



QUAKER COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe: A Review of the Current Situation

Country Report: HUNGARY

Conscription

In February 2003, the Hungarian government announced that it would end conscription by August 2005. During the last years of conscription, some categories were no longer called up for military service (men over 23, married men and men having children).

The transformation process into professional armed forces went faster than initially anticipated. The last 2,000 conscripts were discharged from military service in November 2004. Since December 2004 the armed forces consist of professional soldiers only.¹

Conscription is in fact suspended. In November 2004, the Hungarian Parliament accepted the modification of the Constitution and the Defence Law. Accordingly, conscription is suspended during peacetime, but it may be reintroduced in case of emergency or during wartime.²

Conscientious objection

The right to conscientious objection was legally recognized in 1989, following a liberal revolt in the Communist Party. Since 1993, CO applications were no longer individually examined and personal interviews no longer took place. Since then, the number of CO applications increased significantly from 500 to approx. 5,000 applications per year.

There are no legal provisions for conscientious objection for professional soldiers.³

When conscription applied, the Law on Civilian Service allowed for CO applications to be made by serving conscripts, but only until the military oath was taken (after performance of three weeks' military service). This provision practically excludes professional soldiers from claiming the right to conscientious objection.⁴

¹ Ministry of Defence: Conscript service abolished, 14 June 2004, www.honveledem.hu.

² Henrik Farkas: End of conscription in Hungary, in: European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, The Right to Refuse to Kill, October 2003. Henrik Farkas: Email on anti-conscription email list, 8 November 2004.

³ Exercise of the right of conscientious objection to military service in Council of Europe member states, Report Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Doc. 8809 (Revised), 4 May 2001.

⁴ War Resisters' International: Refusing to bear arms - A world survey on conscription and conscientious objection to military service, 1998.