



P R E S S R E L E A S E

September 21st - International Day of Peace

Peace cannot be promoted without equally promoting the right to conscientious objection to military service

Brussels, 21 September 2021

On the occasion of the **International Day of Peace 2021** on September 21st, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) emphasizes that conscientious objection to military service is as well a basic human right as a tangible contribution to peace; it is a concrete act of rejecting war and violence, and promoting peace and universal human values.

"Peace cannot be promoted without equally promoting the right to conscientious objection to military service", EBCO President Alexia Tsouni stated today.

In this direction EBCO wishes to highlight its **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 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.
- 3)** to immediately cease any recruitment into the armed forces on of **persons aged under 18**.
- 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.

NOTE: You can find more information in EBCO's Annual Report "Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Europe 2020" covering all the member states of Council of Europe, available at <https://ebco-beoc.org/reports>

EBCO was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. It enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. It provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. It is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994. It is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND INTERVIEWS please contact:

ENGLISH: Alexia Tsouni, EBCO President (+30 6974461210; tsounialexia@gmail.com)

FRENCH, DUTCH, ITALIAN, ENGLISH: Sam Biesemans, EBCO Vice-President (+32 477268893; sambiesemans@skynet.be)

EBCO was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. It enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. It provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. It is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994. It is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.