognition of conscientious objection in wartime and punish conscientious objectors are still pending in the Constitutional Court of Ukraine⁴³⁷. The Court requested an amicus curiae brief from the Venice Commission, which adopted it on 18 March 2025; the document "Ukraine – Amicus curiae brief on alternative (non-military) service"⁴³⁸ says that "under no circumstances may a conscientious objector to military service be obliged to bear or use arms, even in self-defence of the country", "States have the positive obligation to set up a system of alternative service which must be separated from the military system", "defence does not depend on the use of military weapons by every citizen, nor on their inclusion in the military command system... conscientious objection and the fulfilment of the duties of solidarity towards one's co-citizens are not necessarily incompatible".

Voluntary recruitment

Voluntary recruitment campaigns target youth in age 18-25 and foreigners, promising a significant first-time reward. A law was adopted allowing voluntary service of persons older than 60.

Conscientious objection during and after military service

A law on social protection of military personnel was amended with a removal of a mention of the right to alternative nonmilitary service, emphasizing non-recognition of right to conscientious objection during military service. All proposals of MPs to preserve or modernize the provision were rejected.

Asylum for conscientious objectors

A Russian citizen Ivan Borysov, sentenced to prison in Russia for criticizing the war of aggression and support of Ukraine, living in Dnipro with a Ukrainian wife, faced multiple refusals in consideration of his asylum application. His residence permit was revoked on the grounds that his Russian passport expired, he was taken to a migration detention facility and threatened of being included into a prisoners exchange with Russia. Despite the court refused to allow the State Migration Service to detain and deport Borysov, he remained in detention waiting for appellate review of the judgment.

Ukrainian authorities lobbied for the end of protection of male refugees in Europe forcing them to return and be conscripted, and for prohibition of any Russians who served in the army to enter the EU countries, with no exceptions to conscientious objectors. Despite the European Commission reiterated protection of Ukrainians will long to 2028, in Norway a legislation was proposed to deny temporary collective protection to Ukrainian males aged 18-60, with some exceptions.

The German Federal High Court was criticized for a ruling of 16 January 2025 saying that a conscientious objector could be extradited to Ukraine even though he is threatened with conscription into the war and, if he refuses, years in prison.⁴³⁹

Militarisation of the education system

Educational institutions are obliged to inform TCCs about women subject to military registration by the Decree No 916 of 30.07.2025 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Also, the Decree of Ministry of Education No 177 of 12.02.2025 requires of educational institutions to comply strictly with military registration regulations, not enroll students without military registration documents, and envisions checks of compliance.

The Ministry of Education numerously declared it "fights" use of education for "draft evasion" considering abnormal

⁴³⁷ <https://www.civilni.media/448/>

⁴³⁸ [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)006-e)

⁴³⁹ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4390>



and subject to scrutiny any enrolment of students in age 25 and more years. In result of administrative measures, such checks and licence suspensions, the number of such students decreased by half, 53 500 in 2025 compared to 113 000 in 2024.⁴⁴⁰

2.49. UNITED KINGDOM

[\[See country page on EBCO website\]](#)

Conscription currently imposed?	No	Conscription imposed 1916-1919 and again from 1939. Abolished 1960. Last conscripts demobilised 1963.		
Conscientious objection first recognised	1916	Military Service Act, 27th January.		
CO release of professional soldiers	Yes	Regulations within each of the service branches cover the handling of applications for release. An “independent” Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objection is the ultimate appeal tribunal, but has met only once this century and upheld the military decision.		
Minimum recruitment age	16	For voluntary service		
Military expenditure ⁴⁴¹	\$ (% change from 2024)		Per capita	% of GDP
	88,978m (-2.0%)		\$1,283	2.4%

Asylum for conscientious objectors

Asylum guidance regarding Ukraine says that “there is no provision in international law which requires States to recognise the right to conscientious objection or to provide some form of alternative service”; punishment of conscientious objectors in Ukraine is therefore not recognized in the UK as persecution giving grounds for asylum⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰<https://osvita.ua/consultations/96129/> ;

<https://sud.ua/uk/news/ukraine/343165-u-mon-zayavili-scho-navchannya-ne-mozhe-vikoristovuvatisya-dlya-uniknennya-mobilizatsiyi-universiteti-pochali-pereviryati>

⁴⁴¹Military expenditure figures are estimates published by SIPRI (The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in April 2026.

⁴⁴²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-country-policy-and-information-notes/country-policy-and-information-note-military-service-ukraine-june-2022-accessible> (p. 3.5.4)



3. THEMATIC ISSUES

3.1. MILITARY EXPENDITURE

Table 6: Military expenditure: European States 2025

Country	Military expenditure US\$million 2025	% change from 2024 (inflation adjusted)	US\$ per capita	% of GDP
Norway	17,034	+49.0%	\$3,040	3.3%
Denmark	14,949	+46.1%	\$2,495	3.2%
Ukraine	84,109	+19.7%	\$2,197	39.6%
Netherlands	28,944	+14.5%	\$1,582	2.2%
Sweden	16,474	+24.1%	\$1,549	2.5%
Finland	8,082	+17.1%	\$1,437	2.6%
Germany	113,586	+23.9%	\$1,346	2.3%
Russia	190,417	+5.9%	\$1,318	7.5%
United Kingdom	88,978	-2.0%	\$1,283	2.4%
Luxembourg	855	+29.7%	\$1,264	0.8%
Belgium	14,532	+58.7%	\$1,237	2.0%
Poland	46,760	+23.4%	\$1,219	4.5%
Estonia	1,576	+1.0%	\$1,164	3.4%
Lithuania	2,952	+1.7%	\$1,035	3.1%
France	68,008	+1.5%	\$1,021	2.0%
Latvia	1,732	+11.1%	\$929	3.6%
Switzerland	7,591	+9.4%	\$849	0.8%
Greece	8,388	+5.6%	\$842	3.0%
Spain	40,212	+49.6%	\$839	2.1%
Italy	48,144	+20.1%	\$812	1.9%
Austria	6,353	+11.1%	\$697	1.1%
Czechia	7,052	-0.4%	\$660	1.8%
Armenia	1,725	+16.0%	\$582	6.1%
Slovenia	1,222	+16.7%	\$577	1.5%
Slovakia	3,118	+3.0%	\$568	2.0%
Portugal	5,861	+21.7%	\$562	1.7%
Croatia	2,102	+11.5%	\$544	2.0%
Hungary	5,002	-2.4%	\$518	2.0%
Romania	9,725	+5.9%	\$513	2.3%
Cyprus	663	+6.0%	\$486	1.6%
Azerbaijan	4,939	+23.7%	\$476	6.5%
Serbia	2,781	+6.3%	\$414	2.8%
Bulgaria	2,589	+9.3%	\$384	2.0%
Türkiye	29,987	+7.2%	\$342	1.9%
Montenegro	177	+8.5%	\$277	1.9%



Country	Military expenditure US\$million 2025	% change from 2024 (inflation adjusted)	US\$ per capita	% of GDP
Ireland	1,551	+9.8%	\$272	0.2%
Malta	125	+24.8%	\$230	0.4%
Albania	624	+6.1%	\$224	2.0%
Belarus	1,939	+21.5%	\$215	2.4%
North Macedonia	375	+15.6%	\$206	2.0%
Georgia	658	+18.4%	\$173	1.8%
Kosovo	235	+31.1%	\$140	1.8%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	231	-1.2%	\$73	0.7%
Moldova	113	-6.0%	\$38	0.6%



3.2. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS AS REFUGEES

Situation with protection and asylum for conscientious objectors in Europe worsened in 2025. While international guidelines promote the right to refuse to kill, the practical reality in Europe is a tug-of-war between human rights commitments and national security anxieties driven by the ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

The UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection No. 10 state that conscientious objection should be recognized as a ground for refugee status if persons face persecution for their beliefs⁴⁴³. However, many European states still disregard a fundamental and non-derogable character of the right to conscientious objection in their migration policies and processing of asylum requests. In 2025, the UNHCR expressed concern⁴⁴⁴ over the Return Regulation part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which could lead to refugees being returned to their countries of origin without a full assessment of their specific protection needs.

The new Border Procedure introduced in 2025 aims to process asylum seekers from countries with low recognition rates (under 20%) within 12 weeks, potentially detaining them for that period. This disproportionately affects conscientious objectors from countries like Turkey or Egypt.

Disturbing tendency is an explicit denial to refugees in a right to conscientious objection recognized domestically, like in a 2025 ruling of the German Federal High Court allowing to extradite conscientious objectors to Ukraine despite a threat of forced conscription or punishment for their religion or beliefs⁴⁴⁵, that clearly would amount to persecution, or a claim in a UK country policy on Ukraine⁴⁴⁶, citing a controversial House of Lords judgement, which says that "there is no provision in international law which requires States to recognise the right to conscientious objection or to provide some form of alternative service", therefore "it is legitimate for States to treat conscientious objectors in the same way as any other draft evader" and "punishment for refusing to perform military service due to genuine reasons of conscience does not amount to persecution". These legal interpretations appear to diverge from the established understanding of treaty law. By prioritizing domestic policy considerations over the authoritative guidance of international treaty bodies, such rulings may inadvertently undermine universal human rights standards. Policies derived from these precedents risk overlooking the international obligation of states to protect individuals from persecution or discriminatory treatment based on their conscientious beliefs. Furthermore, such an approach appears to conflict with the fundamental principle of non-refoulement, which serves as a vital safeguard for those facing punishment for their sincerely held convictions.

Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and influx of refugees made the migration policies even more tight to conscientious objectors. Russian nationals are considered as security threats and no longer able to receive multiple-entry visas⁴⁴⁷, a measure criticized by opponents of Putin hiding abroad from his repressive machine⁴⁴⁸, while Ukrainian government seeks cooperation of European countries (and succeeded with Norway⁴⁴⁹ in March 2026) in forcing male Ukrainians abroad to return and be conscripted.

In 2025, EBCO with QCEA, WRI, IFOR and other NGOs issued a joint statement⁴⁵⁰ calling on the European Parliament to reiterate its demand to Member States to provide protection for those who are at risk because they refuse to fight, and asking Member States to offer humanitarian visas to those who refuse to fight, and thus exercise the human right to conscientious objection to military service, whether they refuse conscription or make that decision while in training, in service or as reserves.

⁴⁴³ <https://emergency.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20on%20International%20Protection%20No.%2010.pdf>

⁴⁴⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/news/press-releases/unhcr-urges-stronger-safeguards-new-eu-return-rules>

⁴⁴⁵ <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-4390>

⁴⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-country-policy-and-information-notes/country-policy-and-information-note-military-service-ukraine-june-2022-accessible>

⁴⁴⁷ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu-adopts-stricter-rules-visas-russian-nationals_en

⁴⁴⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/nov/13/russia-eu-ban-multi-entry-visas-restrictions>

⁴⁴⁹ <https://www.udi.no/en/information-ukraine-and-russia/ukraine/>

⁴⁵⁰ <https://www.qcea.org/joint-statement-on-the-protection-of-russian-and-belarusian-conscientious-objectors-in-the-eu/>



3.3. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN TIME OF WAR AND OTHER NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

By Yurii Sheliashenko, editor and EBCO Board member:

Intensification of Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, security-profiteering of the new U.S. administration, escalating arms race and increased push for reintroduction of conscription posed new challenges for conscientious objectors in Europe: uncertainty regarding the future, shrinking spaces for pacifist expression and way of life, social alienation of conscientious objectors because of their unwilling to engage into build-up of civil-military cohesion, and lack of recognised ways for them to contribute to national preparedness for emergencies.

The media, reporting regarding the push for conscription in Europe, emphasise the military service and only episodically say a few words about alternative civilian service. Usually, it is not included into headlines. In 2025 we identified such mentions in reports on spreading conscription by the BBC, DW, ARTE and France24.

While the militaries spend a lot of efforts to marginalise and thwart pacifism, there is no clear European strategy of coordinated international action of nonviolent war resisters. The European World BEYOND War network published a hopeful statement entitled "Conscientious objection could change the world"⁴⁵¹, but good ideas need to be supported by systemic work, starting from development of European strategy of nonviolent war resistance and transformation of societies to overcome dominant militarism.

Pacifist response to preparations for war is usually a commitment to prevent war. For example, when the Swedish government issued a brochure to prepare society for war, the Swedish war resisters published an alternative brochure emphasising peacebuilding and peaceful conflict resolution. Apparently, the Swedish model is becoming an example to other European countries, with a Swedish minister of civil defence appearing on Euronews, talking about the concept of total defence aimed first of all on civil-military cooperation. In the context of the growing push for conscription of women, even in such a traditional society as Ukraine, "total defence" begins to be studied by feminist scholars in attempt to support by evidence that compulsory military service of whole population is not the only option and there are civilian ways to protect one's country.

On March 2025, the European Parliamentary Research Service issued a briefing "Conscription as an element in European Union preparedness" emphasising that the

Niinistö report, commissioned by the EP, "underscored the potential importance of conscription in developing a holistic 'total defence' concept that connects military and civil defence, while promoting a 'whole-of-society' approach to crisis response and preparedness" and calls EU for "collective effort to make careers in defence, security and emergency response more attractive to younger generations". It also points out that "all EU Member States with an active conscription system have recognised the rights of conscientious objectors through national law. Thus, they offer the possibility to enrol in an alternative service programme (usually civil or unarmed service)", and refer for details to the EBCO annual report⁴⁵². Despite that these and other relevant policy documents inter alia mention some civilian ways to resist war, such as countering disinformation and preparing households to survive in risky scenarios, nonviolent resistance as such is not mentioned, and civilian responses look like supplementary to the politics of militarisation. Civil society is mildly guided to support preparations for escalation and war, not make preparations for deescalation and peace; for example, the coercive nature of conscription is underplayed by its dubious presentation as a "social contract".

The "total defence", hardly challenged seriously by pacifists because of lack of commitment to work seriously on worst case scenarios, became a grey zone of military expansion into civilian life, that undermines a basic idea of conscientious objection that some people will never support any preparations for war. In countries adopting the concept of total defence, while on paper laws exist to recognise to some degree conscientious objectors, they are still expected to be friendly and supportive to the army and open to be pushed for surrendering pacifism and being involved into military operations. Pacifism becomes compromised by totality of militarism, invasive authority of the army overruling civil rights and hijacking democratic institutions. This problem needs to be addressed.

Preparations for peace should not be limited to only peacetime responses to war but also development of institutional fundament of nonviolent resistance of the people of every country and the whole planet to violent dictate of foreign invaders and domestic tyrants. Pacifists should be prepared to remain pacifists and make convincing contribution to national resilience in time of war, without any support of army.

⁴⁵¹ <https://worldbeyondwar.org/conscientious-objection-could-change-the-world/>

⁴⁵² [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)769541](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2025)769541)



4. RECOMMENDATIONS

EBCO will be presenting this report to the European Parliament, to the Parliamentary Assembly and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, and to various State authorities. In each case EBCO accompanies it with a set of targeted recommendations.

Meanwhile EBCO repeats 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, those who support them or advocate conscientious objection, with no further action required from such persons; or –secondly– providing a non-punitive and non-discriminatory alternative service of purely civilian nature, that must be not subservient to the military system, but designed and managed with participation of conscientious objectors;
2. to **recognise in law the right to conscientious objection to military service**, including the right to conscientious objection to all forms of mandatory registration, education and training for the purposes of conscription in peacetime and in time of war, and 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, and that the civil, economic and political rights of conscientious objectors are fully protected;
3. to **recognise conscientious objection as a vital part of pluralism and freedom of religions and beliefs in democratic society**, ensure awareness of legitimacy of conscientious objection among officials and the public, and ensure non-discrimination of conscientious objectors, who should not be subjected to hate campaigns and should not be presumed guilty in crime of draft evasion, or any other crime, and compelled to prove their innocence;
4. to immediately cease any recruitment into the armed forces of **persons aged under 18** and stop any military-type training of such persons;
5. 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, and especially where they are in danger of being otherwise forced to participate in armed conflict;
6. to **decrease military expenditure and increase social spending**, and to make available to citizens with conscientious objections means of specifying that no part of the taxes which they have personally paid is directed towards military expenditure;
7. to introduce **peace education** in all parts of the education system and prevent any form of militarisation of curricula.
8. To **make adequate arrangements for conscientious objectors and nonviolent action** in their institutional and legal preparations for any kind of emergencies and responses to perceived threats for peace, remembering that legitimate scruples of conscience might preclude significant number of civilians from subordinating to military system, and under no circumstances may a conscientious objector to military service be obliged to bear or use arms, even in self-defence of the country.



5. NEW PUBLICATIONS

1. New edition of QUNO pamphlet on international standards: **International Standards on Conscientious Objection to Military Service 2025**.⁴⁵³
2. New publication by QUNO **“Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Wartime”**. In this QUNO briefing, Rachel Brett outlines the UN's longstanding recognition of conscientious objection to military service as a universal right that must be upheld in all circumstances, including in wartime and national emergencies. Drawing on UN standards and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion under Article 18 of the ICCPR, it explains that this protection is non-derogable and cannot be suspended, even in a national crisis. The paper also highlights the importance of ensuring that soldiers and reservists can access recognition as conscientious objectors at precisely the moments when normal routes out of military service are most likely to be restricted.⁴⁵⁴
3. In November 2025, the **European Union Agency for Asylum** (EUAA) published a highly important report titled “Military Service and International Protection in Europe. Jurisprudence on applicants invoking compulsory military service, draft evasion and desertion as protection ground”.⁴⁵⁵ See in detail in the chapter 1.2.1. The European Union Agency for Asylum.

6. THANKS

EBCO wishes to sincerely thank all governments, national human rights institutions, as well as international and national non-governmental organisations and solidarity groups who responded to the request of EBCO for provision of information.

EBCO thanks as well all those who will contribute to the dissemination of its Report in a way that it can meet its purposes such as raising awareness and giving needed attention to violations of the human right to conscientious objection to military service.

⁴⁵³ <https://quno.org/resource/international-standards-conscientious-objection-military-service-2024/>

https://quno.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/QUNO_International_Standards_A5_print.pdf

⁴⁵⁴ <https://quno.org/resource/conscientious-objection-to-military-service-in-wartime/>

⁴⁵⁵ FERRÉ TRAD, N. (coord.), HERRAIZ JAGEROVIC, V. and TEJEDOR LEJONA, L., Military Service and International Protection in Europe: Jurisprudence on applicants invoking compulsory military service, draft evasion and desertion as protection ground. Comillas Pontifical University – University Institute of Studies on Migration under a grant project funded by the EUAA (Call EUBA-EUAA-2025-ASYLUMCASELAW). November

https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/Documents/2025_jurisprudence_compulsory_military_service_EN.pdf