



**EUROMIL aisbl**

*(European Organisation of  
Military Associations)*

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## **Contribution of EUROMIL on “Civil society space in multilateral institutions”**

### **About EUROMIL**

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 34 military associations and trade unions from 22 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of “Citizen in Uniform”. As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

### **About the involvement of EUROMIL with regional and international organisations and its contribution to their work**

Although military associations, including EUROMIL member associations and their individual affiliates, often face threats, intimidation and harassment, EUROMIL did not face any obstacles in the past years when raising the voice of soldiers at international level. Indeed, despite some attempts by authorities to cut off debates at national level, EUROMIL was never prevented from reaching out to regional and international organisations. Additionally, it is worth noting that EUROMIL is exclusively funded by membership fees and is therefore not subjected to economic blackmail when it comes to restrictions on funding to civil society actors.

In the last 10 years, EUROMIL was closely involved in the work of regional and international organisations, i.e. EU Institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and United Nations (UN). EUROMIL has participatory status at the CoE and Special Consultative Status at the UN ECOSOC. The organisation uses these privileged statuses to further promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people it represents. Among others, it participates in the drafting of reports and recommendations and makes use of complaint procedures whenever needed and possible.

This is being achieved thanks to personal contacts with representatives of the above-mentioned organisations. Indeed, despite the willingness of the organisations to call civil society organisations (CSOs) to share input or organise

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joint meetings, messages often fail to get through. The hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of these organisations tend to stifle information before it arrives to the right person. Only good and direct personal contacts prove effective in contributing to the work of international organisations in the general public interest. Unfortunately, turnover is important in international organisation. Therefore, suggested best practices may consist in appointing a sufficient number of easily accessible points of contact for CSOs within international organisations, with clear functions and responsibilities. Renewal of staff must be smooth, with time being given for handing over tasks and institutional memory be better preserved. Too often, gaps in positions result in the absence of cooperation between EUROMIL and supranational organisations for a year or more. In the meantime, human rights' violations do not stop. Furthermore, competences of various bodies, agencies and programmes within the same organisation are sometimes hard to understand and differentiate. CSOs may thus lose time to identify the right body or agency to contact, which is a barrier to cooperation. A recommendation for organisations would thus be to present their system in a unique and comprehensive web-portal highlighting competences. Finally, solutions should be found to increase the speed and impact of complaint procedures. These lengthy procedures only prolong suffering and despair and, once completed, often lack follow-up and concrete measures to ensure justice and accountability.

For any further information, please contact the EUROMIL Office by email [euromil@euromil.org](mailto:euromil@euromil.org) or phone: +32.2.626.06.80