



*4th International Forum of
of the European Organisation of Military Associations*

EUROMIL

**Armed Forces in Europe -
Political Mission and Social Dimension**

A contribution to the European Security and Defence Policy

November 12th, 2001

Quartier Reine Elisabeth, Brussels

*Project carried out with the support of
the European Commission*

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Introduction

When we began to plan today's event, of course we couldn't see that something was going to happen on the 11th September and certainly couldn't foresee its dramatic consequences for Europe and for the world. These consequences are something that is going to remain with us for the foreseeable future. So our debate today is going to go beyond the framework that was originally set by the Belgian Presidency of the European Council and the results we expect from that. After the crisis in the war in the Balkans which set us a direct challenge as neighbouring and affected Europeans, it has become clear today that we are now being affected by events directly following the terrorists' attacks in America without any real time to think or act.

A pan-European response which is both targeted and responsible seems to me to be becoming apparent. But we cannot look away, we cannot sit back, we have to question ourselves and evaluate to what extent Europe has actually learnt the lessons of crisis management. We have to be aware that we cannot get out of this situation simply by paying lip service to it. On the contrary, we have to put forward a substantial and unanimous foreign, economic, security and legal policy. The burden that we will have to bear is going to be a heavy burden and a long-term one. Servicemen from all over Europe are going to be helping to carry that burden and it does not find us unprepared after hostile actions in Europe and elsewhere. Nonetheless, it does affect the armed forces at a time where they are in a period of transition which started ten years ago and has not yet been concluded.

As we said in our invitation to today's forum, the pressure on our community of states is going to increase, particularly looking at the background of new threats which we have to manage and to meet through solidarity but also in an economic way, bearing in mind the decrease in national budgets. At the same time, we see running in parallel the process of a restructuring of our armed forces on a multinational level and it seems to us that the challenges being set for the efficiency of armed forces run counter to the current reduction of forces and their transformation, particularly the very wide-ranging and far-reaching change of a conscription army into a professional army and also in the necessary procurement of new weapons and equipment categories.

These developments lead to very serious social consequences for servicemen and their families on the one hand. On the one hand, the professional perspectives have changed and been reduced. On the other hand, there are high risks to health and safety linked to higher requirements for flexibility of intervention, mobility and training. The preparedness to intervene of the armed forces in Europe on the one hand, and the social services provided by European States for their servicemen on the other hand, seem to us to represent an unstable balance. That is why we chose the title today "Armed forces in Europe, political mission and social dimension". We hope to shed a light on the interplay between security and defence policy, on the one hand, and social policy on the other. The question of representative bodies and social dialogue will be a core element in the discussion.

The Declaration of Laeken and the Future of the European Union

Jean-Luc Dehaene

Summary

Europe is at cross-roads and will have to make a number of decisions in the near future. The next enlargement will create a new Europe and should not only be dealt with in quantitative terms. It should also lead to a qualitative leap forward, the main emphasis being that Europe will be less exclusively economic and more political. The purpose of European integration was to avoid a new conflict between the European nation states. The creation of a European Economic Community was a political decision which – in the view of the founding fathers – would in time lead to political integration.

Already in the 1950ies the issue of a European Defence Community was raised, but became a secondary theme on the European agenda due to the historical situation. Only with the Maastricht Treaty, directly after the Fall of the Iron Curtain, the issue was brought back on the top of the agenda. With the Treaty of Amsterdam and after the so-called St-Malo initiative a qualitative leap forward was achieved by integrating defence issues in the operation of the European Union. In the coming years the European Union will have to take an incremental approach, based on the conclusions from what is happening in the field.

In the development of a real defence policy three elements are of major importance:

- *The common defence policy should be in complementarity with NATO;*
- *It should be a gradual process, allowing the public opinion to get used to the new reality, based on the experience of its functioning in the field. This experience should help to break down the current ideological problems and to tackle the issue pragmatically and comprehensively. Only then should it be enshrined in written text;*
- *A link should be established between the common defence policy and the common foreign policy but also to the first and second pillar. This poses a number of institutional problems. First the EU will have to institutionalise the third pillar in order not to be in an inferiority position to fight internationally organised terrorism, drug crime, arms trade etc. The events of 11 September will also accelerate this process for the CFSP, yet the CSDP will remain an intergovernmental issue for a very long time.*

Finally, after the enlargement Europe will not only have more political power, it will also be confronted with a new purpose, i.e. to represent something in the world. It needs to constitute a balance in the globalisation process, which, if well organised, can contribute to a more sustainable and balanced world. To achieve this Europe needs to pool its resources and further develop the integration process. This integration needs a political dimension and, derived from that, a common defence policy as an essential pillar in that process.

Debate following the speech of Mr Dehaene

The debate focussed on social dialogue / consultation and participation rights for members of the armed forces on national and European level:

1. To the question, whether the restructuring process, which is going on in almost all European armed forces, needs guidance by social partners in order to achieve the best possible outcome for all parties concerned, Mr Dehaene replied:

It is clear that integration of the armed forces is connected to a number of personnel problems and I don't see how we can find a solution without some form or other of social dialogue with the people concerned. I think this consultation and dialogue needs to take place.

On the other hand, if at European level a number of things are harmonised we need to check whether these are general changes, or whether, on the other hand, any specific provisions are necessary for military personnel. So, I don't see any difference between the European and national level. Since specific provisions have been adopted at national level, I suppose that specific provisions will also have to be adopted at European level.

As to social dialogue within the defence sector, it was Mr Dehaene's opinion, that since defence will stay for a longer period intergovernmental, you will have an important dialogue on national level. But it was also his conviction that the integration of forces at European level will have an important effect of benchmarking on the national discussions and there one must say that the social sector in the European Union is also to a large extent working that way. There are not that many social rules that are real European directives. You have much more, certainly since the Treaty of Amsterdam, evolution in the social sector by benchmarking, by goals that are put forward by the European Union, but the realisation and the concrete implementation is at the national level.

2. To the questions whether the European Union should not be preparing further integration with regard to security and defence policy by starting to work on full integration of military personnel in the EU social policy (application of EU legislation)? The question was hung up on the example of multinational co-operation during foreign missions by servicemen enjoying a different social status and the implications that might have on the mission. Mr Dehaene replied:

I think that the chances to realise that, will be greater when there is indeed also a defence organisation at European level. It is just because the European Union, up to now, has regarded the social dimension as a complement to the economic approach that they have excluded sectors where the European Union normally does not interfere. So, I think that the best guarantee to achieve your goal, is that you have indeed a European defence organisation, where the defence problematic is a natural European subject too.

As to exclusion of certain sectors from social legislation, I don't think you can say that some specific rules necessarily mean exclusion. I think that at some moment there can be some specific rules, because of the peculiarities of army and defence missions, but I agree with you, that it should not be by definition "specific", but rather that it has to be defined within the negotiations and not as a rule be excluded, full stop.

The second example you give is for me an illustration that effectively, as I said, having things like a Rapid Reaction Force and so on, where troops of different nations are integrated in the same concept, that there will be comparisons one with another, and that will lend pressure to harmonise a certain number of things. I think that, even if I understand that you have been waiting for so long, but on the other hand – as you say, the glass is half full or half empty. In European terms, it is always half full, since before, it was less than half full, so that is a progress. So, I think that you should not underestimate the effects of integration. Like it was in the economic sector the same effect can take place in other areas like social status and so on.

3. As to the prospects of that happening, Mr Dehaene replied:

Two points: I think if you have a real integrated Rapid Reaction Force, where military forces of different Member States of the European Union work together, they necessarily will also make comparisons between their status in the different Member States, so that will also be a vector to work for common rules at the European level. The question of a defence organisation at European Union is a very important one. You will have a kind of military commando at European level but it will have an intergovernmental status. The danger of that is, if we have institutions working next to each other without sufficient internal co-ordination. That is something we have to be very careful about, but on the other hand I see no other alternative than to start that way. From the start there is a need for reflection on how the project can be institutionally integrated. For instance, I think, at some moments we should dare to use some of the European institutions, like e.g. the Parliament, even in an inter-governmental framework.

The military dimension of European Security and Defence Policy

Lieutenant General Rainer Schuwirth

Summary

The European Security and Defence policy (ESDP) has different dimensions and the military one is only one of them. Of equal importance are the political, economic, financial and social dimensions and possibly other measures. Indeed in certain cases European crisis management and prevention might not have a military dimension at all.

The process as it currently exists, is an intergovernmental one. Within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the ESDP is to enable the European Union to prepare to take the necessary decisions on a common and comprehensive approach towards crisis prevention and crisis management, and to employ and control the necessary means. However this is an intergovernmental process which in all aspects requires consensus in the Council, i.e. by the 15 member states.

The headline goal foresees to conduct military missions across the spectrum of the so-called Petersberg tasks, with a force up to 50,000 to 60,000 soldiers to be deployed within 60 days after the respective decision. The operations can be conducted autonomously (using only the assets and capabilities available in the member states) or could be conducted drawing in addition on NATO assets and capabilities or by inviting non-EU member states to participate. By no means we are talking of an integrated standing European force, but we are drawing from voluntary contributions on a case by case basis.

To translate such a project you need: structures, procedures and military capabilities. The structures established are the Political and Security Committee, the EU Military Committee and the EU Military Staff.

The latter is the only capability which the EU has at disposal on a permanent basis. The staff comprises personnel from all 15 EU member states on the level of Generals down to the level of Sergeant and every member is linked to his/her national military authorities - they are wearing different uniforms, have different payments - since we are working in an intergovernmental environment.

Procedures are needed to assure the various instruments of the EU to work in a concerted way and to guarantee interoperability.

Finally military capabilities, as mentioned before. The capabilities are offered by the member states or drawn from NATO-assets on a case by case basis and based on the requirements for a specific peacekeeping, enforcement, monitoring or humanitarian assistance mission (i.e. idem as in NATO context under non-Art. 5 missions). This is also the case for the command and control chain. As to what the European Union could do - in terms of missions - therefore I belong to those who do not want to speculate about that, because in the end you need the

approval of the Governments and Parliaments, and it is very difficult to predict how they will react in a certain situation and what they are prepared of, regardless what we have on paper to an actual situation.

To conclude: The project has momentum and it has as such been more than accepted. In the aftermath of 11 September, we should be aware of the new challenges, but also that the others have not suddenly disappeared, the Balkan operations for instance go on. Therefore the EU has to get prepared for the whole range of challenges. It is very important that the project receives the necessary support in a way also that the European member states are capable to deliver the military capabilities missing in order not to run into a credibility gap.

Debate following the speech of Lieutenant General Rainer Schuwirth

1. To the question, whether LtGen Schuwirth saw any purpose of a soldier's representation abroad during foreign missions in order to report on an early stage existing problems like e.g. uranium in Kosovo, LtGen. Schuwirth replied.

Principally, yes. But it needs to be noted that the influence of the EU into the member states' national military organisations is limited. One can try to convey a message through the military representatives to the national military but the effect of the information is up to the member states as long as security policy is organised intergovernmentally.

Yet the issue has never come up before. EUROMIL can try to initiate a kind of exchange of views in terms of information through the EU to the member states, but it might be more effective to try to convey a message through its national delegation to the EU. Because on EU-level so far, there is a lack of a platform for exchange of information e.g. on health and safety issues.

2. To the question, whether the national governments will be able to fulfil their commitments with regard to the indications they made on the capabilities they can deliver.

What was offered, currently seems to be realistic. I do not see any reason for suspicion there. Since, what has been determined is "up to" as I stressed before. Of course problems might come up under certain conditions, it depends on what these countries have already been contributing in other operations.

If we talk about shortfalls, the real shortfalls are lacking military equipment and capabilities, intelligence gathering, command and control structures. This is no problem if the money is available. In that case, this sort of equipment can be found very quickly. There are other shortfalls, however, which cannot be overcome in short notice like for instance the strategic transport aircraft, which will not be available by 2003.

3. To the question of the importance of the human factor in interoperability.

The human factor is of core importance. It are the soldiers who have to carry out the mission. But interoperability plays on different areas. There is a difference between interoperability in the EU military staff on the one hand and during foreign missions on the other. The fact is that a mission has never been impaired because of different social systems of payment, mainly because these missions are organised intergovernmentally and the soldiers of the different member states are working in different sectors. In so far, the question is far from a current concern in the EU.

4. To the question, whether the EU security and defence project need existing force packages and politically define contingencies per area.

For good reasons, from my point of view, the EU, at least so far, has not intended to define what they are going to do or where they are going to do what. Because if you do, you invite people to create a crisis, where the organisation has said, it would intervene or you limit your own decision-making possibilities and autonomy even.

5. To the question, whether in LtGen Schuwirth's opinion the European Parliament can be made aware of its responsibility towards military personnel particularly when it comes to defining the social rights and status of servicemen.

The European Parliament - only in relation to the EU security and defence project - has no responsibility and no decision-making authority as far as the employment of forces is concerned. This remains for constitutional and a lot of other reasons firmly rested with the national governments and parliaments. The project is not a supranational thing but is intergovernmental. The social dimension again has to do with the configuration and the set of decisions on the project. We are dealing with voluntary contributions, that we know theoretically but not concretely. So it is very difficult to assess for me, in what way this project could in concrete terms add to any effort you raise for well-argued social things towards the European Parliament.

Panel Discussion

Political-Military Relations after the Cold War

Prof. Dr. Peter M.E. Volten

Professional loyalty to the cause of maintaining or restoring national security has increasingly shifted to international duties and missions. So for the professional soldier, it has become increasingly more difficult to identify himself with nation and national security.

Professionalism is not just creating an all volunteer force. Professionalism means that the military execute efficiently the political demands and that the organisation reflects two criteria: efficiency and the political demands. My argument is that the political demands are increasingly, almost exclusively defined in an international context and no longer by national governments on their own.

Efficiency is judged by the public opinion. This public opinion is in so far important as it will support or reject the need for spending on defence or, even worse, the need for maintaining the military.

In my view the international dimension is insufficiently recognised in the relations between the new political community and the military. Key to adjustments of political/military relations is the realm of strategy. Strategy is the area where political purpose and the existing organisation of alliance, the military institution, meet. It is the area where military professionalism has to be addressed and thus where both, political and military leaders, each with their own specific responsibility, have to work out new common grounds in phase with the new missions and tasks.

Today security policy is no longer defined on a national level only, this makes the job more difficult. But exactly this calls for the absolute precondition of political leadership and strategic insight on the part of politicians: Parliament and ministers. And if not, the military will continue so-called capability-planning, which is a translation of getting as much as you can in order to respond to whatever purpose in the most flexible way. There is no money for that and the public opinion will not continue to support this. It is clear that the international community needs a wide range of capabilities that go far beyond the traditional hardware requirements, but decoupling military professionalism from this new international imperative is not only unwelcome but also senseless. Military education, recruitment policy etc. have to be directed towards the new profile of the professional soldier, who is also a diplomat in remote areas.

The Role of European Social Dialogue

Mr Jackie Morin

The EU has a strong social dimension, in which various partners, in particular the social partners, play an active role. There are also particular matters at stake for developing this role of social dialogue further in the public sector and in the sector represented by EUROMIL. The social dimension has strongly expanded over the past years and now takes up a full role in the construction of Europe.

In the European social model of today the social partners play a key-role in contributing to the shaping of social policy. Social dialogue offers them a genuine capacity for action: by putting forward their findings they can influence later decisions on a community level and they can take a number of commitments themselves.

This applies for the intersectoral level, but it is also true within individual sectors: there are 26 sectors, essentially in the service sector where social dialogue is taking place and progressing. This framework of social dialogue is supported at European level for all organisations which meet a certain number of criteria of representativity. Some aspects are: be a European organisation, have the ability to negotiate on behalf of their members and have structures which allow them to play a role on European level in possible negotiations.

The social dialogue within the public sector is a little bit more complicated than for other sectors. The public sector in Europe obviously has a major share of employment. As an average, some of this employment covers the basic tasks of the State, in particular ministerial services, defence, law and order and health, but very often the measures governing labour contracts for the public sector are not directly negotiated, but are specifically discussed or are set by legislative bodies. Some public servants are covered by statutory arrangements which lay down particular rights, and in that framework of course, quite clearly, social dialogue can only take a footing in an incomplete form. But would like to stress that nonetheless it would seem that in a lot of Member States social dialogue in the public sector is coming to align itself more and more on social dialogue in the private sector. So, for all of these reasons, I just would like to stress the following points.

First of all, there is no specific social dialogue at the moment for the public service in Europe, nonetheless there are exchanges of views and particularly, as far as the employers are concerned who meet on the European level, to discuss their views and exchange best practices. Certainly bearing in mind the trend that I mentioned earlier on about an alignment of industrial relations between public and private sectors, there certainly is some interest today to see whether one could not structure the two sides of industry to share their experiences on a European-wide basis. Social policy on European level is now developing considerably. That the social partners on the European level can contribute to that development because we feel that it ensures good governance, in other words it is both an efficient and flexible tool allowing us to take into account the concerns expressed by those directly concerned and it is a tool which the Commission supports in all of its different dimensions, whether it be intersectoral, sectoral or even on company level. So, indeed that might be the path that the public services might take in the future in a European social dialogue.

Social Implications of Multinational Military Co-operation

Major General Pete Segers

Those who talk about the social implications of international military co-operation are tempted to make reference to supranational social legislation in this field, but it is clear that, few things have been achieved until today, the beginning of the 21st century.

Allow me a brief overview of what has been done at a multinational level and of the existing social provisions:

The United Nations, has a fairly generous compensation system for all UN-personnel, and this compensation must provide for accommodation and food. There is also a lot of rules in terms of leave and also medical provisions and that is all.

In NATO, we have a status of forces agreement, as they are called, concerning the working conditions. There is one paragraph about well-being and of course advantages like being exonerated from VAT and other taxes, medical services, dental services and that is it.

Other international organisations, either in peace time or in missions are ruled by multinational memorandums of understanding. In the social field, these are limited to very short provisions for health and safety. In developing such supranational agreements, a number of national departments come in: the Finance Ministry but also Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Justice and of course the Defence Ministry.

For the big majority of the social aspects in the multinational military context it all boils down to the national legislation of each participating country. So, you may be tempted to analyse the various national systems to try and find out the smallest common denominator. Now, this is certainly a useful and interesting exercise but it is not easy, on account of the inevitable link between social legislation and the national budget and social traditions on the other hand.

Now, personally I am not convinced, by the way, that this can produce any useable result in the short term and I don't think there is any imperative need to do so. Our experience in international operations under the auspices of the United Nations or NATO or the European Union or the West European Union or the OSCE has shown that there are sometimes huge differences between social achievements, but that these are not an obstacle that cannot be overcome for the correct implementation of an operational mission. The reasons are the following:

The mandate and the rules of engagement have a sufficient mandate, training and equipment, and are flexible enough to be able to cope with evolutionary scenarios, until reinforcements arrive on the theatre of operations if that is necessary. Training, equipment and the command of the various components is today much more adapted to the scenarios of peace-keeping and the duration of the mission, rules for leave. The cycle of social coaching of the servicemen and their families has also been improved. The same is true for medical preparation, and the follow-up of the troops that have been deployed.

But this will not lead me to the conclusion that everything is well, everything is fine and that one should not try to eliminate the still existing differences between European countries. I am very much aware of the fact that I was not complete in my list.

The concept of social security comprises many more aspects that I haven't mentioned, for example, pension rights and compensation in case of illness or even worse, death on account of the mission. Well, of course between European countries, there are huge differences and the national structure of social security compensation is certainly not harmonised between the various countries. The same thing applies for the duration and the frequency of such operations and rules for leave. There again, we have some big differences between the European States. Still a lot of work needs to be done to harmonise social achievements within the armed forces of the countries and the Member States of the European Union.

On the other hand, it is very clear that the tragic events of the 11th September have reinforced the political determination to produce a credible forum on defence and security policy for Europe. And this is an opportunity that under the influence of European regulation, in terms of working time, well-being at the work place and working conditions, harmonisation of social conditions should be possible among the armed forces of the Member States of the European Union.

Security has a Social Dimension

Mr Jean Lapeyre

Together with EUROMIL, the ETUC defends the right of military personnel to discuss their living and working conditions and the restrictions that can be placed on that. The notion of citizenship should not stop at the barracks. The Nice Charter and the Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted in Nice are a step forward in that respect. The Nice Charter started filling an important legal void, in the sense that it is the first European document to put civil, political and social rights on an equal footing. A lot needs to be done to improve the Charter of Fundamental Rights – to broaden the rights in it and to give them a stronger legal footing in order to ensure that for instance these rights will also apply to military personnel. It is essential to ensure that in the next revision of the Treaty, a chapter should be created to cover both the rights and duties of European citizens, to give that true human dimension to the Treaty of the European Union.

The aim is to ensure that we have an equal footing of social rights that should exist throughout the whole of the European continent, so as to ensure true social cohesion and the safety and security of all European citizens. I think there are three important points for the development of the armed forces which have a clear social dimension. This has already been said before by previous speakers.

First of all, the professionalisation of the armed forces which throws up the problem of training, lifelong learning as in the public sector. We demand that right of lifelong learning in our companies, the same should apply to our armed forces so as to maintain and improve the skills and qualifications of our servicemen. And also the possibilities of moving into a different career when that should prove to be necessary.

The second point would be the reduction of budgets, that is a reality. The reduction of defence budgets obviously has an impact on the living and working conditions of servicemen with more stress, more workload as a result of such budgetary cuts.

Thirdly, and this is a consequence of the previous situation, the reduction of manpower in the armed services has an impact on the professional perspectives for servicemen and also on the futures of their families in terms of stability of their jobs.

In preparation of the next summit in Laeken, the ETUC together with the other social partners is preparing a joint submission on the role of the social partners in the process of the European construction. If we acquire that role in the next convention, we will be working in close co-operation with EUROMIL to try and defend the interests of military personnel in that debate.

My final point would be the enlargement of the European Union. It is essential that the new continent which is coming into existence is one of peace, freedom, economic and social progress for all its citizens, including military personnel, who have too often been excluded from these concerns. You can count on the ETUC for action.

Debate following the opening statements of the panel

1. Question to Mr Jackie Morin: Unlike many other sectors, military personnel has no consultation avenue with some organ of the European Union. Would you be prepared to take the view forward that perhaps military personnel should start to have more direct consultation?

It is clear that there are entire areas which fall outside of the scope of the social partners in the European Union. The freedom of association, the right of collective bargaining is not recognised in all countries, particularly in some policy fields which are linked to public services. And what I stressed was that quite clearly there is a trend at the moment, which is not yet wide-spread but which one can note, towards a convergence of the systems for industrial relations towards a system which is closer to that of the private sector. So, there is definitely some movement which should be taken into account. Now, that doesn't mean that everything is going to be settled overnight. There is no doubt a lot more to be done before we can really talk about progress.

To come to your second question, I could perhaps just simply give you my personal feeling on the point that you have raised, which is that there are a certain number of measures which have been proposed by the Commission on the basis of Art. 137 of the Treaty which suggests that we could move ahead in health safety, equality of opportunity and so on, by putting forward minimum standards. Minimum standards would basically apply to all, providing there is a working relationship between the parties and providing that no specific waiver has been foreseen in the directives that would be adopted. Now that is not yet the case, when we look at the working relationship for example for military personnel where you have a statute that is applicable. So, my personal answer would be to say: "Well, in the spirit of the Treaty, minimum conditions should apply to all, but we still have to lift a few blockages on the national level before such measures could be more widely applied. But perhaps other speakers on the panel would like to put forward their views.

Jean Lapeyre on the same question:

I would like to add, that it is not the Commission's problem as such or of a lack of will from the Commission. With regard to the emergence of social dialogue in public services including military staff, the problem is far more in the will of the Member States. There is a national prerogative which remains and which at the moment still blocks a consistent approach, a harmonised approach even with some differentiation, but at least harmonised in terms of the ability of military personnel to be able to associate. We aren't even talking about trade unions, we talk about the right of association, the right of discussing their fundamental conditions, in particular living and working conditions which affect both themselves and their families. I think it is a bit regrettable that a certain number of States refuse something which they feel is abandoning national sovereignty in relation of their armed forces. Yet in those countries which have accepted the right of association for military personnel, there are no disadvantages that I have heard of and yet others rejected it in the name of national sovereignty which seems a bit outdated and very narrow-minded. Now, we are almost in a problem of principle, ideological problems, difficult to overcome. We can see the things are changing. In Portugal, for example, we have seen that things have moved ahead, so we should not despair. I think we have to continue our work of trying to persuade the authorities which EUROMIL is succeeding well in, and if we can help to convince these States in moving ahead, if the Commission continues to support us, I think it will be slow, certainly far too slow, but things will move ahead.

2. The recognition of social rights for military personnel is a core issue for EUROMIL. About a year ago, a Member of the European Parliament stated that in her opinion, many within the European Parliament and Commission were of opinion that public servants, including military personnel cannot be defined as "workers", since they perform a duty. What is the view of the members of the panel on this issue? And is it not highly urgent to modernise the social life of servicemen towards modern European standards, if we do not want to create a gap between the servicemen and the rest of society with the possible consequences for future recruitment?

Prof. Dr. Volten:

The professional military cannot simply be situated in the barracks as a separate group of society. Democratisation of the armed forces has advanced pretty much, only maybe too slow. As far as his job is concerned, it has some particularities, in the sense that it deals with violence, but other than that, the soldier represents "a métier". The peculiarities of the military profession is one of the focal aspects of political-military relations, but in a modern society it are to be taken into account that the soldier is part of an open pluralist society and as such a normal person.

As to the gap between the military and the rest of society, I refer to what I have said on professionalism. If there is no proven ability and professionalism the public opinion can turn against the military profession. The same applies to how the profession is described to attract new recruits. The involvement in preventive diplomacy, participation in peace, and a number of other tasks should be underlined to raise the interest for the "métier".

MajGen Segers:

First of all there is always a risk that the distance between society and the army becomes larger when you are dealing with professional armed forces. There is little one can do about that, but making clear to society that, although the military have specific missions and tasks, they are part of society, as human beings, as civilians. Organisations like EUROMIL, politicians and the press can do a lot in this sense in creating more openness to public opinion and also in trying to convince the public opinion that the special duties do not contradict the fact that the military should have normal civil rights. Also with respect to recruitment, in my opinion, problems could be reduced if the public would be better informed about the actual tasks and work of the soldier on a day-to-day basis.

Mr Morin:

Fome categories of staff are covered by statutes, which means that they are outside the common legal provisions and that they have certain and specific regulations or labour regulations don't apply to them. I have the impression that in many of the public services there are deep-going changes going on currently with transformations, and more particularly development of more noble working relations, also in the public service. I have the impression that the same thing will happen in sectors which today are perhaps even more protected than those. Today we are moving more and more towards normal industrial relations

Mr. Lapeyre:

It is obvious that military personnel are workers, wage earners with special obligations, special working conditions with periods where they may be a suspension of a certain number of their rights, but they are wage earners. There is a harmonisation going on. As I was saying earlier on, there is no harmonisation in the field of right of association, but there is a harmonisation in the organisation of armed forces. In all of our European countries, the armed forces are becoming professional. It is very curious because there is a semantics there which

proves that they are becoming wage earners like others, they are talking about professional soldiers, professional army, like an industry. They are professionals, they are workers who have a profession, so the harmonisation is going on even in the semantics, in the way these people are called.

And there is something very important happening currently. We are rediscovering the values of public service and the values of the public interest. That is a consequence of the 11th September, at least even in an ultra-liberal country like the United States of America, you now have a population and a government, which is a conservative government, a liberal right-wing government which glorifies fire fighters, the police and the army. Three essential elements of public interest, of the general interest that cannot be privatised.

Perhaps the European Parliament should take an initiative report for a study on the situation of the servicemen in Europe to find out what can be harmonised, what cannot be harmonised, the constraints, just to take stock of the situation in Europe.