

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION

IN THE EUROPEAN ARMED FORCES

*Results of the EUROMIL 2026 Survey
among Member Associations*



European Organisation of
Military Associations and
Trade Unions

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Recruitment, Retention and Readiness in the European Armed Forces

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Introduction

The European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL) is a European non-governmental organisation composed of 37 military associations and trade unions from 22 countries, representing 500.000 soldiers and their families¹. Founded in 1972, EUROMIL is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern.

Recruitment and retention continue to be among the most pressing challenges facing European Armed Forces. Personnel shortages increasingly affect operational readiness, force generation, and the ability of nations to meet national and international commitments. Following [EUROMIL's 2024 survey](#), we launched an updated survey to:

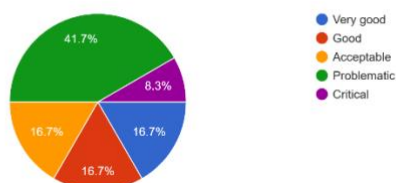
- assess developments since the previous survey;
- gather evidence and best practices from member associations;
- contribute to ongoing research on military personnel policies.

EUROMIL notes that all the data were sourced by EUROMIL's member associations – apart from France – and not the national authorities of each state. Member associations from 12 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) answered the Survey.

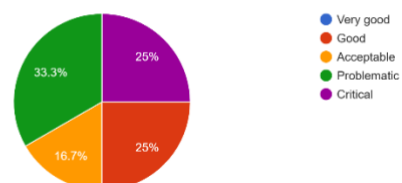
Executive Summary

Overall assessment

How would you assess the current recruitment situation in your Armed Forces?
12 responses



How would you assess the current retention situation?
12 responses

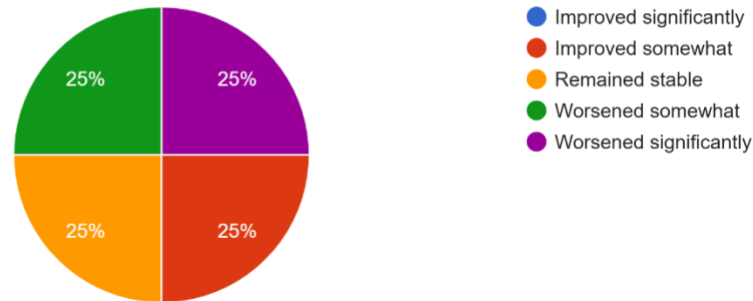


The majority of the Respondents deemed the current recruitment and retention situation either problematic or critical. Most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces within 10 years after joining. Based on the answers, the main obstacles of recruitment remain the competition from private sector and salaries, while retention levels were influenced by receiving better salaries and having better work-life balance outside the military, family reasons, and lack of career opportunities. Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Personnel and Technical Specialists are the most affected by personnel shortages.

¹ On 1 July 2026

Compared to five years ago, the overall personnel situation has:

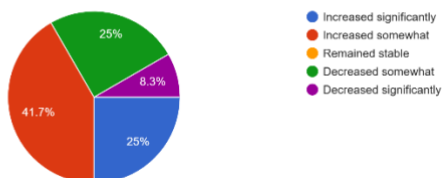
12 responses



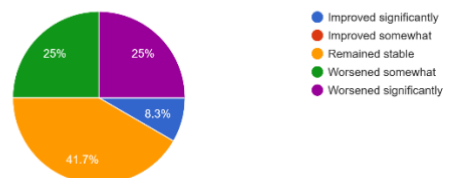
Overall personnel situation remained stable or worsened in most of the Respondents' countries. EUROMIL notes that in the last five years EUROMIL regularly sent its assessment for the UN Universal Periodic Review, launched five collective complaints to the European Social Rights Committee, held webinars and events, and generally promoted the concept of "Citizens in Uniform" to highlight the lack of compliance from European countries to ensure the rights of military personnel and improve their circumstances. Furthermore, EUROMIL informed the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) of its 2024 survey on the problems of Recruitment and Retention in the European Armed Forces and was invited to give a presentation at EUMC's meeting in December 2024.

Recruitment and retention

Has recruitment changed during the last ten years?
12 responses



Has retention changed during the last ten years?
12 responses



Recruitment increased during the last 10 years in most of the assessed countries, however, 58.3% of the responses stressed that military academies or training schools are at least partially experiencing recruitment difficulties. Most recruits are between 20-30 years old.

To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific recruitment measures during the last five years such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, and financial incentives.

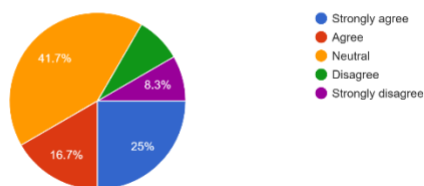
The majority of responses stated that retention during the last 10 years either remained stable or worsened. The most common measure to retain military personnel from leaving was salary increasing. EUROMIL notes that although

financial compensation was the most successful measure, salaries are not competitive enough compared to the ones in the private sector to retain personnel.

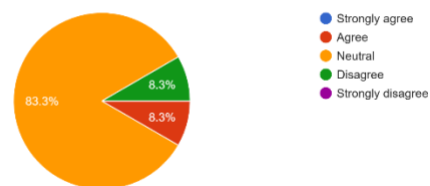
Conscription, national service and reserves

Most of the respondents have fully voluntary systems in their respective countries. According to ANS (Portugal), there are no advantages of conscription because military service should be performed voluntarily, conscientiously, and with dedication, rather than being an imposed obligation, which in many cases can lead to frustration for young people who are not attracted to military service, thus creating difficulties in terms of security.

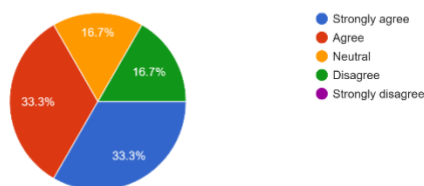
In your opinion, does conscription contribute positively to recruitment?
12 responses



In your opinion, does conscription contribute positively to retention?
12 responses



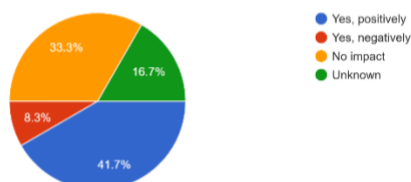
Does conscription strengthen societal resilience and preparedness?
12 responses



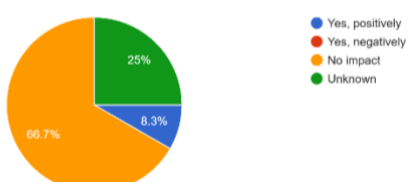
Most respondents asserted that conscription has a positive or neutral effect on recruitment and neutral effect on retention and stated that conscription strengthens societal resilience and preparedness.

Security environment and willingness to serve

Has the war in Ukraine affected recruitment?
12 responses



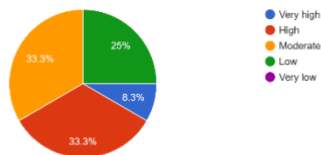
Has the war in Ukraine affected retention?
12 responses



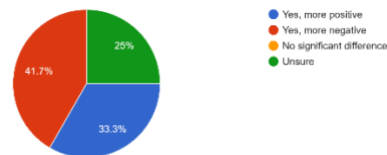
According to most of the Respondents, the war in Ukraine positively impacted recruitment but had no impact on retention. Furthermore, the current security situation increased public support for the Armed Forces. However, society's

willingness to defend their country in the event of a major crises or war is on different levels across the countries according to the answers, which could be the result of (lack of) awareness and younger generations' attitude.

How would you assess society's willingness to defend the country in the event of a major crisis or war?
12 responses

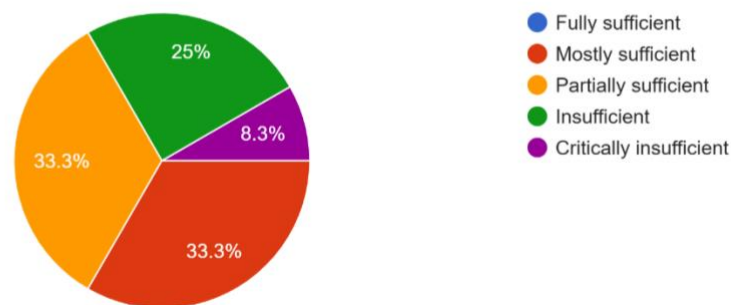


Do younger generations show a different attitude towards military service compared to previous generations?
12 responses



NATO Commitments and readiness

Are current personnel levels sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments?
12 responses



Most of the Responders answered that the current personnel levels are at least partially sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Infantry, Logistics, Cyber, Medical and Navy capabilities face the most severe personnel shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training and national tasks the most.

Furthermore, according to the responders, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be recruitment and retention.

Results by Country

Belgium (ACMP-CGPM)

In the Belgian Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased significantly while retention remained stable, but both are on a good level. The current security situation significantly increased public support for the Armed Forces and affected recruitment positively. Citizens have high willingness to defend Belgium in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more positive attitude towards military service compared to previous generations.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain family considerations and physical fitness requirements. Current personnel levels are partially sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Enlisted Personnel, Technical Specialists and Cyber

Specialists are the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, NATO commitments, and international deployments. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns and financial incentives.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces within the first five years due to family reasons, leadership and management, and lack of training opportunities. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances, however, leadership reform has not been effective.

According to ACMP-CGPM, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be mastering the impact of AI on the battlefield.

Bulgaria (BUAFWA)

In the Bulgarian Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment decreased somewhat but is acceptable, while retention worsened somewhat and is problematic. The current security situation somewhat increased public support for the Armed Forces and affected recruitment positively. Citizens have moderate willingness to defend Bulgaria in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more negative attitude towards military service compared to previous generations as they often have different career expectations and place greater emphasis on work-life balance, personal development and career flexibility.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, demographic decline, medical requirements, and physical fitness requirements. Current personnel levels are partially sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Technical Specialists and Medical Personnel are the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training, national tasks and NATO commitments. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives and educational benefits. These measures have improved public awareness and increased interest in military careers. However, further efforts are needed to simplify recruitment procedures and ensure sufficient funding to recruit and retain qualified candidates.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces within the first five years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, leadership and management, lack of training opportunities, and mental health and stress. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, childcare support, career development programmes, mental health support, and improved accommodation. The increase in salaries and financial allowances have improved the attractiveness of military service and reduced the number of personnel leaving for financial reasons; career development opportunities had a positive impact

particularly for younger service members. Measures related to leadership development and transparent career progression have not yet achieved their full potential. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen trust in personnel management, ensure merit-based career development and improve work-life balance for military personnel.

According to BUAFWA, reserve forces play an important supporting role by providing additional personnel during crises, emergencies and military operations. However, they cannot fully compensate for shortages in the regular Armed Forces. Maintaining a well-trained and adequately resourced reserve is an important complement to, but not a substitute for, a professional military.

According to BUAFWA, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be attracting and retaining qualified personnel in an increasingly competitive labour market.

France²

Regarding attractiveness, the results of a 2023 survey show that young military personnel join the institution primarily to “be a soldier”, motivated by the missions (91% of them), the commitment to serving France (89%), and the unique nature of the profession (82%).

Main obstacles to recruitment remain the competition from private sector, physical fitness requirements, family considerations, and length of recruitment process. Personnel in the Cyber, Air Force and Navy domains are the most affected by shortages. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as tailored communication strategies, financial incentives and new policies [Family Plan II, Loyalty 360 plan, a New Military Remuneration Policy (NPRM) and the Military Planning Law (LPM) 2024-2030].

Regarding retention, most frequently personnel leave the Armed Forces due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, and lack of career opportunities. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances, pension reforms and career development programmes.

Regarding reservists, recruitment is progressing well, however, the primary challenge is minimising recruitment delays which can discourage candidates, and in retention, work-life balance and clarity of career paths. According to the report, the average length of service for operational reservists is 4 years and 10 months. Army Reservists are employed within the operational force or serve in reserve units and are therefore trained and deployed on operational missions (site protection, territorial defense, military operations, etc.) or in direct support roles.

² This section is based on the French National Assembly’s National Defense and Armed Forces Commission’s Information Report No. 1152 of 19 March 2025 on Recruitment and Retention: winning the battle for human resources in the Ministry of the Armed Forces.

Germany (DBwV)

In the German Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment and retention are worsened somewhat, and both are problematic. The current security situation had somewhat increased public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens have moderate willingness to defend Germany in the event of a major crisis or war.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, length of recruitment process, physical fitness requirements, and lack of societal recognition. Current personnel levels are insufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Enlisted Personnel, Technical Specialists and Cyber Specialists are the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training, NATO commitments, international deployments, and reserve readiness. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives, educational benefits and faster recruitment procedures.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces within first five years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, family reasons, housing issues, leadership and management, and frequent relocations. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances, childcare support, career development programs, and flexible working arrangements. The most effective retention measures were the increase in career soldier appointments and the expansion of commitment bonuses, however, infrastructure improvements remain the least effective area (barrack conditions continue to negatively affect soldier satisfaction and retention) and security clearance delays (9–11 weeks) also continue to hinder career progression and drive early departures.

According to DBwV, the main advantages of conscription in Germany are the broader recruitment pool and stronger societal anchoring of the armed forces, while disadvantages are the lack of training capacities, accommodation and instructors. Furthermore, reserve forces play a growing but insufficient role in addressing personnel shortages.

According to DBwV, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be reaching the target of 260,000 active soldiers by the mid-2030s against a backdrop of demographic decline, labour market competition, and structurally high dropout rates. Whether voluntary service alone can close the gap is a question the Bundestag must review every six months from 2027 onwards based on Defence Ministry reports. It should be noted, however, that even a potential reintroduction of conscription would not resolve shortages in specialist and professional roles such as cyber, medical, and logistics areas that require lengthy training and retention strategies beyond basic service models.

Greece (POMENS)

In the Hellenic Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment decreased significantly, retention worsened significantly, and both are critical. The current security situation somewhat increased public support for the Armed Forces and affected recruitment positively. Citizens have high willingness to defend Greece in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more negative attitude towards military service compared to previous generations as they tend to view military service with less commitment and enthusiasm compared. This reflects broader social and cultural shifts in attitudes toward the armed forces.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, housing costs and demographic decline. Current personnel levels are mostly sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Personnel and Medical Personnel are the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training and national tasks. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as social media campaigns, financial incentives and housing support.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 5-10 years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, housing issues, lack of career opportunities and frequent relocations. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases and housing measures, however, they weren't sufficient in addressing the problems.

According to POMENS, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be the increasing strain on existing staff. Current personnel will struggle to cope with multiple daily responsibilities, leading to excessive pressure, greater working difficulties, higher stress levels, and a declining willingness to remain in the armed forces.

Hungary (HÉSZ)

In the Hungarian Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased somewhat but is still problematic, while retention worsened significantly and is critical. The current security situation had no change in public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens have low willingness to defend Hungary in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more negative attitude towards military service compared to previous generations due to widespread individualism and lack of tensions (and war) which could form a potential enemy "image" and the willingness to defend the country.

The main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, medical requirements, and physical fitness requirements. Current personnel levels are insufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Personnel, and Reservists are the most affected by shortages which is affecting national tasks. To improve numbers

in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives, signing bonuses, reduced admission requirements and faster recruitment procedures.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 5-10 years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, leadership and management, lack of career opportunities, and frequent relocations. National authorities did not introduce specific retention measures during the last five years, however, pension reforms and salaries have been most effective.

According to HÉSZ, reserve forces play a quite important role in personnel shortages, because they could at least occasionally compensate shortages. Furthermore, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be recruitment and retention.

Ireland (RACO)

In the Irish Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased somewhat but is still problematic, while retention worsened somewhat and is critical. The current security situation somewhat increased public support for the Armed Forces and affected recruitment and retention positively. Citizens have moderate willingness to defend Ireland in the event of a major crisis or war partly due to Ireland's military neutrality and the threat perception.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain the competition from private sector, salaries, length of recruitment process, physical fitness requirements, and demographic decline. Current personnel levels are critically insufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Personnel, Technical Specialists, Cyber Specialists, Medical Personnel, Engineers (Marine-electrical, marine-mechanical & aeronautical), EOD, Air Traffic Controllers, Pilots and Doctors are affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training and national tasks. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives, reduced admission requirements, faster recruitment procedures and using specialist civilian recruitment firms.

In specialist areas mentioned above, additional pay rates or allowances have been instigated by management to attract new entrants and reward work. Serving Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers (with all NCOs being offered a commission) are being offered significant once-off allowances for committing to an additional 3, 5 or 7 years' service (Service Commitment Scheme) but the Scheme requires to have at least 8 years of experience.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 10-20 years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, family reasons, pension concerns – as personnel who joined the military after 2012 are forced to retire at 62 but cannot receive their full pension

entitlement value until 66. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances, however, the most effective measures were the Service Commitment Schemes.

According to RACO, traditionally reservists are used to augment the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) but in a very limited and ad hoc manner. Efforts have been made since 2012 to better integrate reservists into the PDF, most recently with the Supplementary Military Service' Scheme. Furthermore, according to them, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be retention.

Italy (S.I.A.M.O. ESERCITO)

In the Italian Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased somewhat, while retention remained stable and both are on an acceptable level. The current security situation had no change in public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens have low willingness to defend Italy in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more negative attitude towards military service compared to previous generations. A recent survey by the Center for Social Studies and Investments (Censis) examined Italian society's perceptions regarding war and rearmament. The survey highlighted a lack of willingness to make the "sacrifice of war": *"...only 16% of Italians say they are ready to fight for their country or for an ideal, whereas a far larger majority would opt for pacifist protest or even desertion..."*

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain salaries, demographic decline, family considerations, and geographical location. Current personnel levels are mostly sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted Personnel, and Technical Specialists are the most affected by shortages which is affecting operational readiness. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, reduced admission requirements, modification of the legal status of temporary staff and simplification of the transition to permanent employment.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces during initial training due to better work-life balance, family reasons, mental health and stress, and frequent relocations. National authorities did not introduce specific retention measures during the last five years.

According to S.I.A.M.O. ESERCITO, the use of the reserve forces is predominantly limited and targeted at specific technical skill sets not available within the existing workforce. Furthermore, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be lowering the average age of the enlisted ranks, which is currently approaching 40.

Malta (GWU)

In the Maltese Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased somewhat, while retention increased significantly and both are on a good level. The current security situation had no change in public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens

have high willingness to defend Malta in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more positive attitude towards military service compared to previous generations due to the increase in wages, advertisement from the Armed Forces media, and organizing activities within Military premises.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, the main obstacle to recruitment remain competition from private sector. Current personnel levels are mostly sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Technical Specialists are affected the most by shortages which is affecting reserve readiness. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as financial incentives.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces close to retirement due to better work-life balance, family reasons, and reaching 25 years of service. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances, pension reforms, and flexible working arrangements.

According to GWU, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be competitiveness with private sector.

The Netherlands (AFMP and MARVER)

In the Dutch Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased somewhat, while retention remained stable, but both are problematic. The current security situation somewhat increased public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens have high willingness to defend the Netherlands in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more positive attitude towards military service compared to previous generations.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, family considerations, and length of recruitment process. Current personnel levels are partially sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. All categories of military personnel are affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training, national tasks, NATO commitments, international deployments and reserve readiness. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives, educational benefits, and reduced admission requirements.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 5-10 years due to better work-life balance, family reasons, leadership and management, lack of career opportunities, and frequent relocations. National authorities did not introduce specific retention measures.

According to AFMP and MARVER, reserve forces play a small but significant role in personnel shortages and the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be recruitment and retention.

Portugal (ANS)

In the Portuguese Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment decreased somewhat, while retention worsened significantly and both are problematic. The current security situation significantly increased public support for the Armed Forces. Citizens have moderate willingness to defend Portugal in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more negative attitude towards military service compared to previous generations as they are not willing to give up certain restrictions imposed by military service, nor to commit to the rigor, discipline, and sacrifice required.

Most of the new recruits are under 20, however, the main obstacles to recruitment remain competition from private sector, salaries, and lack of societal recognition. Current personnel levels are insufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Enlisted Personnel is the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness, training, and national tasks. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, reduced admission requirements and increased recruitment staff.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 10-20 years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, lack of career opportunities, and pension concerns. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, bonuses and allowances (Military service supplement).

In Portugal, there are no reserve forces. However, before retirement, military personnel have a five-year reserve period during which they are not on active duty, and during which, if justified, they can be called back to active duty. Given the shortage of personnel that the Armed Forces have been experiencing, this has been a mechanism that military leaders have used to try to overcome these difficulties.

According to ANS, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be achieving enough personnel to fulfil the national commitments of the Armed Forces, as well as international commitments.

Spain (AUGC)

In the Spanish Civil Guard, in the last decade, recruitment increased significantly and is on a very good level, while retention remained stable and is on a good level. The current security situation did not increase the public support for the Civil Guard and had no impact on recruitment or retention. Citizens have low willingness to defend Spain in the event of a major crisis or war partially due to a more individualistic perspectives of younger generation.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, the main obstacle to recruitment is the lack of work-life balance. Current personnel levels are partially sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Officers are the most affected by shortages which are affecting operational readiness.

Regarding retention, most frequently personnel leave the Civil Guard between 5-10 years due to receiving better salaries outside and better work-life balance.

According to AUGC, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be the Civil Guard's low number of staff and stations in districts.

Sweden (SAMO)

In the Swedish Armed Forces, in the last decade, recruitment increased significantly and is on a very good level, while retention remained stable and is acceptable. The current security situation significantly increased public support for the Armed Forces and affected recruitment and retention positively. Citizens have very high willingness to defend Sweden in the event of a major crisis or war. Younger generations have a more positive attitude towards military service compared to previous generations partly due to Sweden's gender-neutral military service.

Most of the new recruits are between the age of 20 and 30, however, main obstacles to recruitment remain the competition from private sector, salaries and demographic decline. Current personnel levels are mostly sufficient to meet national and NATO commitments. Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Technical Specialists, Cyber Specialists and Medical Personnel are the most affected by shortages which are affecting national tasks and reserve readiness. To improve numbers in recruitment, national authorities introduced specific measures during the last five years, such as recruitment campaigns, social media campaigns, financial incentives and faster recruitment procedures.

Regarding retention, most frequently military personnel leave the Armed Forces between 5-10 years due to receiving better salaries outside the military, better work-life balance, family reasons, lack of career opportunities, and operational tempo. To strengthen retention, national authorities introduced specific measures such as salary increases, pension reforms and career development programmes, however, the latter has been the least effective.

According to SAMO, the main advantages of conscription in Sweden are broader recruitment base and increased willingness to defend. Reservists and part-time serving soldiers mainly staff the wartime organization at high readiness, and they temporarily staff the organization in peacetime.

According to SAMO, the greatest personnel challenge during the next ten years will be the low recruitment targets if retention numbers won't change.

Recommendations

To the governments

Belgium: Maintain the current statute of service members, increase the defence budget and reinforce international cooperation.

Bulgaria: Continue improving the attractiveness of military service through competitive salaries, better living conditions and social benefits. Develop transparent, merit-based career development systems, with equal opportunities, effective leadership and access to education and training. Improve recruitment and retention policies by addressing demographic challenges, simplifying procedures and supporting work-life balance for military personnel and their families.

Germany: Accelerate infrastructure renovation in barracks and facilities. Implement constitutionally compliant pay as required by the Federal Constitutional Court and eliminate promotion backlogs. Digitize personnel administration and security clearance processes to reduce processing times and improve the recruitment and retention experience and overall working conditions, including family compatibility, flexible working arrangements, and reducing bureaucratic burdens on soldiers to strengthen both recruitment and long-term retention.

Greece: Provide competitive pay and targeted financial incentives, especially for personnel serving in border areas and high-cost locations. Guarantee affordable housing and meaningful family support, including childcare and assistance during frequent relocations. Improve working conditions and career prospects by reducing excessive workloads, ensuring transparent promotions, and strengthening staffing levels to prevent burnout and resignations.

Hungary: Improve salaries, pension, and work-life balance for military personnel.

Ireland: Improve entry salaries and pension arrangements for the post 2022 cohort.

Italy: Complete the reform of the military apparatus, both functionally and by increasing staffing levels across the different categories. Enhance the professionalism of the staff by incentivizing and granting more autonomy in the practice of their profession outside military environment. Make recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces more attractive.

The Netherlands: Focus on recruitment campaigns, increase salaries and improve working conditions.

Portugal: Restore previously existing health protection models, under the responsibility of the Military Branches, review and update the remuneration system applicable to the military.

Spain: Increase the Civil Guard's workforce, as the force's territorial deployment is currently based on having small police stations in rural areas.

Sweden: Improve salaries and working conditions. Create a work environment that doesn't lead to unhealthy workloads and ensure adequate work-life balance.

To associations

Promote best practices; contribute to policy discussions on recruitment, retention, and overall welfare; serve as a bridge between service members and decision-makers; provide reliable information; address the needs and concerns of service members; and negotiate sustainable collective agreements.

To NATO

Consolidate best practices across member states; share lessons learned; set standards for recruitment, retention and socio-professional conditions; recognize a nation's contribution within the Alliance; hold allies accountable to their capability targets; provide professional exchange opportunities and policy forums; and support allied countries in improving working conditions for military personnel.



European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions

*The main Europe-wide forum for cooperation
among professional military associations
on issues of common concern.*



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*Representing military associations and trade unions
for the rights, welfare and dignity of military personnel.*

Founded in 1972
