EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS
COMITE EUROPEEN DES DROITS SOCIAUX





Case Document No.5

European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) v. Greece
Complaint No. 242/2024

EBCO'S ADDITIONAL RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY ON THE MERITS

Registered at the Secretariat on 21 July 2026

European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

Collective Complaint No. 242/2024

European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) v. Greece

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Response of EBCO to Further Observations by the Greek Government on the merits of the Collective Complaint No. 242/2024

21 July 2026

Complainant:

European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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1. Concerning the document titled "Further Observations by the Government of Greece on the Merits of Collective Complaint 242/2024, European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) v. Greece" (June 2026, no specific date, registered on 26 June 2026), EBCO wishes to point out the following.
2. In paragraph 12, the sentence "Consequently, in the main part of our observations on the merits of the Collective Complaint 242/24, reference to the full 15-month military service (accounting for 59%), the reduced 12-month military service (accounting for 22.3%), the reduced 9-month military service (accounting for 17%), and the reduced 6-month military service (accounting for 1.6%) and not to the reduced 5-month military service, is entirely justified" appears to be **erroneous and confusing**. As far as we know, **there is no "full 15-month military service" in Greece**.
3. (Paragraph 12) Concerning the argument that the (3rd) category of reduced military (3 months) and alternative (5 months) service is not related to family status, but applies to a category of permanent residents abroad and born abroad, the Complainant wishes to point out the following:
   a) This point appears to refer to paragraph 24 of the Complainant's Response (11 May 2026). That paragraph was general and drafted "without entering into too many details" stating that "most" (i.e., **not all**) "the reasons and relevant criteria for belonging to a category of reduced military (and consequently reduced alternative) service are related to the family status (e.g. number of brothers), including cases of vulnerability of family members (disabilities, age of parents, etc.)". The Complainant never claimed that there are no further criteria.
   b) The aforementioned paragraph 24 concerns the categories of reduced service in general, and claims that it's "not reasonable that the more vulnerable a group of

conscientious objectors is, the more punitive and discriminatory the ratio of alternative service in comparison with the equivalent military service becomes". Even if it would not be valid for the 3rd category of reduced service (3 months military / 5 months alternative), in any case, it is still valid for the other 2 categories of reduced service. For example, a conscientious objector who is father of one living child has a ratio of **1.33** (12 months of alternative service instead of 9 months of military service), while a father of two living children has a ratio of **1.50** (9 months of alternative service instead of 6 months of military service). This is unreasonable and in the Complainant's view a **violation of Article 16 in conjunction with Article E of the Charter.**

c) As far as it concerns the 3rd category of reduced service, this concerns two groups, permanent residents abroad who were born abroad, but also conscripts who are **children or brothers** of persons who died while on duty in the armed forces, security forces, coast guard and other cases. Therefore, theoretically, this category might also concern family status.

d) In any case, concerning this 3rd category of reduced service, the main arguments of the Complainant is that the punitive length (1.67 longer) is (a) an **aggravating factor** to the situation and the discrimination (Complaint, Part 3.4, para. 73, Response para. 20), (b) constitutes in itself a violation of **Article 1, paragraph 2** of the Charter (Complaint, para. 73., Response paras. 21-23). These are still valid. The fact that this 3rd category is (usually) not about family but rather about permanent residents abroad does not affect the above violations (only perhaps that of Article 16).

e) The fact that this category is (usually) about permanent residents abroad raises **further and perhaps even more serious concerns**. Not only the length is unduly increased (5 months instead of 3) but it should be stressed that permanent residents abroad may perform **military service in parts (e.g. 1 month at a time)**, an option which **does not appear to be available in the case of alternative service**.

f) Even if the above cannot be considered related with Article 16, because it is not directly related to family (although it can still affect families of conscientious objectors), nevertheless, **the element of discrimination (article E)** is still valid, possibly in conjunction with **article 18** (or even **19**) of the Charter.

g) Concerning **vulnerability**, this is not exclusively about family. If the State party considers that a permanent resident abroad should enjoy increased protection than persons in the other categories of reduced service related to family criteria, then, it is still not reasonable that a conscientious objector permanent resident abroad is punished with a higher ratio (1.67) than the other conscientious objectors.

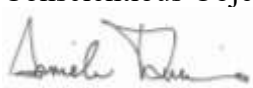
4. (Paragraph 12). The alleged percentage of 0.3% concerning those conscientious objectors who have completed the 5-month alternative service (instead of 3 months of military service) during the period 2016-2026 does not affect the essence of this part of the complaint. The State party and its Government are under obligation to cease any violations of the Charter even if they would concern only one person, and to **amend legislation in order to comply with the Charter and not result in further violations for more individuals in the future**. Furthermore, the low percentage or number of persons concerned indicates that the real reason for insisting in maintaining the punitive length (1.67 times the length of the equivalent reduced military service)

for this category of reduced service is **not because of real needs in the public sector that can be covered by such a small number of persons**, but rather in order to **punish** the conscientious objectors, in the context of the broader State policy of punishment, discrimination, disincentives, and dissuasion of people from declaring their conscientious objection to military service (Complaint para. 22, Response para. 35(d)).

5. Regarding the Government's arguments in paragraphs 7-8, the Complainant points out that the differences between the nature of military and alternative service are already counterbalanced by the longer duration of alternative service (which should not be excessive though) but cannot justify punitive conditions nor blatant discrimination (e.g. higher amount of money for buying out) in violation of the Charter.
6. Furthermore, regarding the sentence "Consequently, the organization in question claims the right to enjoy the benefits of military service without bearing its obligations", the Complainant points out that most parts of the Complaint are not merely the opinion of one organisation but rather supported by observations and recommendations by domestic and international human rights bodies, mandates and organisations, including but not limited to: the **Human Rights Committee**, the **Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**, the **OHCHR**, the **Greek National Commission for Human Rights**, the **Greek Ombudsman**, and highly respected human rights organisations like **Amnesty International**, among others.
7. Regarding the claim that "In most cases, while the Body provides the stipulated cash amount, it also provides the conscientious objector with food." (para. 9), the Complainant points out that, (besides the lack of proof and, in any case, of legal basis and therefore guarantee), according to official data, the available positions with food in 2026 are only **6.8%** and in 2025 were only **5.6%**.
8. Finally, taking into consideration the prolonged time until the admissibility decision, the seemingly delayed second response of the Government, but most importantly the continuous deterioration of the situation and the fact that conscientious objectors are facing not only violations of economic and social rights but also **severe criminal and administrative sanctions and consequences described in the Complaint** (paras. 25-27), while this process is ongoing, the Complainant respectfully calls the Committee to **expedite procedures and prioritise the examination of this Complaint**.

Signed by

Daniele Taurino
President of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection



Theodoros Diamantidis
Secretary of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection



