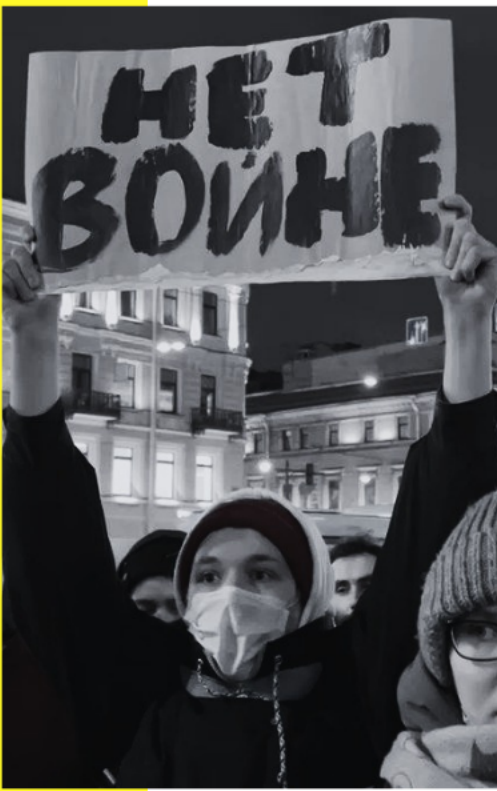




# Webinar

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE



Moderator: Semih Sapmaz, *War Resisters' International*

- Presentation of EBCO Annual Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe

Alexia Tsouni, *EBCO President, Association of Conscientious Objectors (Greece)*

Merve Arkun, *EBCO Vice-President, Conscientious Objection Watch (Turkey)*

Zaira Zafarana, *International Fellowship Of Reconciliation*

- Focus on the war in Ukraine

Resisting war in Ukraine, Yurii Sheliashenko, *Ukrainian Pacifist Movement*

Opposing war in Russia, Alexander Belik, *Movement of Conscientious Objectors in Russia*

Right to asylum for war resisters, Rudi Friedrich, *Connection e.V. (Germany)*

**MAY**  
**27**

**17:00-18:30**  
**CEST**



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# **PRESENTATION OF EBCO ANNUAL REPORT ON CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE IN EUROPE**

**Joint web event: EBCO - IFOR - WRI**

**27 May 2022**

## EBCO ANNUAL REPORT

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**Europe was not a safe place in 2021** for many conscientious objectors in several countries who faced **prosecution, arrests, trials by military courts, imprisonments, fines, intimidation, attacks, death threats, and discrimination.**

These countries include **Turkey** (the only Council of Europe member state who has not yet recognised the right to conscientious objection), and consequently the Turkish-occupied **northern part of Cyprus** (the self-styled “Turkish Republic of North Cyprus”), **Azerbaijan** (where there is still no law on alternative service), **Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, Georgia, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Belarus** (candidate).

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Still enforced in **18**  
**Council of Europe**  
**Member States:**

**Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia** (reintroduced in 2017), **Greece, Lithuania** (reintroduced in 2015), **Moldova, Norway, Russia, Sweden** (reintroduced in 2018), **Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine** (reintroduced in 2014), and **Belarus** (candidate).



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# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE



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| Country        | Time of abolition / suspension (ascending order) | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Andorra        | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Iceland        | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Ireland        | -                                                | Conscription never existed in any part of Ireland, even when the entire island was part of the UK. There is however provision in article 54 of the 1954 Defence Act, to enable male conscription during emergencies.             |
| Liechtenstein  | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Malta          | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Monaco         | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| San Marino     | -                                                | Conscription never existed.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| United Kingdom | 1963                                             | Conscription was abolished in 1963.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Luxembourg     | 1967                                             | Conscription was abolished in 1967 by law.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Belgium        | 1992                                             | Conscription was suspended in 1992 in peacetime.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Netherlands    | 1997                                             | Conscription was suspended in 1997, but the law on conscription still exists. At the age of 17, all citizens receive a letter stating they have been registered for service. They can be called up in case of war.               |
| France         | 1997                                             | Conscription was suspended in 1997 according to the law 97-1019. The law itself envisages the reintroduction when needed to defend the nation. In 2019 a new Universal National Service for 15- and 16-year-olds was introduced. |
| Spain          | 2002                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2002 by Royal Decree 247/2001, of 9 March.                                                                                                                                                         |
| Slovenia       | 2003                                             | Conscription was abolished in 2003 in peacetime.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Czechia        | 2004                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2004 by amendment of the Military Act, and it can be reintroduced in situation of threat or in wartime.                                                                                            |
| Portugal       | 2004                                             | Conscription was abolished in 2004 in peacetime according to law 174/99.                                                                                                                                                         |
| Hungary        | 2005                                             | Conscription was abolished in 2005 in peacetime by amendment of the Constitution.                                                                                                                                                |

| Country              | Time of abolition / suspension (ascending order) | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Italy                | 2005                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2005 by law 226 of 2004.                                                                                                                                                  |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | 2005                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Montenegro           | 2006                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2006 by decision of the President of Montenegro (30/08/2006) following independence from Serbia.                                                                          |
| Slovakia             | 2006                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2006 but it is legally retained and can be reinstituted in case of emergency.                                                                                             |
| Latvia               | 2007                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2007. A new kind of project, called "Total Defence", was introduced in 2017.                                                                                              |
| Romania              | 2007                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2007 in peacetime by law 395/2005. During wartime conscription is compulsory for men.                                                                                     |
| North Macedonia      | 2007                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Bulgaria             | 2008                                             | Conscription was abolished in 2008 by amendment of the Defence and Armed Forces Act.                                                                                                                    |
| Croatia              | 2008                                             | Conscription was suspended in 2008 by a governmental decision. In 2019 a short-term military service was introduced, but although described as " <u>conscription</u> " this remains strictly voluntary. |
| Kosovo               | 2008                                             | Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Since then conscription to the Serbian armed forces no longer applied, and was not replaced.                                                                      |
| Poland               | 2009                                             | Conscription was abolished in 2009 by amendment of the Constitution.                                                                                                                                    |
| Albania              | 2010                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Serbia               | 2011                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**



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## CONSCRIPTION AND CONTRACT OR PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS

Source:

International Institute for  
Strategic Studies (IISS), "The  
Military Balance 2020".

| Country                | Total strength of<br>armed forces | Number of<br>conscripts | % (descending<br>order) | Date of<br>estimate |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Switzerland            | 19.450                            | 16.450                  | 86,2%                   | 2020                |
| Finland                | 23.800                            | 16.000                  | 67,2%                   | 2020                |
| Turkey <sup>136</sup>  |                                   |                         | 70.4%                   | 2015                |
| Cyprus <sup>137</sup>  | 15.000                            | 10.700                  | 59.4%                   | 2020                |
| Ukraine <sup>138</sup> |                                   |                         | 50.0%                   | 2015                |
| Estonia                | 7.100                             | 3.400                   | 47,9%                   | 2020                |
| Russia <sup>139</sup>  | 900.000                           | 313.000                 | 44,5%                   | 2015                |
| Moldova                | 5.150                             | 2.200                   | 42,7%                   | 2016                |
| Armenia                | 44.800                            | 18.950                  | 42,3%                   | 2015                |
| Greece                 | 142.700                           | 49.600                  | 34,8%                   | 2020                |
| Norway                 | 23.350                            | 6.850                   | 28,5%                   | 2020                |
| Sweden                 | 14.600                            | 4.000                   | 27,4%                   | 2020                |
| Georgia                | 20.650                            | 4.350                   | 21,1%                   | 2019                |

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
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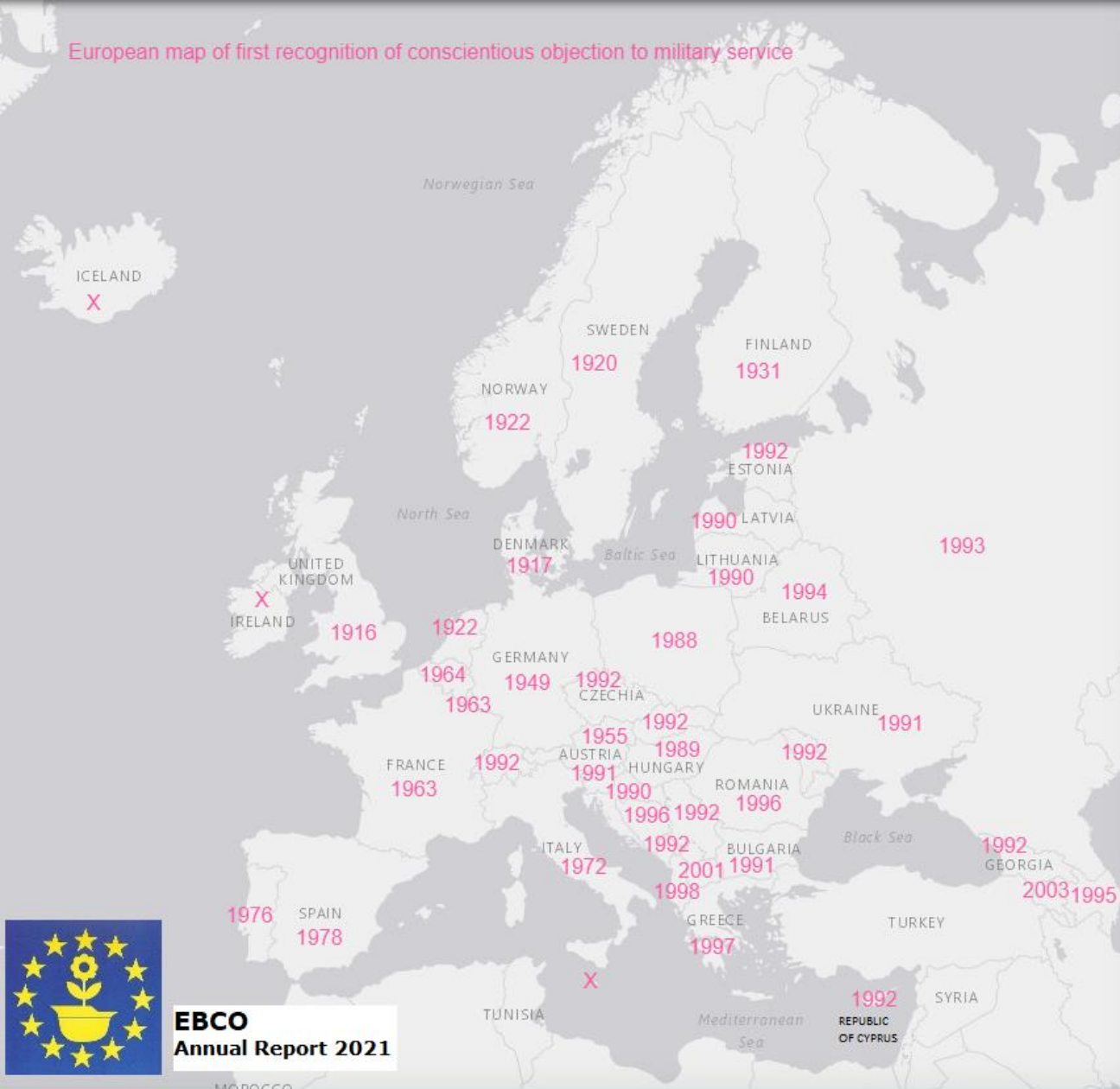


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European map of first recognition of conscientious objection to military service



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## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE

## RECOGNITION OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

With the **solitary exception of Turkey**, all Council of Europe states, which have ever had conscription, have **explicitly recognised conscientious objection**.

\* **This should not be taken as implying full recognition**, or provisions in line with modern international standards. For example, constitutional provisions in **Bulgaria, Russia and Belarus** were not implemented for many years; similar provisions have still to be implemented in **Azerbaijan**. In many cases the initial legislation applied only to certain religious minorities and/or merely made an unarmed military service available. **Despite legal recognition, the persecution of conscientious objectors often persisted – and persists.**



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| Year (ascending order) | Country               | Provision                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1916                   | <b>United Kingdom</b> | Military Service Act, 27 <sup>th</sup> Jan.                                                                                                                            |
| 1917                   | <b>Denmark</b>        | Alternative Service Act, 13 <sup>th</sup> Dec.                                                                                                                         |
| 1920                   | <b>Sweden</b>         | Alternative Service Schemes Act, 21 <sup>st</sup> May                                                                                                                  |
| 1922                   | <b>Netherlands</b>    | Constitutional amendment                                                                                                                                               |
| 1922                   | <b>Norway</b>         | Civilian Conscript Workers Act, 24 <sup>th</sup> March                                                                                                                 |
| 1931                   | <b>Finland</b>        | Alternative Service Act, 4 <sup>th</sup> June                                                                                                                          |
| 1949                   | <b>Germany</b>        | In principle in the <u>Grundgesetz</u> "Basic Law" of the Federal Republic of Germany, Art. 4. The first provisions in the German Democratic Republic dated from 1964. |
| 1955                   | <b>Austria</b>        | National Service Act                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1963                   | <b>France</b>         | Act No. 1255/63, 21 <sup>st</sup> December                                                                                                                             |
| 1963                   | <b>Luxembourg</b>     | Act of 23 <sup>rd</sup> July, Art. 8                                                                                                                                   |
| 1964                   | <b>Belgium</b>        | Act of 3 <sup>rd</sup> June                                                                                                                                            |
| 1972                   | <b>Italy</b>          | Act No. 772/1972                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1976                   | <b>Portugal</b>       | Constitution, Article 41                                                                                                                                               |
| 1978                   | <b>Spain</b>          | Constitution                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1988                   | <b>Poland</b>         | Constitution, Art. 85                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1989                   | <b>Hungary</b>        | Constitution, Art. 70                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1990                   | <b>Croatia</b>        | Constitution, Article 47.2                                                                                                                                             |
| 1990                   | <b>Latvia</b>         | Law on Substitute Service of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.                                                                                                    |
| 1990                   | <b>Lithuania</b>      | Law on Alternative Service of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.                                                                                                |

| Year (ascending order) | Country                                         | Provision                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1991                   | <b>Bulgaria</b>                                 | Constitution, Article 59.2                                                                                                                   |
| 1991                   | <b>Slovenia</b>                                 | Military Service Act (Official Journal of the Republic of Slovenia, n° 18/91).                                                               |
| 1991                   | <b>Ukraine</b>                                  | Law "On Alternative (Non-Military) Service"                                                                                                  |
| 1992                   | <b>Estonia</b>                                  | Constitution, Article 124                                                                                                                    |
| 1992                   | <b>Moldova</b>                                  | Alternative Service Act, No. 633/91                                                                                                          |
| 1992                   | <b>Republic of Cyprus</b>                       | National Guard Act, No. 2/1992, 9 <sup>th</sup> Jan.                                                                                         |
| 1992                   | <b>Czechia and Slovakia</b>                     | (Czechoslovakian) Civilian Service Act, No.18/1992                                                                                           |
| 1992                   | <b>Georgia</b>                                  | Military Service Act, Art. 12                                                                                                                |
| 1992                   | <b>Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro</b> | Constitution, Art. 58 – Montenegro gained independence in 2006; Kosovo declared independence in 2008.                                        |
| 1992                   | <b>Switzerland</b>                              | Constitutional amendment by introducing the following phrase in Art. 59 lit. 1: "Alternative civilian service shall be provided for by law." |
| 1993                   | <b>Russia</b>                                   | Constitution, Art. 59.3                                                                                                                      |
| 1994                   | <b>Belarus</b>                                  | Constitution, Art. 57.<br>First Alternative Service Law in 2015.                                                                             |
| 1995                   | <b>Azerbaijan</b>                               | Constitution, Art. 76                                                                                                                        |
| 1996                   | <b>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</b>                 | Parallel Defence Acts in the Federation and in the <u>Republika Srpska</u>                                                                   |
| 1996                   | <b>Romania</b>                                  | Act No. 46/1996, Art. 4                                                                                                                      |
| 1997                   | <b>Greece</b>                                   | Law No. 2510/97                                                                                                                              |
| 1998                   | <b>Albania</b>                                  | Constitution, Art. 166                                                                                                                       |
| 2001                   | <b>North Macedonia</b>                          | Defence Act, Art. 8                                                                                                                          |
| 2003                   | <b>Armenia</b>                                  | Alternative Service Act                                                                                                                      |

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## European Map of Conscientious Objection to Military Service

- Conscription: No
- Conscription: Yes - Recognition of conscientious objection: Yes
- Conscription: Yes - Recognition of conscientious objection: No

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Created with mapchart.net



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| Country                   | Military service duration | Civilian service duration                                   | Ratio to military service duration (ascending order) | Gender                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Norway</b>             | 12                        | No alternative service required of conscientious objectors. |                                                      | Men are obliged by law.                                                                         |
| <b>Sweden</b>             | 11                        | Civil conscription is not activated.                        |                                                      | Men and women are obliged by law.                                                               |
| <b>Denmark</b>            | 4                         | 4                                                           | 1                                                    | Men are obliged by law. Women may participate.                                                  |
| <b>Moldova</b>            | 12                        | 12                                                          | 1                                                    | Men are obliged by law.                                                                         |
| <b>Estonia</b>            | 8-12                      | 12                                                          | 1-1.5                                                | Men are obliged by law. The Defence Forces Service Act of 2013 states that women can volunteer. |
| <b>Finland</b>            | ~5.5, 8.5 or 11.5         | ~11.5                                                       | 1-2.1                                                | Men are obliged by law. Women can volunteer.                                                    |
| <b>Lithuania</b>          | 9                         | 10                                                          | 1.1                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                                                                         |
| <b>Greece</b>             | 9 or 12                   | 15                                                          | 1.25-1.7                                             | Men are obliged by law.                                                                         |
| <b>Republic of Cyprus</b> | 14                        | 19                                                          | 1.4                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                                                                         |

| Country            | Military service duration | Civilian service duration                  | Ratio to military service duration (ascending order) | Gender                                       |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Austria</b>     | 6                         | 9                                          | 1.5                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Switzerland</b> | ~9                        | ~13                                        | 1.5                                                  | Men are obliged by law. Women can volunteer. |
| <b>Ukraine</b>     | 18 or 12                  | 27 or 18                                   | 1.5                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Georgia</b>     | 12                        | 18                                         | 1.5                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Armenia</b>     | 24                        | 36                                         | 1.5                                                  | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Russia</b>      | 12                        | 21                                         | 1.75                                                 | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Belarus</b>     | 18 or 12 or 6             | 36 or 24                                   | 2                                                    | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Turkey</b>      | 6                         | No alternative civilian service available. |                                                      | Men are obliged by law.                      |
| <b>Azerbaijan</b>  | 18                        | No alternative civilian service available. |                                                      | Men are obliged by law.                      |

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## MILITARY EXPENDITURE

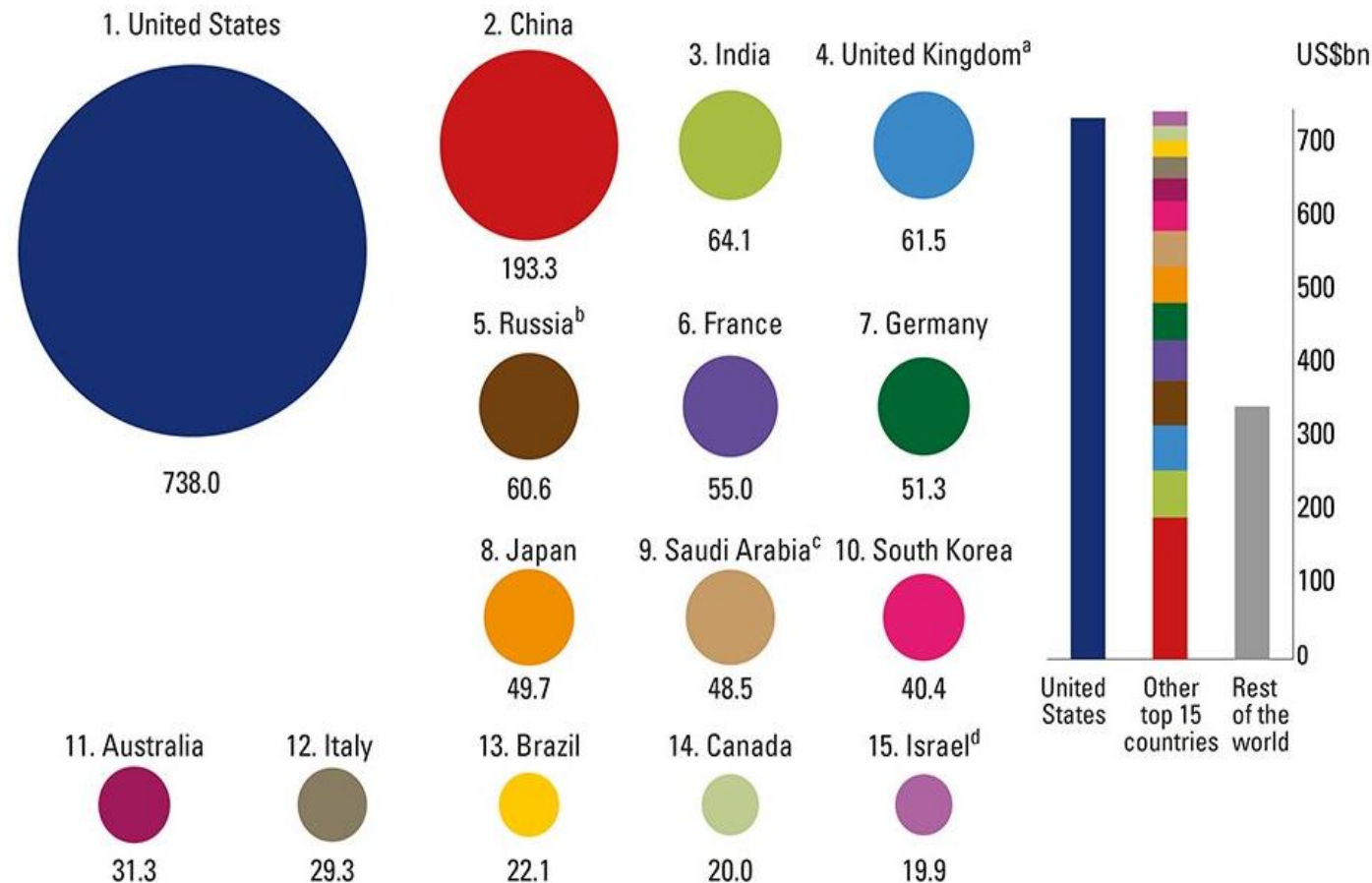
Yet another measure of militarisation is given by military expenditure.

Sources:

International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), “The Military Balance 2020”.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “Military Expenditure Database 2020”.

## Top 15 defence budgets in 2020<sup>†</sup> (US\$bn)



<sup>a</sup> Includes Armed Forces Pension Scheme; <sup>b</sup> Total defence expenditure including National Guard, Federal Border Service and military pensions; <sup>c</sup> Excludes security expenditure; <sup>d</sup> Includes US Foreign Military Assistance. Note: US dollar totals are calculated using average market exchange rates for 2020, derived using IMF data. The relative position of countries will vary not only as a result of actual adjustments in defence spending levels, but also due to exchange-rate fluctuations between domestic currencies and the US dollar. The use of average exchange rates reduces these fluctuations, but the effects of such movements can be significant in a number of cases.

Source: IISS Military Balance+

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# MILITARY EXPENDITURE

In 2020 only nine states (**Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Norway, Russia, Malta, Greece, Armenia and Serbia**) registered a **decline**. The really big proportional **increases** in 2020 were in **Montenegro, Romania, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Hungary, Belgium and Luxembourg**.

| Country                                                                                              | Military Expenditure US\$ million 2020 | % change from 2019 | US\$ per capita | % of GDP |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|
|  Albania              | 222.0                                  | 12.6%              | 77.2            | 1.5%     |
|  Armenia              | 634.0                                  | -2.8%              | 213.9           | 4.9%     |
|  Austria              | 3601.6                                 | 11.2%              | 399.9           | 0.8%     |
|  Azerbaijan           | 2237.8                                 | 20.7%              | 220.7           | 5.4%     |
|  Belarus              | 844.5                                  | 9.2%               | 89.4            | 1.3%     |
|  Belgium              | 5461.2                                 | 14.7%              | 471.2           | 1.1%     |
|  Bosnia & Herzegovina | 167.5                                  | 1.3%               | 51.1            | 0.9%     |
|  Bulgaria             | 1247.2                                 | -42.2%             | 179.5           | 1.8%     |
|  Croatia              | 1034.9                                 | 3.3%               | 252.1           | 1.8%     |
|  Republic of Cyprus  | 418.8                                  | 4.3%               | 346.9           | 1.8%     |
|  Czechia            | 3252.5                                 | 11.8%              | 303.7           | 1.4%     |
|  Denmark            | 4953.4                                 | 8.7%               | 855.2           | 1.4%     |
|  Estonia            | 701.0                                  | 10.0%              | 528.5           | 2.3%     |
|  Finland            | 4087.5                                 | 12.6%              | 737.7           | 1.5%     |
|  France             | 52747.1                                | 5.2%               | 808.1           | 2.1%     |

| Country                                                                                             | Military Expenditure US\$ million 2020 | % change from 2019 | US\$ per capita | % of GDP |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|
|  Georgia           | 292.2                                  | -5.9%              | 73.2            | 1.8%     |
|  Germany           | 52764.8                                | 7.7%               | 629.8           | 1.4%     |
|  Greece            | 5301.4                                 | -3.1%              | 508.6           | 2.8%     |
|  Hungary           | 2409.5                                 | 17.5%              | 249.4           | 1.6%     |
|  Iceland           | 0                                      | 0%                 | 0               | 0%       |
|  Ireland           | 1144.4                                 | 2.8%               | 231.8           | 0.3%     |
|  Italy             | 28921.3                                | 9.6%               | 478.3           | 1.6%     |
|  Kosovo            | 79.0                                   | 20.2%              | 42.2            | 1.1%     |
|  Latvia            | 756.9                                  | 9.4%               | 401.3           | 2.3%     |
|  Lithuania        | 1170.6                                 | 7.0%               | 430.0           | 2.1%     |
|  Luxembourg      | 489.5                                  | 14.2%              | 782.0           | 0.8%     |
|  Malta           | 80.6                                   | -3.6%              | 182.6           | 0.6%     |
|  Moldova         | 44.5                                   | 3.5%               | 11.0            | 0.4%     |
|  Montenegro      | 102.1                                  | 31.5%              | 162.5           | 2.1%     |
|  Netherlands     | 12578.4                                | 4.8%               | 734.1           | 1.4%     |
|  North Macedonia | 158.0                                  | 8.1%               | 75.8            | 1.3%     |

| Country                                                                                              | Military Expenditure US\$ million 2020 | % change from 2019 | US\$ per capita | % of GDP |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|
|  Norway           | 7112.5                                 | -5.4%              | 1312.0          | 1.9%     |
|  Poland           | 13026.7                                | 10.5%              | 344.2           | 2.2%     |
|  Portugal         | 4639.1                                 | 8.4%               | 455.0           | 2.1%     |
|  Romania          | 5726.8                                 | 24.1%              | 297.7           | 2.3%     |
|  Russia           | 61712.5                                | -5.4%              | 422.9           | 4.3%     |
|  Serbia           | 1121.2                                 | -2.0%              | 128.3           | 2.1%     |
|  Slovakia         | 1837.5                                 | 1.9%               | 336.6           | 1.8%     |
|  Slovenia         | 574.8                                  | 0.3%               | 276.5           | 1.1%     |
|  Spain            | 17431.8                                | 1.4%               | 372.8           | 1.4%     |
|  Sweden          | 6453.6                                 | 10.5%              | 639.0           | 1.2%     |
|  Switzerland    | 5701.8                                 | 11.5%              | 658.8           | 0.8%     |
|  Turkey         | 17724.6                                | -14.0%             | 210.2           | 2.8%     |
|  Ukraine        | 5924.2                                 | 9.3%               | 135.5           | 4.1%     |
|  United Kingdom | 59238.5                                | 4.2%               | 872.6           | 2.2%     |

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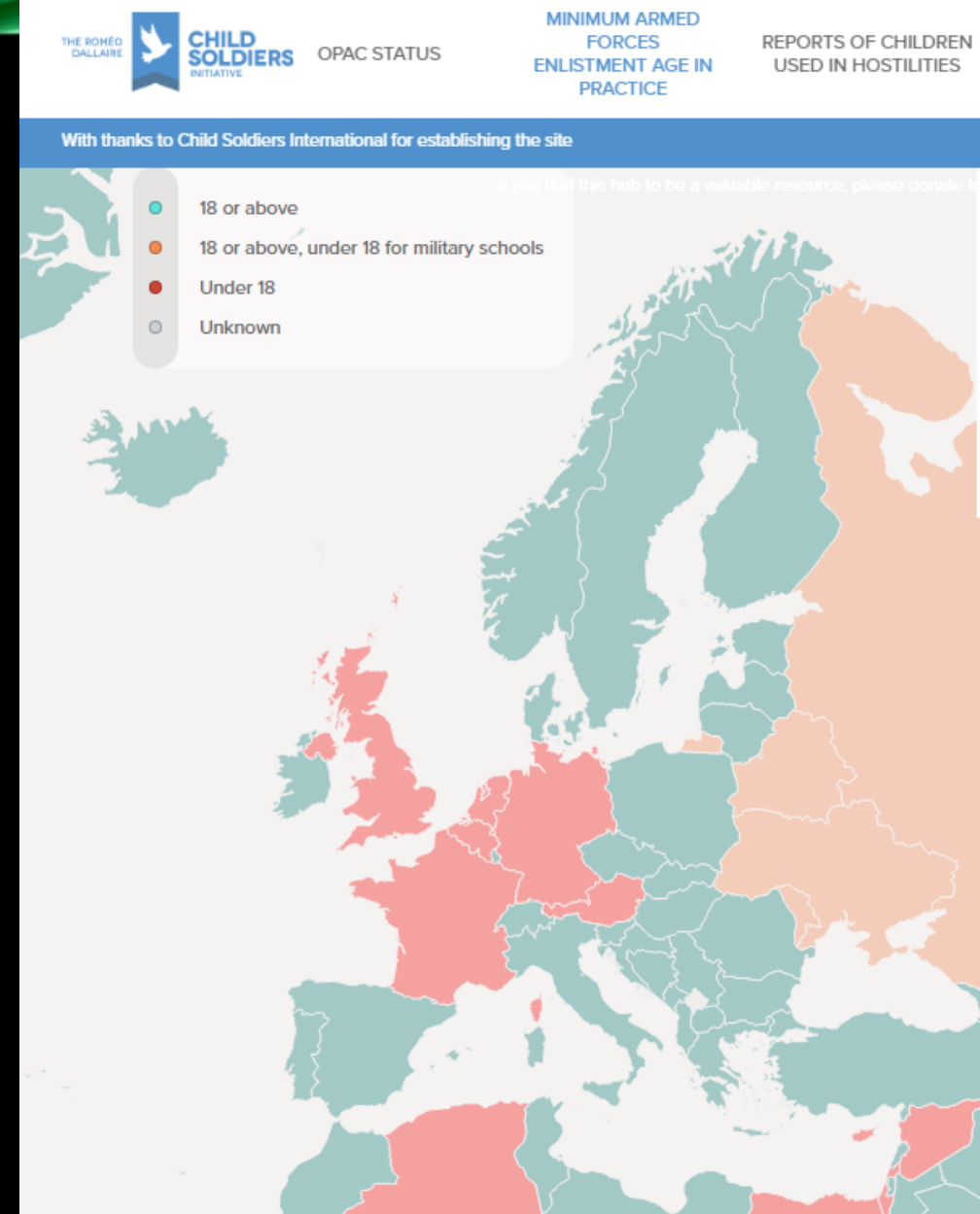
## RECRUITMENT AGES

Although the **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict** encourages states to end all recruitment of persons below the age of 18, **a disturbing number of European states continue to do this.**

Worse, some breach the absolute prohibitions in the Optional Protocol by **placing servicemen aged under 18 at risk of active deployment**, or by **allowing conscripts to enlist before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

Source: Child Soldiers Initiative, January 2021

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**



## RECRUITMENT AGES

| Country                                                                                                         | Minimum conscription age | Minimum voluntary enlistment age                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Albania</b>                  | No conscription          | 19                                                                |
|  <b>Armenia</b>                  | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 17 for cadets                      |
|  <b>Austria</b>                  | 18                       | Under 18: 17 on request                                           |
|  <b>Azerbaijan</b>               | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 17 for cadets                      |
|  <b>Belarus</b>                  | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 16 for Military Academies          |
|  <b>Belgium</b>                  | No conscription          | Under 18: On completion of secondary education, regardless of age |
|  <b>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</b> | No conscription          | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Bulgaria</b>                 | No conscription          | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Croatia</b>                  | No conscription          | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Republic of Cyprus</b>      | 17                       | Under 18: 17                                                      |
|  <b>Czechia</b>                | No conscription          | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Denmark</b>                | 18                       | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Estonia</b>                | 18                       | 18                                                                |
|  <b>Finland</b>                | 18                       | 18                                                                |
|  <b>France</b>                 | No conscription          | Under 18: 17, 16 for Technical School                             |

| Country                                                                                                    | Minimum conscription age | Minimum voluntary enlistment age                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Georgia</b>           | 18                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Germany</b>           | No conscription          | Under 18: 17                                          |
|  <b>Greece</b>            | 19                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Hungary</b>           | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Iceland</b>           | No conscription          | No armed forces                                       |
|  <b>Ireland</b>           | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Italy</b>             | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Latvia</b>            | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Lithuania</b>         | 19                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Luxembourg</b>       | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Malta</b>           | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Moldova</b>         | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 17 for Military School |
|  <b>Montenegro</b>      | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Netherlands</b>     | No conscription          | Under 18: 17                                          |
|  <b>North Macedonia</b> | No conscription          | 18                                                    |

| Country                                                                                                     | Minimum conscription age | Minimum voluntary enlistment age                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Norway</b>           | 18                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Poland</b>           | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Portugal</b>         | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Romania</b>          | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Russia</b>           | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 16 for Military School |
|  <b>Serbia</b>           | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Slovakia</b>         | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Slovenia</b>         | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Spain</b>            | No conscription          | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Sweden</b>          | 18                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Switzerland</b>    | 18                       | 18                                                    |
|  <b>Turkey</b>         | 19                       |                                                       |
|  <b>Ukraine</b>        | 18                       | Under 18 for military schools: 17 for cadets          |
|  <b>United Kingdom</b> | No conscription          | Under 18: 16                                          |

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**



**IFOR** INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP  
OF RECONCILIATION



## REFUGEES

**Refugees are not always granted international protection as they should.**

However; in **Germany**, the asylum application of **Beran Mehmet İşçi** (from Turkey and of Kurdish origin) was accepted in September 2021 and he was granted the **refugee status**.



**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
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# EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ECtHR)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

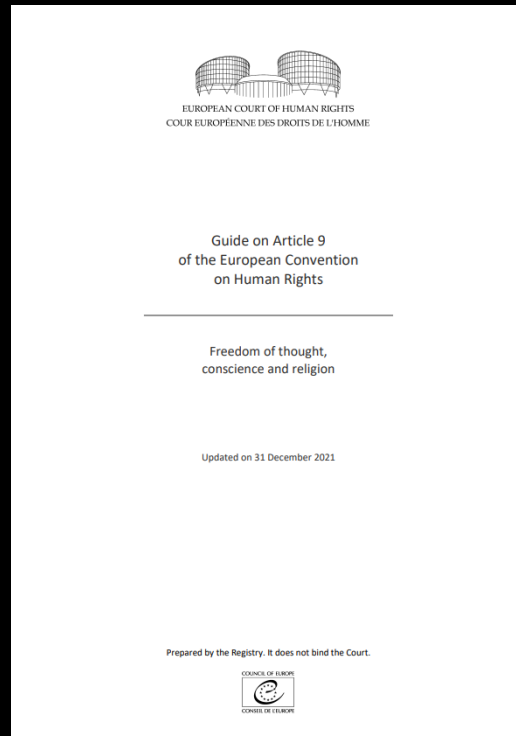
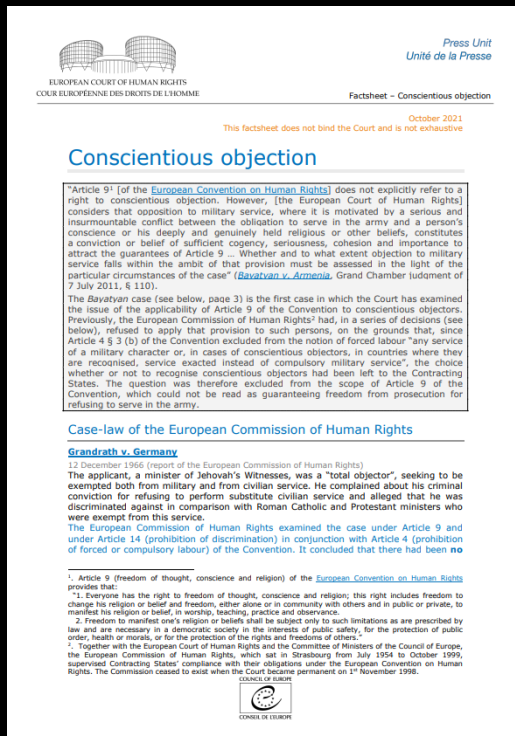


CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



The Press Unit of the ECtHR published an updated version of its **factsheet on conscientious objection** in October 2021. A more comprehensive study “**Guide on Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights**” was updated in August 2021.

**Three cases are pending before the ECtHR against Turkey**, concerning **COs from the northern part of Cyprus: Halil Karapasaoglu, Haluk Selam Tufanli and Murat Kanatli** (EBCO Board Member).



# COUNCIL OF EUROPE (CoE) COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS



On 24 November 2021 the CoE Committee of Ministers specified the terms of reference of the **Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)** valid from 2022–2025, which includes “Workshop, conference, or dialogue on human rights of members of the armed forces, **with attention to issues concerning conscientious objection to compulsory military service**”.

Since several years **EBCO** has been involved in the work of the CDDH on conscientious objection.

## EUROPEAN UNION (EU)



The **Turkey 2021 Report of the European Commission** underlines: “**Several ECtHR judgements regarding conscientious objection are yet to be implemented.**”

However; once again the right to conscientious objection to military service is not mentioned at all in the latest **EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World** nor in the corresponding **motion for a European Parliament resolution.**

## UNITED NATIONS (UN)



At the UN Human Rights Council level, the **Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** published a **report on “Freedom of Thought”** on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, which then presented to the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2021. The Report examines the theoretical scope and potential violations of the first right in article 18 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

It is worth highlighting that, according to the jurisprudence of the UN Human Rights Committee, **the right to conscientious objection to military service inheres in the right of article 18.**

# COUNTRY REPORTS FOR ALL CoE MEMBER STATES



## 1.2.14 FINLAND

|      |                                                                           |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | Conscription:                                                             | Yes   | Approximately two thirds of males serve the military service.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|      | Conscientious objection:                                                  | 1931  | First recognised by Alternative Service Act, 4 <sup>th</sup> June.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|      | Military:                                                                 | ~5.5  | or ~8.5 or ~11.5 (The exact service durations in the military are 165, 255 or 347 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|      | Civilian:                                                                 | ~11.5 | (The exact service duration in the non-military service is 347 days)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|      | Conscription:                                                             | 18    | In case of partial compulsory mobilization minimum age is 18 years. In case of general compulsory mobilization also those who are not yet served in military but turn 18 years that year can be called for service. So minimum age for general compulsory mobilization is 17 years. This includes war time. |
|      | Voluntary enlistment:                                                     | 18    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| More | <a href="https://ebco-beoc.org/finland">https://ebco-beoc.org/finland</a> |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

See also Section 1.1.3.1.

### The UN Human Rights Committee

The UN Human Rights Committee examined Finland's seventh periodic report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on its 131<sup>st</sup> session which was held in March 2021. Committees' criticism towards the situation of conscientious objectors has further increased compared to previous conclusions issued in 2013.

In April 2021 EBCO urged Finland to urgently comply with the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee, to stop prosecuting and imprisoning conscientious objectors, and amend the civilian service which is still extremely punitive and discriminatory.<sup>79</sup>

### The Parliamentary Committee on Development of Conscription

The Parliamentary Committee on Development of Conscription and fulfilling national defence obligation published its report on 26 November 2021.<sup>80</sup> As the framework conditions set for the work, the Committee's suggestions were expected to produce "operational added value to military national defence, support the maintenance and strengthening of the will to defend the country and increase equality among citizens". The government of Finland set the Committee on 5 March 2020, after the introduction by the Ministry of Defence.<sup>81</sup> The Committee consisted of members from all parliamentary parties. The appointment decision

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.ebco-beoc.org/node/501>

<sup>80</sup> <https://iulkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163633>

<sup>81</sup> <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/paatokset/paatokset?decisionId=0900908f806827ab>



## 1.2.37 RUSSIAN FEDERATION

|      |                                                                         |      |                                                                                                                                            |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | Conscription:                                                           | Yes  |                                                                                                                                            |
|      | Conscientious objection:                                                | 1993 | First recognised in Constitution, Art. 59.3.                                                                                               |
|      | Military:                                                               | 12   |                                                                                                                                            |
|      | Civilian:                                                               | 21   | Or 18 months for alternative service in organizations affiliated to armed forces, such as military factories and construction departments. |
|      | Conscription:                                                           | 18   |                                                                                                                                            |
|      | Voluntary enlistment:                                                   | 16   | Under 18 for military schools: 16 for Military School                                                                                      |
| More | <a href="https://ebco-beoc.org/russia">https://ebco-beoc.org/russia</a> |      |                                                                                                                                            |

According to [The Movement of Conscientious Objectors](#):

### Suppression of NGOs

EBCO's member organisation in Russia [Citizen Army Law](#) has been declared as a foreign agent. (<https://miniust.gov.ru/ru/events/48667/>) The work of NGO Soldiers' Mothers (<https://soldiersmothers.ru>) is also under suppression. EBCO strongly condemns these grave violations of fundamental human rights from the Russian authorities.

Citizen, Army, Law has almost ceased their activities. The organisation is closely connected with the country's oldest human rights group Memorial which was ordered to be closed by the Prosecutor General's Office and the Supreme Court. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59808624>)

The Federal Security Service FSB published on October 1 a list of information that is not classified as secret information, but if reaching foreign states and citizens, and "can harm Russian Federation" those who collected and disseminated this information may be prosecuted. Such information includes e.g. information about the moral and psychological state in military units, information about the state of health of military personnel in military units, information about violations of the law in military units. This is exactly what The Soldiers' Mothers have been doing until the list appeared. (<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-foreign-agents-topics/31487969.html>, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-soldiers-mothers-ngo-persecution/31495904.html>)

The organization returned to the way they started in the 1990's and their work concentrates on guidance. For example, if the parents of a conscript apply, the organization's employees can suggest what applications they should write, and where. They cannot publish any more publications about violations in the army or write appeals to official structures about the violations. In Chelyabinsk there is a NGO Conscript School which does similar work as Soldiers' Mothers. (<https://netprizyv.ru/faqs>)

### Repression of Jehovah's Witnesses



## 1.2.45 TURKEY

|      |                                                                         |     |                                                                                                                                      |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|      | Conscription:                                                           | Yes |                                                                                                                                      |
|      | Conscientious objection:                                                | -   |                                                                                                                                      |
|      | Military:                                                               | 6   | Since 2019, there is the option of paid service: if one pays around €4300, he can serve for 1 month (including only basic training). |
|      | Civilian:                                                               | -   | Not available.                                                                                                                       |
|      | Conscription:                                                           | 20  |                                                                                                                                      |
|      | Voluntary enlistment:                                                   | 17  | 17 for the registration to the 'National Defence University'.                                                                        |
| More | <a href="https://ebco-beoc.org/turkey">https://ebco-beoc.org/turkey</a> |     |                                                                                                                                      |

See also Sections 1.1.1.1, 1.1.1.2, 1.1.3.1.

Turkey is the only member state in the Council of Europe that has not recognised the right to conscientious objection to military service, or at least indicated the intention of making alternative service available. Turkey continues to prosecute conscientious objectors and to ignore the judgements which the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has pronounced since 2006 in favour of Turkish conscientious objectors, in what the Committee of Ministers has named the "Ulke group" of cases. Many different penalties are imposed on those who refuse to perform military service. As a result, conscientious objectors face ongoing arrest warrants; a life-long cycle of prosecutions and imprisonment, and a situation of "civil death" which excludes them from social, cultural and economic life.

On the occasion of the International Conscientious Objection Day on 15 May 2021, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) red-flagged the grave human rights violations that conscientious objectors to military service and activists continue to undergo in Turkey and highlighted their courageous struggle.<sup>114</sup>

In July 2021, the Association for Conscientious Objection released a comprehensive report, "Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Turkey", including the cases of 85 conscientious objectors and interviews with conscientious objectors and the lawyers working in the field.<sup>115</sup> According to the report, 45 applications have been made to the Constitutional Court of Turkey by conscientious objectors, but none of the applications were considered by the Court yet. Within the scope of the cases examined in the report, it was observed that a total fine of 575,517 TL was imposed on conscientious objectors in Turkey.

Following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the case of the conscientious objector Osman Murat Ülke, dated April 24, 2006, Turkey has been included in the qualified monitoring procedure of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

<sup>114</sup> Available at: <https://www.ebco-beoc.org/node/503>

<sup>115</sup> See <https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2021/turkey-new-report-conscientious-objection-association-documents-ongoing-rights>

**EBCO Annual Report  
uploaded on EBCO's  
website**

**All country reports  
uploaded on EBCO's  
interactive  
conscientious objection  
map of Europe**

 **European Bureau for Conscientious Objection**  
*Bureau Européen de l'Objection de Conscience | Europäisches Büro für Kriegsdienste*

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## EBCO's interactive Conscientious Objection map of Europe (Council of Europe members)



# Example of country report uploaded on EBCO's interactive conscientious objection map of Europe



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Ukraine



|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |      |                                                                                     |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | Conscription:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Yes  | Reintroduced in 2014 (earlier suspended in 2012).                                   |
|         | Conscientious objection:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1991 | First recognised in the Law of Ukraine "On Alternative (Non-Military) Service".     |
| Service | Military:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 18   | 12 months for males of higher education.                                            |
|         | Civilian:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 27   | 18 months for males of higher education.                                            |
| Minimum | Conscription:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 18   | Quasi-voluntary with summoning in the age of 18-19, compulsory in the age of 20-27. |
|         | Voluntary enlistment:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 17   | Under 18 for military schools: 17 for cadets                                        |
| More    | <a href="https://ebco-beoc.org/ukraine">https://ebco-beoc.org/ukraine</a> including the reply of the <a href="#">Ministry of Defence to the Questionnaire about EBCO's Annual Report 2021</a> (e-mail on 12/01/2022) and the reply of the <a href="#">Secretariat of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights</a> to the Questionnaire about EBCO's Annual Report 2021 (e-mail on 27/01/2022). |      |                                                                                     |

16,460 conscripts were drafted during the spring military draft in May-July 2020 (it was postponed due to COVID-19 for a month) and 13,570 conscripts were drafted during the autumn military draft in October-December 2020. So, the total number of young people coercively sent to military service in 2020 was 30,030, corresponding to 88,5% of the 2019 draft (33,952). The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine informs that 4,166 conscripts who served their 18-month term and 300 conscripts who served 12-month term were released from military service in 2020.

# EBCO ANNUAL REPORT ON CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE IN EUROPE

Exceptionally, although not during 2021 which is the scope of this report, a special reference was made to the **Russian invasion in Ukraine** on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022.

On the same day **EBCO strongly condemned the invasion** and called all parties to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law, **including the right to conscientious objection to military service**, and to protect civilians, including internally displaced persons and refugees.

**EBCO urged to end the war with an immediate ceasefire leaving space for negotiation and diplomacy.**

**EBCO stands in solidarity with the pacifist movements in Russia and Ukraine**, and shares their statements for peace, non-violence, and conscientious objection, which are indeed a source of hope and inspiration.

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**





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Conscientious Objection**  
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**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

**Russia/Ukraine: Peace is the only solution!**  
**Protect conscientious objectors and all civilians**

Brussels, 24 February 2022

The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) **strongly condemns the Russian invasion in Ukraine** this morning and calls all parties to strictly adhere to **international humanitarian law** and **international human rights law**, including the **right to conscientious objection to military service**, and to protect civilians, including internally displaced persons and refugees. EBCO urges to end the war with an immediate ceasefire leaving space for negotiation and diplomacy.

*"Peace is the only solution; and it cannot be safeguarded without equally safeguarding the right to conscientious objection to military service, which is as well a basic human right as a concrete act of rejecting war and violence; it is a tangible contribution to peace and universal human values", EBCO President Alexia Tsouni stated today.*

**EBCO stands in solidarity with the pacifist movements in Russia and Ukraine, and shares their statements for peace, non-violence, and conscientious objection.**

IFOR INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP  
OF RECONCILIATION



# EBCO ANNUAL REPORT ON CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE IN EUROPE

## Statement by the Movement of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Russia:

What is happening in Ukraine is a war unleashed by Russia. The Conscientious Objectors Movement condemns the Russian military aggression. And calls on Russia to stop the war. The Conscientious Objectors Movement calls on the Russian soldiers not to participate in hostilities. Do not become war criminals. The Conscientious Objectors Movement calls on all recruits to refuse military service: apply for alternative civilian service, be exempted on medical grounds.



## Statement by the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement in Ukraine:

The Ukrainian Pacifist Movement condemns all military actions by the sides of Russia and Ukraine in the context of the current conflict. We call the leadership of both states and military forces to step back and sit at the negotiation table. Peace in Ukraine and around the world can be achieved only in a non-violent way. War is a crime against humanity. Therefore, we are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**



**IFOR** INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP  
OF RECONCILIATION



# EBCO RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL EUROPEAN STATES

1. if they have not already done so, to **abolish all compulsory military service**, and meanwhile **refrain from prosecuting or otherwise harassing conscientious objectors**, with no further action required from such persons; or - secondly – providing a non-punitive and non-discriminatory alternative service of purely civilian nature.
2. to **legally recognise the right to conscientious objection to military service** 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 **immediately cease any recruitment into the armed forces of persons aged under 18** and stop any military-type training of such persons.
4. to **accept applications for asylum** from all persons seeking to escape military service in any country where there is no adequate provision for conscientious objectors.
5. to **decrease military expenditure** and increase social spending.
6. to **introduce peace education** in all parts of the education system.

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN EUROPE TODAY  
WITH FOCUS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE**



**IFOR** INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP  
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