



PARLAMENTARISCHE  
BUNDESHEERKOMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017



**The Austrian Parliamentary Commission  
for the Federal Armed Forces**

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for the Federal Armed Forces**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

Imprint: Published once yearly pursuant to Section 10 (4) of the Rules of Procedure of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces in conjunction with Section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act, Federal Law Gazette I no. 146/2001, as amended.

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Photographs: Parliamentary Administration: Thomas Jantzen, Photo Simonis,  
The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces,  
The Federal Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces Photo and  
Video Production Service,  
9ICOF

Printing: Armed Forces Printing Office, 1030 Vienna, Kaserne Arsenal

Translation: Austrian Armed Forces Language Institute, 1070 Vienna, Stiftskaserne



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## **Preface of the Presidium**

Due to wars, destabilisation and a lack of prospects for large parts of the populations living in the regions surrounding Europe, there is an increased risk for Austria's security for an indeterminate period. Against the backdrop of this new geopolitical situation, the Austrian Armed Forces have a major role to play in tackling those key challenges for Austria's security.

The necessary measures for a successful fulfilment of the duties of the Austrian Armed Forces are set out in the government programme of the new Federal Government. This includes ensuring the feasibility of long-term planning through sufficient budgetary funds and personnel.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces notes that the adequate and lawful training of national service soldiers is only possible to an insufficient degree, due to a significant lack of qualified core personnel, training resources and suitable administrative processes, as well as to inconsistent regulations. The monthly pay of national service soldiers needs to be increased.

With the current personnel structures (personnel, advertising measures, acceptance criteria etc.) the intended recruitment of an additional 9,800 soldiers can only be achieved by 2035 and not, as planned, by 2020. To achieve the increase in personnel, several amendments to service and remuneration law will be required.

While recognising the organisational difficulties and issues of understaffing, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces wishes to note that ultimately the supervision by those in charge of training and leadership is always key to the quality of training. They have the final responsibility for events on the ground! Careless delegation of this leadership task and duty of care for soldiers under their command is absolutely inadmissible.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces supports the efforts of the Ministry to reinforce the field kitchen system in order to increase the self-



sufficiency of the Austrian Armed Forces. That requires expansion of the container systems, increased personnel and intensified training efforts.

We wish to thank the soldiers of the Austrian Armed Forces for their service.

Vienna, 2 February 2018

The Presidium of the  
Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP  
Chairman

Mag. Michael Hammer, MP  
Executive Chairman

Otto Pendl, former MP  
Chairman



## I. Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Term of office from 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2020



Chairman Mag. Michael Hammer, MP

Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 1 January 2017

Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 21 January 2015 until 31 December 2016



Chairman Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP

Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 21 January 2015



Chairman Otto Pendl, former MP

Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 21 January 2015 until 31 December 2016

Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 1 January 2017





## II. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces 2017

### Presidium:

MP Mag. Michael Hammer, Executive Chairman,  
People's Party  
MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch, Chairman,  
Freedom Party  
Former MP Otto Pendl, Chairman,  
Social Democratic Party

### Members:

MP Andrea Gessl-Ranftl (until 28 Sept 2017),  
Social Democratic Party  
Former MP Mag. Gisela Wurm (since 29 Sept 2017),  
Social Democratic Party  
Christian Schiesser,  
Social Democratic Party  
Former MP Mag. Bernd Schönegger,  
People's Party  
Former MP Oswald Klikovits,  
People's Party  
Mario Kunasek, Federal Minister of Defence (since 18 Dec 2017),  
former MP, former Prov. Parliament Representative,  
Freedom Party  
District Councillor Nikolaus Kunrath,  
The Greens  
Ms Sonja Stiller, MA MA,  
Former Team Stronach  
Former Federal Minister Dr. Friedhelm Frischenschlager,  
NEOS

### Substitute members:

MP Mag.<sup>a</sup> Gisela Wurm (until 28 Sept 2017),  
Social Democratic Party  
Former MP Hannes Weninger,  
Social Democratic Party  
Prov. Parliament Representative Mag. Marcus Schober,  
Social Democratic Party  
MP Norbert Sieber,  
People's Party



Dr. Franz Pietsch,  
People's Party  
Mag. Dominik Thauerböck (until 4 April 2017),  
People's Party  
Former MP Asdin El Habbassi, BA (since 5 April 2017),  
People's Party  
MP MMag. DDr. Hubert Fuchs, since 18 Dec 2017 State  
Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Finance,  
Freedom Party  
Prov. Parliament Representative Manfred Haidinger,  
Freedom Party  
Dr. Peter Steyrer (until 13 Sept 2017),  
The Greens  
Former MP Tanja Windbüchler-Souschill (since 14 Sept 2017),  
The Greens  
Former MP Christoph Hagen,  
Former Team Stronach  
Mag. Max Künsberg-Sarre (until 28 June 2017),  
NEOS  
Mag. Erwin Gartler (since 29 June 2017),  
NEOS

Advisors:

General Mag. Othmar Commenda, CHODS  
Lieutenant General Mag. Bernhard Bair, Deputy CHODS  
Director General Mag. Christian Kemperle,  
MoD/Directorate General I  
COL Prof. Harald Harbich, M.D.,  
Head, Military Medical Service (until Oct 2017)  
Brig Dr. Dr. Sylvia Sperandio MBA,  
MoD/Division Head Military Healthcare (since Nov 2017)

Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal  
Armed Forces:

Mr Mag. Karl Schneemann, Head  
Mr Siegfried Zörnpfenning  
Mr Mag. Manfred Gasser  
Ms Mag.<sup>a</sup> Petra Neuhauser  
Ms Sabine Gsaxner  
Mr Ernst Kiesel  
Ms Larissa Pollak  
Sgt Jasmin Puchwein (seconded since 18 Dec 2017)



### **III. General**

#### **III. 1. Presidium of the National Council**

Elisabeth Köstinger succeeded Doris Bures as President of the National Council on 9 November 2017. We wish to warmly thank both Presidents. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces looks forward to continuation of that excellent cooperation with the current president of the National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka.

#### **III. 2. Federal Minister of Defence**

On 18 December 2017, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil was succeeded by Mario Kunasek as Federal Minister of Defence. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces wishes to express its thanks for the excellent cooperation and is confident that cooperation will continue between the Ministry and the Commission in the interest of the soldiers.

### **IV. Tasks**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was founded in 1955 upon establishment of the Austrian Armed Forces to serve as a democratic supervising body the National Council. The Commission is governed by Section 4 and Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act and by Section 20a, Section 29 (2) k) and Section 87(4) of the Rules of Procedure Act of the National Council (GOG).

For further information about the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces see the website of the Austrian Parliament:

[www.parlament.gv.at/ENGL/WWER/PBK/](http://www.parlament.gv.at/ENGL/WWER/PBK/)

#### **IV. 1. Terms of office**

Pursuant to Section 4 of the 2001 Defence Act, the term of office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is six years. The current term of office commenced on 1 January 2015 with the Commission composed of three members of the Social Democratic Party of Austria, three members of the Austrian People's Party, two members of the Freedom Party of Austria,



one member of The Greens, one member of former Team Stronach and one member of New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS).

If the composition of the National Council changes during the term of office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the composition of the Commission remains unaffected until the end of its six-year term of office.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces has three chairpersons, who rotate as executive chairperson, as well as eight further members. The chairpersons are elected by the National Council. The other members are nominated by the political parties in the ratio of their number of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. Every political party that is represented on the Main Committee of the National Council when the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces holds its constitutive session is entitled to be represented on the Commission.

During the 59th session of the National Council/25th legislative term on 21 January 2015, Otto Pendl, MP (Social Democratic Party of Austria), Mag. Michael Hammer, MP (Austrian People's Party), and Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP (Freedom Party of Austria), were elected chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for the term of office lasting until 31 December 2020. Otto Pendl, MP held the office of executive chairman by rotation for two years until 31 December 2016. Mag. Michael Hammer, MP has held the office of executive chairman since 1 January 2017.

In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is advised during its meetings by the highest-ranking officials of the Federal Ministry of Defence, which means that there is a continuous exchange of opinions with the leaders of the Ministry.

At the international level, the duties of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Armed Forces are comparable with those of the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and of other parliamentary ombuds institutions for armed forces, such as in Ireland, Norway and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



#### **IV. 2. Who may lodge a complaint?**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces accepts complaints that are lodged either directly or indirectly

- by persons who have volunteered for a pre-enlistment fitness examination or who have volunteered for trainee service,
- persons liable to attend a pre-enlistment fitness examination,
- by soldiers of either sex,
- by soldiers' representatives,
- by conscripts in the militia or reserve,
- by persons who have undergone trainee service

and – unless the Commission deems the alleged reason for the complaint to be negligible – examines the complaint and decides upon recommendations to resolve the complaint.

The persons listed above are entitled to lodge a complaint concerning shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service, especially regarding personal injustices suffered or encroachments in professional competencies.

The right to lodge a complaint expires one year after the issue that gave rise to the complaint has become known to the complainant. However, the right expires at the latest two years after the cause of the complaint has ceased.

In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to conduct *ex officio* investigations into suspected shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service.

Complaints to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are completely independent of military channels and ensure that an independent third party, i.e. the Commission, assesses the grievance in question.



### **IV. 3. How can the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces be contacted?**

*in person:*

1090 Vienna

Roßauer Lände 1 or Türkenstraße 22a

*by telephone:*

➤ +43 50201 10 21050

➤ +43 1 3198089

➤ 1230100 (Integrated Telecommunications Infrastructure of the Austrian Armed Forces (IFMIN))

*in writing:*

➤ 1090 Vienna, Roßauer Lände 1

➤ Fax: +43 50201 10 17142

➤ [bundesheer.beschwerden@parlament.gv.at](mailto:bundesheer.beschwerden@parlament.gv.at)

### **IV. 4. Annual report**

The annual report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is published yearly pursuant to Section 10 (4) of the Rules of Procedure of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces in conjunction with Section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act, and is required to be submitted without delay to the National Council together with a position statement of the federal minister in charge of military affairs. The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to attend the debates that are conducted by the committees of the National Council about such reports and to take the floor on request, including repeatedly.

## **V. Activities**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces responded to queries submitted during the year under review, investigated complaints, arranged for ex officio investigations, conducted on-site inspections, eliminated shortcomings and grievances in the scope of military service in close cooperation with the Federal



Minister of Defence and the advisors and presented proposals for improvements with respect to military service and training.

The Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces prepared the plenary meetings of the Commission in order to facilitate decisions on complaints and ex officio investigations and to make recommendations to the Federal Minister of Defence.

Information events of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces within the sphere of the Federal Ministry of Defence and in the international sphere as well as work meetings with politicians, religious representatives and businesspeople, served to reinforce the understanding of the independent, objective and extensive oversight of military service.

By working together with the Federal Minister of Defence and the advisors, problems related to complaints that were lodged could frequently be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant during the process of investigation. The on-site interventions of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces often resulted in the elimination of the reported grievances and, in many cases, contributed to an improved working environment.

In the case of justified complaints, the Federal Minister of Defence took the supervisory measures deemed necessary (ranging from instructions, reprimands and disciplinary measures to bringing charges).

### **V. 1. Key figures**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces launched a total of 393 complaints procedures in 2017.

The complaints were chiefly related to personnel matters, the incorrect conduct of superiors, matters of training and service, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate equipment and sub-standard military medical care.

### **V. 2. Ex officio investigations**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces decided to conduct eight ex officio investigations. Shortcomings and grievances in the scope of military service were investigated.



### **V. 3. Activities pursuant to Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act**

In the year under review, no requests were made for a position statement on an appeal against a selection notification on the obligation to participate in militia recalls.

## **VI. Examples of complaints/ex officio investigations**

### **VI. 1. Inappropriate language**

During a law-enforcement assistance operation dealing with migration, a non-commissioned officer made the following remarks in the presence of soldiers and foreigners in need of assistance and protection: "swine" and "... let them freeze to death so we can set them alight". (ref. no. 10/050-2017)

A platoon leader was heard making remarks to national service soldiers, such as "Leave the thinking to the horses because they have a bigger brain than you, "You're as stupid as you look, "Bloody idiot!", "There's nothing you aren't too stupid for", "Get out of my sight, you blockhead!", "I'll kick you in the arse in a minute", "If the windows aren't cleaned, you'll be in for it".

The same non-commissioned officer, when asked for a personal talk, reacted in the following way: Putting his legs on the table he asked, "What is it you want?" or, when asked for two days off for national service soldiers a short time before being discharged from military service: "The two days' leave you can stick up your arse!" (ref. no. 10/326-2017)

### **VI. 2. Bullying and harassment**

Two national service soldiers were ordered by a non-commissioned officer to remove weed from within the gaps between paving blocks on barracks' premises on a few days in series, under hot temperatures with the sun burning down. In case they did not comply, he announced that he would "let them have it until they'd throw up." (ref. no. 10/263-2017)

Another non-commissioned officer emptied out a rubbish bin in a common room and then ordered a private to clear up the mess. (ref. no. 10/275-2017)

A private on duty who lay on the bed during a break was ordered by his platoon leader to take his bedclothes and mattress from the accommodation on the ground floor to the platoon leader's office on the second floor, to lay





them down there in an orderly fashion and to collect them again at the end of duty. The same order was given on the next day. The same private was instructed to run repeatedly from the ground floor to the second floor and back, due to not having worn his uniform correctly and failure to report back correctly to the squad commander. Due to closing a door loudly, he was ordered by his squad commander to open and close the door repeatedly for practice purposes. After doing this for 10 minutes, he was assigned a different task in order to reduce the noise level. With the door closed, he then had to push the door handle up and down. (ref. no. 10/378-2017)

### **VI. 3. Accommodation shortcomings and constructional defects**

The accommodation of national service soldiers showed constructional defects, such as non-functioning showers and toilet flushes. In addition, repairs were not carried out promptly. (ref. no. 10/105-2017)

Soldiers of a stand-by unit were banned from using electrical devices such as hotplates, kettles and multi-plug extension cords because the capacity of the power lines was insufficient. In addition, these soldiers were accommodated in former offices and storerooms with barred windows and entirely inadequate bathroom and toilet facilities. (ref. nos. 10/185 and 200-2017)

In the bathroom and toilet areas of another accommodation facility, there were hygiene issues and defects, such as mould and non-functional drains in the shower area. (ref. no. 10/366-2017)

In one barracks, national service soldiers are still accommodated in 20-person rooms. (ref. no. 10/297-2017)

### **VI. 4. Inadequate catering**

In a contingent abroad, there were catering shortcomings (half-raw chicken, a spider in the salad) and shortcomings in terms of accommodation and sanitation (mould, defective flooring and a lack of hot water). (ref. no. 10/002-2017)

One mess kitchen solely served cold food as the evening meal for a period of over 12 days. In some cases, there were flies and mosquitoes by the salad buffet. (ref. no. 10/306-2017)



The cold provisions (1 roll, 1 cream cheese triangle, 1 dry sausage) during a deployment from Linz to Vienna to participate in the Vienna Business Run were insufficient. (ref. no. 10/336-2017)

#### **VI. 5. Organisational failings**

A soldier's voluntary application for militia training was forwarded to the military command even though the relevant non-commissioned officer was notified timely of the withdrawal of that application. (ref. no. 10/019-2017)

Due to a lack of training personnel, an officer and a non-commissioned officer from the militia were taken off the Forces Demolition Licence course at short notice on the first day of the course. After a complaint was filed, the decision was withdrawn on the same day. (ref. no. 10/021-2017)

Eleven privates had high duty hours due to frequently being assigned to standby duty (up to 12 such duties within a month, including up to 3 at weekends). In addition, shortcomings, such as a lack of sports equipment, information at short notice about changes in the duty roster and delayed election of the soldiers' representatives, were confirmed. (ref. no. 10/030-2017)

Following successful completion of the radiation protection course, the national service soldiers were only awarded the relevant badge in bronze after filing a complaint. (Ref. no. 10/260-2017)

The tyres of the private car of a non-commissioned officer were damaged due to a pothole with a length of 40 cm, a width of 25 cm and a depth of 15 cm on the road at a barracks. Repairs were not performed and warning signs were not put in place. (ref. no. 10/303-2017)

Due to deficient administrative processes, a soldier was called up for trainee service with a delay, despite having passed the non-commissioned officer suitability test, resulting in the soldier concerned missing out on three months' increased pay. (ref. no. 10/329-2017)

A corporal was not informed about his promotion to master corporal and the promotion decree was only issued with a delay. (ref. no. 10/332-2017)

**VI. 6. Military medical care and restrictions**

Despite a military doctor having imposed a “duty indoors” restriction, a private was instructed to take a sports test, although it is imperative to rest as much as possible in the case of such a restriction. (ref. no. 10/027-2017)

A national serviceman, despite having suffered a burn on his lower right arm, was put on kitchen duty by his superior, despite the restriction imposed by a military doctor of “no kitchen duty”. (ref. no. 10/253-2017)

A private suffering from a peritonsillar abscess received inadequate military medical care, resulting in the need for emergency transport to a civilian hospital and immediate surgery. (ref. no. 10/318-2017)

**VI. 7. Maladministration**

At a military command, national service soldiers were recruited for deployments to provide backup to the police and were assigned on the basis of having signed up voluntarily for such deployments. Due to insufficient information about the requirements for a militia career, national service soldiers who did not meet those training requirements were de-assigned shortly before deployment and were not granted the bonus for voluntarily signing up for militia training. (ref. no. 10/054-2017)

In one barracks, a duty officer was assigned solely to guard the weapons stored in a building. After a complaint was made, it proved possible to store those weapons securely in another building. For that reason, a duty officer was no longer required to guard the weapons. (ref. no. 10/182-2017)

Following a tonsil operation, with the instruction to rest by the military doctor, a soldier was assigned at short notice as duty officer, with the company commander commenting: “I don’t care whether you rest at home or on duty at the guard table here” and “If there’s an alien attack, you can call me”. (ref. no. 10/318-2017)

**VI. 8. Failure to comply with regulations/laws**

Due to not being provided adequate information by an HR officer, a non-commissioned officer forfeited the payment due upon the requested early termination of his employment. (ref. no. 10/003-2017)

Figurines of St. Barbara were made from lead and brass as gifts of honour in the army workshop of a battalion. During processing of the materials, occupational



safety regulations were not complied with due to insufficient technical equipment. (ref. no. 10/024-2017)

The national service soldiers assigned to assist at the leisure facility of a barracks had to clean the toilets and wet rooms of the facility, which is not compatible with the relevant administrative regulations for such facilities. (ref. no. 10/051-2017)

A non-commissioned officer filmed a private during his sports test using his private smartphone. (ref. no. 10/027-2017)

## **VI. 9. Evaluation of training regulations**

In connection with the death of a private following a foot march, the training regulations and decrees of the Federal Ministry of Defence were assessed by a special committee.

With reference to the comments in the report dated 5 December 2017 of the special committee/Federal Ministry of Defence on evaluation on the training regulations and the relevant decrees concerning

### **- Personnel**

A longer service period of training personnel results in a gain in experience for core personnel at the group commander, platoon commander and unit commander level.

The criteria for general core personnel suitability and, in particular, psychological fitness of conscripts should not be lowered.

The General Service Regulations (ADV) should be adapted to serve as a code of conduct.

Promotion of appropriate measures for addressing misconduct, including dealing with misconceived comradeship.

Soldiers doing national service are colleagues.

### **- Training guidelines**

Trainers must have access to regulations at all times, including using mobile devices.

The rules set out in Decree/Federal Ministry of Defence Gazette I No. 45/2014 on "Service in extreme outside temperatures and/or increased environmental pollution" should be amended, including Section D.1.cc.



"Avoidance of activities involving physical strain during the hot hours of the day, especially in open and uncovered areas".

Medical background information is required.

- **Tasks**

The forces require sufficient time for training preparations and follow-up, internal further training and recovery phases to ensure operational capability.

New structures can only be established once the significant personnel reductions have been covered and the relevant personnel are in place.

The newly trained personnel need to have a service period in the forces of several years.

- **Position of commanders**

The freedom of action of the commanders is to be increased by allowing them to report planned measures, instead of filing a request for them.

Service as a commander should be made more attractive by increasing incentives under service and remuneration law.

In the case of service misconduct, support needs to be provided by the Ministry (legal protection).

Supervision needs to be reinforced.

- **Administrative activities and documentation**

A suitable system needs to be provided for documentation and administrative activities at the company level.

it is noted that the adequate and lawful training of national service personnel is only possible to a limited extent due to a significant lack of qualified core personnel, training resources, suitable administrative processes and inconsistent regulations.

## **VII. Workshop for soldiers' representatives**

On the initiative and on behalf of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the Land Forces Command organised and held the workshop for soldiers' representatives from 27 to 29 November 2017 in Graz. A total of 48 soldiers' representatives from throughout Austria discussed national service processes and formulated suggestions for tackling training issues.



Anonymity was agreed for the discussions with the soldiers' representatives, with reference made to the possibility of lodging complaints by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

In this regard, reference is made to the military service shortcomings and grievances that were presented very credibly:

Only a quarter of the soldiers' representatives present had training in that role.

Considerable organisational shortcomings in training together with a lack of relevant information increase the impression of disrespectful behaviour of the core personnel towards privates ("the last in all things, not just military rank").

Complaints were made of collective punishments, verbal abuse, running around a block of buildings in CBRN uniform in great heat, practices of rapid changes of uniform (so-called "masked balls") conducted in a bullying fashion, extra training as punishment etc.

Information about matters concerning the Austrian Armed Forces for conscripts and privates before and during trainee service is inadequate.

Shortfalls occur in terms of food provision. Criticisms are made concerning both the quality and quantity of the meals, such as mushy food. The use of ready-made sauces is said to result in everything tasting the same.

The cold marching provisions are unpopular, due to insufficient quantity of food and a lack of variety.

Environmental concerns were raised in a few instances on the grounds that local foodstuffs are not used.

The monthly pay for national service soldiers of EUR 322 is too low.

The 2013 combat boots are found to be uncomfortable.

In some cases, privates are accommodated in 50-person, 12-person or 10-person rooms with bunk beds and metal lockers.

The number of sockets in the accommodation for privates is not in line with modern private IT use.

Hot water is only fully available at the start of showering. In some cases, the number of showers is insufficient.

Medical care during national service is overwhelmingly viewed negatively, in particular due to the lack of free choice of doctor, combined with the brusque



approach of military doctors and in-patient stays in a military medical facility instead of recuperating at home.

In accordance with the senior officers of Land Forces Command the chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and Otto Pendl, former MP note that, in view of the three main pillars of the Austrian Armed Forces - professional soldiers, militia, national service soldiers -, a change is necessary concerning the attitude towards national service soldiers or rather that the system itself is deficient and many efforts will be required to make national service attractive again.

## **VIII. Inspection visits conducted by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

### **VIII. 1. Report on the inspection visit to AUTCON26/EUFOR ALTHEA**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces conducted an inspection visit to the AUTCON26/EUFOR ALTHEA soldiers at Camp Butmir near Sarajevo from 10 to 11 May 2017.

The following topics and issues were discussed with the AUTCON/EUFOR ALTHEA soldiers:

#### Personnel

Due to understaffing of 39 soldiers (minus 10 per cent actually: 298; target: 337) concerning individual areas (medical officers, S2, rifle companies etc.) and due to a 24/7 operational readiness of the various technical elements and units, soldiers come under heavy service-related strain.

In the view of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the low difference in pay when comparing deployments in Austria and abroad is a key reason for the understaffing of 10% at AUTCON/EUFOR ALTHEA. Furthermore, in the case of law enforcement assistance operations it is possible to travel home more frequently than in the case of international deployments. Unlike for law-enforcement assistance operations, extensive physical and psychological tests need to be passed for international deployments.

Insufficient information about the composition of the remuneration for international deployments and about the difference in pay for the latter



compared to law enforcement assistance operations has greatly reduced the attractiveness of deployments abroad.

#### Accommodation

The standard of accommodation at Camp Butmir is good. Each soldier has his or her own room.

For training for deployments in Austria, the furnishings and equipment of the accommodation in the Wallenstein barracks are outdated. In addition, no WLAN is available.

#### Catering

The catering at Camp Butmir is very good. In view of the extensive provisions, soldiers do not make use of some meals. Therefore, with reference to a regulation in place several years ago, soldiers demand a regulation enabling them to cancel meals on specific days or individual meals, including a disbursement of the applicable food costs of up to EUR 30 per day.

#### Uniform/equipment

Hot Weather Clothing (HWC) uniforms are available, with the exception of boots and the relevant field jacket.

The crowd-riot-control equipment of the rifle company has significant wear and tear and is damaged, so it is not fully functional.

With reference to a rule under customs law, there are massive restrictions on taking private items for leisure purposes in the case of rotations. The previous rule of one soldier box for each service equipment and private items, and the additional possibility of taking a private bicycle was repealed, with the result that there are now massive restrictions on taking private items duty-free.

#### Pay/special payments

Provisions under pension law result in withholding of a 10-percent pension supplement of the international deployment supplement for all military personnel born in or after 1976. Persons in that group complain about being disadvantaged compared to older personnel, who are unaffected.

For international deployments, military personnel with a special contract receive monthly remuneration of roughly EUR 200 less than military personnel on the payroll, due to different deductions/remuneration approaches.





Remuneration for international deployments can be viewed electronically via the standard portal of the Ministry of Defence. However, since not everyone has an army PC, in some cases it is not always possible to check this information “in practice”, resulting in a lack of information about the level and, in particular, the composition of the monthly remuneration. There are no paper-based pay slips.

### **VIII. 2. Report on the inspection visit to AUTCON12/UNIFIL**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces conducted an inspection visit to the AUTCON 12/UNIFIL soldiers at the HQ UNIFIL camp in Naqoura in Lebanon from 11 to 12 July 2017.

The following topics and issues were discussed with the AUTCON 12/UNIFIL soldiers:

#### Preparatory training in Austria

The complaint is made that insufficient attention is paid to the actual knowledge and skills of personnel in specialist roles during the preparatory training in Austria for international deployments. As a result, in some cases it is not possible to rely on the relevant expertise in the deployment area from the start of the international deployment.

In isolated cases, personnel in specialist roles, such as non-commissioned officers, like Quartermaster NCO responsible for catering or Signal NCO, lack sufficient expertise.

The Austrian UN fire brigade recommends that the general preparatory training in Austria be shortened in favour of extended and more intensive fire safety training.

#### Accommodation

A few complaints are made about the inadequate quality of the innerspring mattresses. The air conditioners tend to become mouldy because of the high humidity.

Repairs are delayed due to the cumbersome nature of the UN administration. Austria has to assist in rectifying accommodation shortcomings in the case of delayed action or of lack of action by UNIFIL.



The furnishings and equipment of the accommodation in the Wallenstein barracks are outdated. In addition, no WLAN is available.

#### Catering

The breakfast in the "Edelweiß" leisure facility is praised.

The international kitchen at Camp Naqoura is chiefly geared to Asian food given that the majority of troop-contributing countries are from the Far East. Since early 2017, the new kitchen management has significantly improved the quality and selection of food. Nevertheless, the food is found to be monotonous over time.

#### Uniform

Only two sets of the HWC uniform are available. That is insufficient.

#### Pay

The level of pay for deployments in law enforcement assistance operations in Austria is similar to that for international deployments. The relatively low difference in pay between deployments in Austria and abroad reduces the incentive to apply for international deployments. The possibility of travelling home every few days in the case of law enforcement assistance operations contrasts with longer absences from home in the case of international deployments. An increase in the amount per value unit applicable to supplementary pay could help in that respect.

#### Field post

The transport times of up to 4 weeks for field post are too long. The Federal Ministry of Defence should strive to achieve a contractual agreement with an airline to ensure regular, fast and punctual field post.

#### Pastoral care

There is no provider of pastoral care in the contingent. Providers of military pastoral care are dispatched temporarily to the deployment area for special occasions like Christmas and Easter. As a result, there is no independent point of contact – who is not subject to a reporting obligation – available on a day-to-day basis.

#### Internet

Since July 2017, an Austrian IP-address for EUR 15,- per month has been provided. This has facilitated and improved the access to information from home. By comparison: Previously, internet use cost EUR 50,- per month.



#### UN vehicles

UNIFIL provides the service vehicles, which are subject to particular wear and tear owing to their intensive use. Repair and the provision of spare parts through the UN administration is slow and cumbersome, repeatedly raising concerns about operational safety. Without wishing to absolve the UN agencies of their responsibility, a supplementary supply chain via Austria should be requested.

### **VIII. 3. Report on the inspection visit to the COOPSEC17 exercise**

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces conducted an inspection visit on 14 September 2017 to the "COOPSEC17" exercise at the Allentsteig Military Training Area. During this exercise, 33 female soldiers and 2176 male soldiers from Austria, and 136 soldiers from the Czech Republic, Germany, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia practised deployment and the provision of support in a civilian-military border management operation to establish the groundwork for possible military support in the scope of civilian-military cooperation.

The soldiers' mission was to "stabilise, control and provide humanitarian aid."

The inspection visit focused on the militia. A total of 235 militia soldiers participated in the COOPSEC17 exercise.

The following topics were addressed during discussions with militia soldiers:

#### Personnel

The militia soldiers are well-trained and motivated. Personnel recruitment in the militia will be a challenge in the coming years, given that the current level of positions filled is in some cases below 50%.

#### Training duration/training courses

Alignment of the length of training for professional and militia soldiers causes difficulties for militia soldiers who wish to pursue a militia career only after starting a civilian career, as well as for students, in terms of compatibility with private and professional circumstances. A six-month absence from a civilian job or university for further training to be a non-commissioned officer results in a conflict of interests.

Some military training courses are not recognised in the civilian sphere despite high requirements and comparability with civilian training courses.



#### Catering/accommodation

The newly introduced container kitchen enables quick and high-quality catering.

The air-conditioned tents for some soldiers provide greater comfort than the previous tents for exercises.

#### Equipment

Militia soldiers complain that they have to recollect equipment for every militia exercise. For example, the required adjustments to the combat jackets are often time-consuming and there is a risk of reduced comfort. Therefore, they recommend being able to keep the equipment for the duration of their militia function.

#### Summary

There was no difference between the professional and militia personnel in terms of commitment and motivation. The soldiers of the COOPSEC17 exercise performed well together and were well-motivated.

## **IX. Specific events**

### **IX. 1. Submission and presentation of the Annual Report 2016**

On 14 March 2017, the Annual Report 2016 of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was handed to President of the National Council, Doris Bures and subsequently, to Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil.

Within a press talk on the Annual Report, the Executive chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP emphasised that the number of complaints within the armed forces in the year 2016 had decreased due to, amongst others, the increasing motivation. There has been noticeable improvement in the priority field of making national service more attractive. Chairman Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP noted that it is necessary to press ahead with the planned structural improvements to ensure that the Austrian Armed Forces fulfil their role as a strategic reserve for the Republic of Austria. Chairman Otto Pendl, MP emphasised the positive atmosphere in the forces during the inspection visits of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.



In his statement Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil, underlined that every complaint represents a meaningful articulation of dissatisfaction which might indicate any shortcomings within the system and which thus opens up opportunities for improvement. Persons filing complaints are therefore seen not as "opponents" but as partners of the Ministry in its efforts to continuously improve processes and services in the public interest, he said.

## **IX. 2. Conference of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

During the Conference of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the National Defence Academy on 5 April 2017 two sessions took place. Military Bishop Dr. Werner Freistetter provided information about the current situation with respect to military pastoral care.

Presentations were then given, with the possibility for subsequent discussion about the personnel situation and catering logistics in the Austrian Armed Forces (Cook&Chill catering, field kitchen system etc.).

### **IX. 2.1. Personnel situation in the Austrian Armed Forces**

In 2016, the Austrian Armed Forces launched a personnel offensive for the first time in years, with the aim of recruiting soldiers for an additional 9800 posts by 2020.

An upturn can be observed, but the current personnel situation remains problematic. Despite numerous initiatives and measures, it is proving very difficult to increase the number of personnel. Aside from that, it is a great challenge in itself to maintain the personnel level in the Austrian Armed Forces. With a little more than 21000 soldiers, the Austrian Armed Forces have been stretched to their limits, also with regard to current missions nationally (859 in law enforcement assistance operations, among them 233 militia and 284 national service soldiers) and abroad (1037 plus a reserve of 527).

The prospect of better pay, the adjustment of the framework conditions, in particular the reduction/modification of the limits of the aptitude test for key personnel training and the guarantee given by the Ministry of being able to start a career in the Austrian Armed Forces are important reasons, e.g. for national service soldiers to stay in the Austrian Armed Forces. However, only



approx. 1600 national service soldiers (of approx. 17500) decide to pursue a career as a soldier.

Irrespective of that, the currently available funds are not sufficient for the plan of raising the number of personnel to 24400 by 2020. The additional personnel budget required by 2020 is EUR 337 million.

With current personnel structures (personnel, advertising measures, acceptance criteria etc.), the intended recruitment of an additional 9800 soldiers can only be achieved by 2035 and not, as planned, by 2020.

To achieve the increase in personnel, several amendments to service and remuneration law will be required. Amendments to service legislation are being drafted.

In order to make service in the Austrian Armed Forces more attractive, salaries for non-commissioned officers belonging to the M BUO2 and M ZUO2 personnel groups were adjusted in 2017.

The monthly pay of national service soldiers needs to be increased.

### **IX. 2.2. Catering logistics in the Austrian Armed Forces**

The Cook&Serve and Cook&Chill catering systems have been introduced in recent years to meet the requirements of catering logistics in the Austrian Armed Forces. The associated reduction in personnel by around half (currently approx. 550 persons in 4 central kitchens, 58 regeneration kitchens, 3 serving stations and 23 remaining mess kitchens Austria-wide) has made it possible to respond to the recurring issue of understaffing.

The Cook&Chill catering system makes it possible to respond flexibly on a day-to-day basis to increased catering requirements and, where necessary, to increase production capacity at short notice.

The Cook&Serve and Cook&Chill catering systems meet the requirements of solely cost-saving catering logistics. Criticisms are still made concerning the "monotonous taste" due to a high number of ready-made products. In addition, the proportion of regional products that is allegedly too low is criticised. Since the introduction of Cook&Chill catering, compared with mess kitchens that prepare meals themselves, there is allegedly significant environmental harm owing to more frequent deliveries and also a lack of security of supply in extreme weather conditions.



The advantages of extending Cook&Chill catering across the Austrian Armed Forces by 2021 are optimised cost-effectiveness, achievement of the required reduction in personnel and a decrease in operating costs. There has been a significant decline in the number of complaints about the now available Cook&Chill catering, and the number of objections during hygiene inspections has fallen. Cook&Chill catering allows for stocking of meals for seven days in Austria.

The field kitchen component, which has been reduced for years and which currently consists of 70 field kitchens and 2 container kitchens, results in partial self-sufficiency of the army. The Austrian Armed Forces, however, have to be self-sufficient in possible threat scenarios. Catering for contingents abroad is primarily arranged through local civilian providers.

Currently, the Ministry is evaluating to what extent reinforcement of the field kitchen system could contribute to an increased self-sufficiency of the Austrian Armed Forces, while being aware that it would require expansion of the container systems, increased personnel and intensified training efforts.

The budget for catering in the Austrian Armed Forces is approx. EUR 22,8 million per year, with the procurement of foodstuffs accounting for approx. EUR 18 million of that. Austrian products account for 72% of the foodstuffs. It is the stated intention of the Federal Ministry of Defence to increase this proportion. This will not only support and promote Austrian agriculture, but also ensure that the Austrian Armed Forces are less reliant on foreign suppliers.

Reducing the proportion of ready-made products is another important project. The aim of providing healthy food, drawing on the National Nutrition Action Plan, can only be achieved by reducing the proportion of convenience products and increasing the use of regional products. In line with that, the Federal Ministry of Defence has been endeavouring to increase the proportion of regional and high-quality products since March 2017.

A pilot project has been implemented for the transition to a cash-free food payment and access control system. The so-called "RFID Medium", a multifunctional chip, controls access to the site, building, wing, room and messhall, and enables cash-free settlement of payments. Roll-out of this project across Austria will result in optimised processes, increased cost-effectiveness and a service improvement for the catering recipients, due to process automation.

The introduction of "RFID Medium" is considered to be a sensible step.



### **IX. 2.3. Military pastoral care**

In discussion with the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Military Bishop Dr. Werner Freistetter noted that he is particularly committed to positive and productive relations with all religions represented in the Austrian Armed Forces. In general, it may be noted that there is a very good relationship currently between national service soldiers and key personnel of different faiths.

The soldiers of the Austrian Armed Forces rightly expect the providers of military pastoral care to be there for them as objective and trustworthy dialogue partners. This is particularly important since the rigours of day-to-day life in the Austrian Armed Forces often leave little time for interpersonal religious discussion.

With the aim of Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox, Alevi, Islamic and Jewish pastoral military care forming an overarching whole – in the interest of the role that they perform – the religious communities aim to cooperate even more closely and by doing so send an important and correct message to the public since, despite their many differences, they all have the religious dimension in common.

### **IX. 3. Female soldiers**

Since 1 April 1998, it has been possible for female soldiers to voluntarily serve in the Austrian Armed Forces in all roles.

Despite a personnel drive and the high interest of the target group, which has led to an increase in women signing up for military service, only some of the prospective female soldiers could actually be called up for trainee service. The reason for the higher “failure rate” of women on the aptitude test for service in the Austrian Armed Forces could be that the suitability of young men for national service/alternative national service is checked upon the pre-enlistment fitness examination, whereas in the case of women it is checked straight after they apply for trainee service. In addition, the proportion of women who break off their service and training is high.





The "Girls' Day" for women was held in all federal provinces in 2017, giving 3400 potential female soldiers insight into the Austrian Armed Forces. Another 220 potential female soldiers participated in the three-day "Girls' Camps".

The "FIT FOR THE ARMY" pilot project was launched at the Non-Commissioned Officers' Academy in July 2017. The aim of the project is to prepare prospective key personnel for the challenges of a military career. Female soldiers are given as accurate an impression as possible of military service through individual training, as well as military history and visits to the forces. It is possible to enter the programme monthly. The average time spent in the programme is three and a half months. A total of 69 female soldiers participated in that preparatory programme in the year under report.

When in December 2017, 596 female soldiers were serving in the Austrian Armed Forces, 428 of them were employed. The number of women signing up voluntarily, the number of women entering and extending trainee service, the number of female participants in key personnel training, and the number of female employees has increased. The proportion of female soldiers in the Austrian Armed Forces is just under 4 percent.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is committed to promoting the increase in the proportion of female soldiers through its parliamentary oversight role.

#### **IX. 4. Inaugural visit to the Federal President of the Republic**

On 3 October 2017, the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces paid its inaugural visit to Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen at Hofburg.

The Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and the two chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP and Otto Pendl, MP thanked Federal President and Commander-in-Chief, Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen, during their inaugural visit for his support for the improvement of the financial situation of the Austrian Armed Forces in the coming years to ensure that the Austrian Armed Forces can fulfil their duties as a strategic reserve of our Republic for the protection of the population. This means increased recruitment, not only to compensate for



decreases in personnel, due to upcoming retirements, but to increase the number of personnel overall.

Therefore, attractive conditions, including appropriate pay for the soldiers, especially for national service soldiers, are required. Furthermore, equipment should be brought in line with optimal safety standards. There is also a specific need for improvement in areas, including barracks infrastructure, vehicles (including aircraft), weapons and equipment.

The Federal President of the Republic and the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces agree that the Federal Government must allocate sufficient funds to the ordinary budget of the Federal Ministry of Defence in order to fulfil the wide-ranging duties and challenges, such as in the case of a terrorist threat, a natural disaster or a blackout.

#### **IX. 5. Annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

The traditional annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was held on 20 November 2017.

President of the National Council, Elisabeth Köstinger and Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil, praised the Parliamentary Commission on the Federal Armed Forces as an important democratic oversight body in their speeches.



## **X. International cooperation**

In addition to its statutory duties of inspection and oversight, the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces deemed it important to cooperate with institutions at the international level to exchange views and discuss the wide-ranging tasks of democratic oversight bodies for armed forces at the bilateral and multinational level.

### **X. 1. Meetings with the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces**

The German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, met with the Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Otto Pendl, MP on 27 February 2017 for a meeting about the German-Austrian Military Alpine Guide Course at the Hochfilzen Military Training Area.

Mountain warfare involves fighting for infrastructure and takes place in high mountains and in extreme and difficult terrain. The German-Austrian Military Alpine Guide Course at the Mountain Warfare Centre trains Austrian, German and international participants for deployments in mountainous terrain.

The Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces welcomed this German-Austrian cooperation and emphasised the high quality of the training in comparison to that in other countries. The commander of the Mountain Warfare Centre thanked the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for their support.

A further pilot project of the German-Austrian Military Alpine Guide Course will take place in 2017/18 to enable alpine training procedures and alpine equipment in the two countries to be coordinated as closely as possible. Binational military alpine guide training will only commence properly after that.

The German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces paid a working visit to the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on 6 December 2017. The topics of budgetary funds, increased



recruitment and the accommodation of soldiers were discussed in Parliament/Hofburg.

The Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces agreed that the question of the rights of military ombuds systems in binational and multinational contexts should be addressed in greater depth. As already discussed at 9ICOAF in London, a joint project involving countries such as Norway, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria in the first instance is surely an important first step.

After arriving at the Land Forces Command in Graz, the current defence policy training, the cultivation of traditions and the feedback system for national service soldiers in the Austrian Armed Forces were presented and discussed.

## **X. 2. Meeting with the Parliamentary Military Commissioner of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

On 11 May 2017, during the inspection visit to EUFOR ALTHEA, a discussion was held between the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the Parliamentary Military Commissioner of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosko Silijegovic, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Security and Defence and the Inspector General of the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Parliamentary Assembly in Sarajevo.

## **X. 3. 9. International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for Armed Forces**

As a platform for promoting the democratic oversight of armed forces and preventing maladministration and violations of human rights, the ICOAF has supported and enabled the international exchange of experiences and enhanced cooperation between ombuds institutions for armed forces for nine years now.

9ICOAF was held from 8 to 10 October 2016 in London and addressed the topic of "Moral compass of the armed forces and how ombuds institutions can break down barriers to achieve change." Representatives of the ombuds institutions of some 40 countries attended the event. Opinions were put forward in numerous discussions about wide-ranging approaches to addressing complaints.



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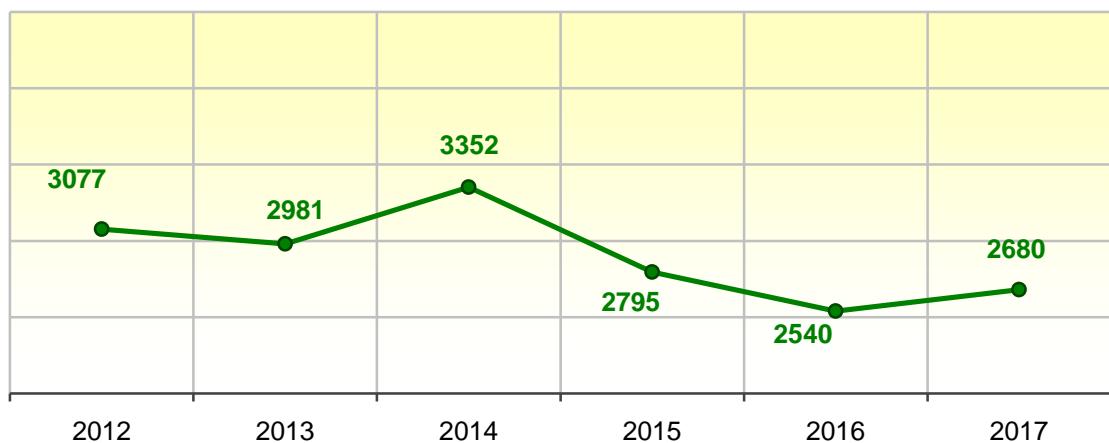


## Statistics 2017

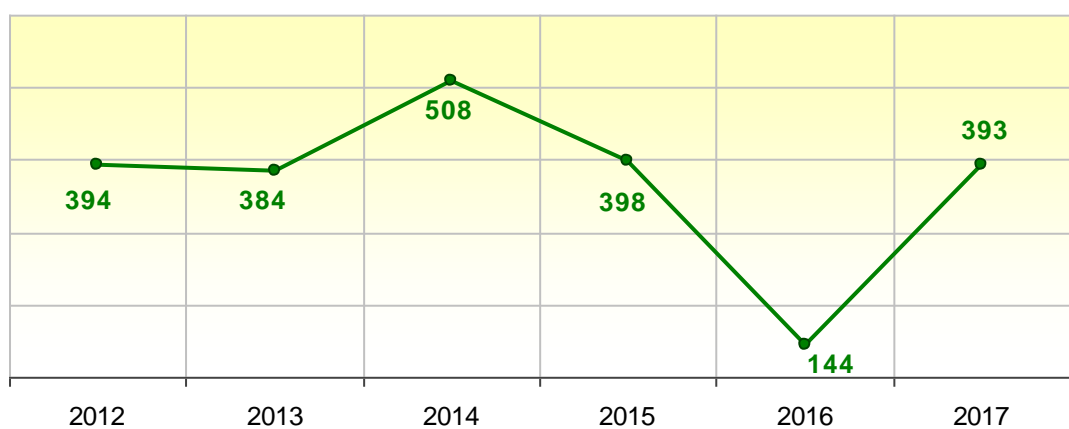
In the period under review, a total of 2680 people turned to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. In many cases, prompt and efficient help could be provided by giving information and legal advice and brokering solutions.

In 393 cases, it was necessary to conduct a complaints procedure pursuant to Section 4 of the 2001 Defence Act.

### Requests for information and legal advice 2012 – 2017

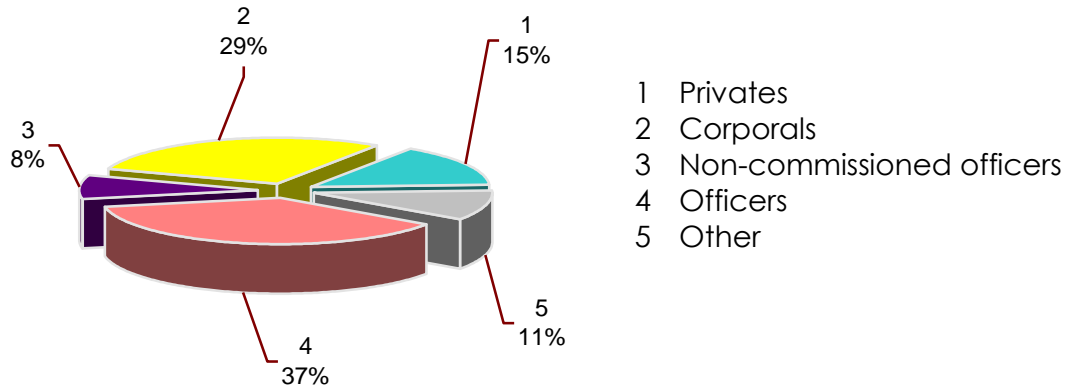


### Number of complaints 2012 – 2017

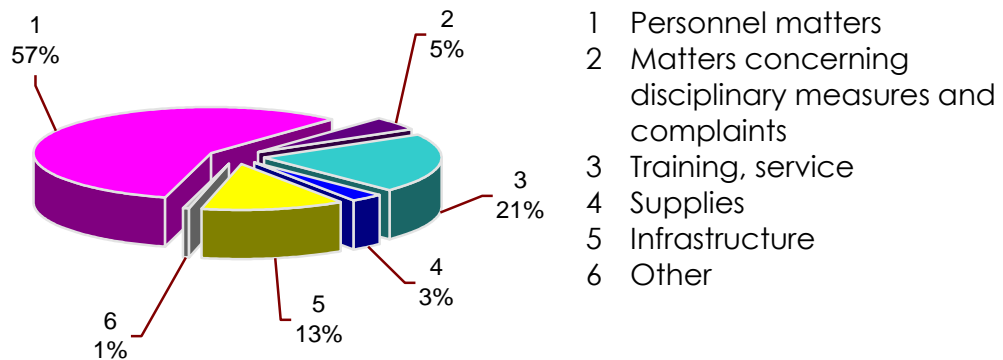




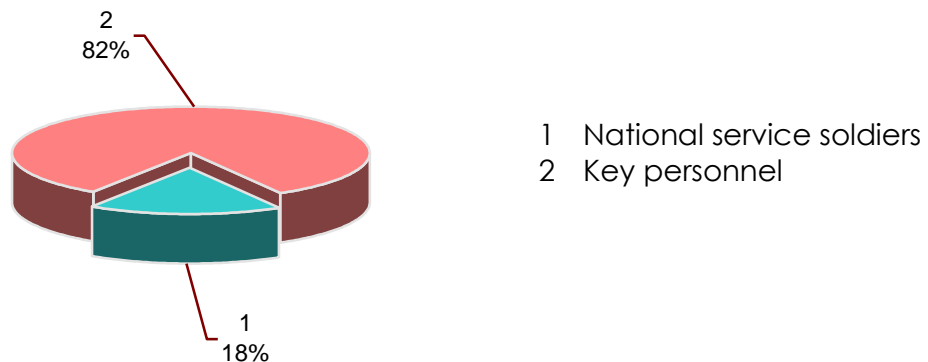
### Who were complaints lodged by?



### Reasons for complaints



### Number of complaints lodged by national service soldiers and key personnel





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## **Extract from the 2001 Defence Act**

### **2001 Defence Act**

**Federal Law Gazette I No. 146, last amended by Federal Law Gazette I No. 164/2017**

#### **The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

**Section 4 (1) (Constitutional provision)** A parliamentary complaints commission for military matters (Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces) shall be established at the federal ministry in charge of military affairs. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall consist of three chairpersons, each of whom, pursuant to paragraph (10), shall become the executive chairperson by rotation, as well as six further members in the first instance. The chairpersons shall be appointed by the National Council pursuant to paragraph (9). The other six members shall be delegated by the political parties in accordance with the d'Hondt method in the ratio of their numbers of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. Every party represented on the Main Committee of the National Council is entitled to be represented on the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. If, by way of this calculation, not every such party is able to delegate a member, the party in question is entitled to appoint an additional member. The political parties shall nominate a substitute member for each member and each chairperson proposed by them. The chairpersons shall jointly constitute the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The term of office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is six years. Only members of the National Council are eligible to be nominated as chairpersons; in addition to members of the National Council, experts from the sphere of national defence and human rights are eligible to be nominated as members and substitute members.

(2) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have a quorum if at least two chairpersons and three further members are present. Decisions shall be taken by majority. In the event of a tie, the chairperson shall have the casting vote.

(3) The Chief of Defence Staff and a suitable member of the Ministry, nominated by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, serve as advisors to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(4) The Parliamentary Commission on the Austrian Armed Forces shall accept complaints lodged, directly or indirectly, by persons who have volunteered for a pre-enlistment fitness examination or trainee service, by persons liable to attend a pre-enlistment fitness examination, by soldiers, by conscripts in the militia or reserve who have completed national service, by persons that have performed trainee service, and – unless the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces finds the alleged grounds for the complaint negligible – examine them and decide upon recommendations pertaining to their resolution. The above also applies to complaints lodged by soldiers' representatives. If such a complaint is lodged on behalf of a single



soldier only, his/her consent is required. The right to lodge a complaint expires one year after the issue that gave rise to the complaint became known to the complainant. However, the right expires at the latest two years after the cause of the complaint has ceased. In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to conduct ex officio investigations into suspected shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service. If necessary, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may carry out the investigations necessary for its work on site, and obtain all necessary information from those concerned.

(5) **(Constitutional provision)** By 1 March of each year, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall submit a report on its work and the recommendations it made in the past year. The report shall be submitted without delay by the federal minister in charge of military affairs to the National Council, together with a position statement on the recommendations made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to attend the debates that are conducted by the committees of the National Council about such reports and to take the floor on request, including repeatedly. Further details are laid down in the National Council Rules of Procedure Act.

(6) The chairpersons and the other members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures that arise from the work of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, including necessary travel costs. These expenditures shall be reimbursed in accordance with the provisions of the 1955 Travel Fees Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 133, for civil servants at service-grade VIII level in the general administration. In addition, for his/her work in the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces the executive chairperson shall receive remuneration corresponding to 20% of the salary of a federal civil servant in the general administration at the highest salary-grade level of service grade IX; the other chairpersons shall receive remuneration corresponding to 10% of the aforementioned salary. The chairpersons shall not receive such remuneration if they are members of the National Council, the Federal Council, a federal state parliament, or members of the federal government or a federal state government.

(7) **(Constitutional provision)** The federal minister in charge of military affairs shall provide the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces with the necessary personnel and bear the necessary material costs. During the performance of tasks for the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the personnel provided is solely required to comply with the directives of the executive chairperson.

(8) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall lay down its own rules of procedure and vote them into effect by two-thirds majority.

(9) **(Constitutional provision)** The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be elected by the National Council on the basis of a comprehensive proposal by the Main Committee of the National Council. When drafting that proposal, each of the three parliamentary parties with the highest number of seats in the National Council has the right to nominate one candidate. In the case of an equal number of seats, the number of votes in the last National Council election shall be decisive. If a chairperson retires early, the party



represented on the National Council that nominated that chairperson originally shall name a new member. On the basis of this nomination, he/she will be elected by the National Council for the remaining term of office.

(10) The executive chairpersons change by rotation every two years; the sequence of said rotation reflects the number of seats held by their respective nominating party. In the case of an equal number of seats, the number of votes in the last National Council election shall be decisive. The work of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be directed by the executive chairperson; the other chairpersons shall hold the office of his/her deputy in the sequence previously described.

### **Militia recalls and preparatory militia training**

**Section 21** (3) Conscripts who have not volunteered for militia recalls but have successfully completed preparatory militia training during national service may be required to participate in militia recalls if the required posts cannot be sufficiently staffed with conscripts that have volunteered for militia recalls. The conscripts shall be selected by selection decision within two years of their release from national service, according to the respective military requirements, taking personal circumstances into consideration. At most 12% of conscripts who have completed their national service in the respective calendar year may be subject to such an obligation. That percentage includes conscripts who have volunteered for militia recalls. At the request of the conscript, a position statement of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces must be obtained prior to a selection decision being made. On the basis of an effective selection decision, conscripts may be required to participate in militia recalls up to their 50th birthday.



## **Extract from the National Council Rules of Procedure Act**

### **1975 Rules of Procedure Act**

**Federal Law Gazette I No. 146, last amended by Federal Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 41/2016**

**Section 20a (1)** The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to attend the debates that are conducted about the report pursuant to Section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act by the relevant committee of the National Council.

(2) The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to take the floor, including repeatedly, during the debates referred to in paragraph (1), but without interrupting a speaker.

(3) The relevant committee is entitled to require the presence of the chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces during the debates referred to in paragraph (1).

**Section 29 (2)** The Main Committee has responsibility for the following matters in particular:

...

**k)** Submission of a comprehensive proposal for election of the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to Section 4 (9) of the 2001 Defence Act.

**Section 87 (4)** The president of the Court of Auditors, the members of the Ombudsman Board and the chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are elected upon the recommendation of the Main Committee, pursuant to Section 4 of the Defence Act.



## The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

### Rules of Procedure

On 27 January the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, in accordance with sect. 4 para 8 of the 2001 Defence Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 146/2001, amended by Federal Law Gazette No. 111/2010, adopted the following rules of procedure:

Composition of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

**Section 1** (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces has the following members:

the three chairpersons appointed by the National Council, each of whom shall become the executive chairperson by rotation pursuant to Section 4 (9) of the 2001 Defence Act, as well as six further members nominated by the political parties in the ratio of their numbers of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. The chairpersons shall jointly constitute the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(2) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces has the following substitute members:

the substitutes for each member and each chairperson nominated by the respective political parties. The substitute members are members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for the duration of the time that the persons specified in paragraph (1) are prevented from attending.

(3) Advisors to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are as follows:

- the Chief of Defence Staff,
- a suitable official appointed by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports.

Authorised substitutes acting on behalf of the advisors shall be treated on a par with such advisers. An authorised military medical expert shall attend the meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(4) Prior to executing their offices for the first time, the persons listed in paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be sworn in by the executive chairperson; the executive chairperson in turn shall be sworn in by the member of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces who is most senior by age. The oath is as follows:

"I swear that as a member (chairperson) of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces I shall perform my duties impartially and to the best of my knowledge and belief."

(5) The Chairpersons, the further members and the substitute members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall, unless law



stipulates otherwise, be bound to official secrecy (section 20, para 3, Federal Constitutional Law).

(6) The executive chairperson shall discharge the duties that are incumbent upon him/her pursuant to the 2001 Defence Act and these Rules of Procedure, especially as regards preparing, convening and chairing meetings, and as regards the minutes and the annual report. If he/she is unable to attend, one of his/her deputies shall act on his/her behalf. In such event, the deputy who, pursuant to Section 4 (10) of the 2001 Defence Act, is to succeed the executive chairperson upon the end of his/her two-year term of office shall act as executive chairperson. If, however, the executive chairperson is a member of the third largest party, the chairperson nominated by the party with the highest number of seats in the National Council shall act as executive chairperson in such event. At the same time the unavailable chairperson's substitute member shall be summoned; this substitute member, however, shall only serve as a member pursuant to Section 1(1).

### **Duties of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

**Section 2** (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall accept complaints that are filed directly or indirectly

- a) by persons who have volunteered for a pre-enlistment fitness examination or trainee service,
- b) by persons obliged to attend a pre-enlistment fitness examination,
- c) by soldiers of either sex,
- d) by conscripts in the militia or reserve who have completed national service, and by persons who have undergone trainee service,
- e) by soldiers' representatives on behalf of the soldiers they represent (if the complaint is lodged on behalf of only a single soldier, that soldier's consent is required),

examine them and decide on recommendations to resolve the complaint.

(2) In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to conduct ex officio investigations into suspected shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service.

(3) If necessary, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may carry out the investigations necessary for its work on site and obtain all necessary information from those concerned.

(4) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall furthermore adopt the position statements that the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports is required to obtain pursuant to Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act prior to reaching a negative decision on an appeal against a selection decision taken by the respective military command.

### **Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

**Section 3** (1) The Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is established to attend to the affairs of the Austrian Parliamentary



Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. Pursuant to Section 4 (7) of the 2001 Defence Act, the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports shall provide the required personnel and cover the necessary material expenses. Only the executive chairperson is entitled to instruct the personnel. The executive chairperson shall decide on all personnel matters that have a direct and immediate organisational bearing upon the discharge of duties within the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces (especially direction and authorisation of overtime, regulation of overtime compensation, leave, taking of holidays, training and professional development). In all other personnel matters, the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports shall contact the executive chairperson before making a decision.

(2) The head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and his/her staff shall discharge their duties pursuant to the provisions of these Rules of Procedure. The head of the Office and his/her staff shall in particular

- a) assist the chairpersons and other members and substitute members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces in the discharge of their duties;
- b) take care of the administration and clerical organisation of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- c) liaise with the Presidium of the National Council, the Parliamentary Administration, the offices of the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, especially the advisors of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, and other relevant central bodies in the scope of the responsibilities of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- d) prepare and support the meetings of the Presidium and the plenum of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces as well as on-site hearings, investigations following extraordinary complaints and investigations of suspected deficiencies and grievances in the Armed Forces;
- e) ascertain facts relevant to lodged extraordinary complaints and ex officio procedures;
- f) obtain statements of the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports and other offices in preparation of the settlement of extraordinary complaints and ex officio investigations;
- g) prepare draft proposals for the meetings of the Presidium and the plenum of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- h) implement decisions made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- i) process enquiries submitted to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces or the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- j) receive extraordinary complaints lodged directly at the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and information potentially entailing ex officio investigations;



- k) provide archival work, documentation and evaluation pertaining to lodged extraordinary complaints and ex officio investigations including pertinent statistics for the Parliamentary Austrian Armed Forces Commission;
- l) prepare the annual report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and process the position statement made about the report by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports;
- m) take care of matters of the Rules of Procedure and the allocation of responsibilities within the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- n) prepare position statements to be made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to Section 21(3) of the 2001 Defence Act.

(3) The head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to authorise activities that serve to accomplish the above tasks. He/she shall handle other matters, including with his/her signature, on behalf of the executive chairperson that he/she has been authorised to handle independently by the executive chairperson. The executive chairperson may declare himself/herself responsible for any matter, or reserve the right to authorise the decision.

### **Passage of decisions of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces**

**Section 4** (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have a quorum if at least two chairpersons and three further members are present.

(2) Decisions shall be taken by majority. In the event of a tie, the executive chairperson shall have the casting vote.

### **Duties of the chairpersons**

**Section 5** (1) Meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be prepared by the executive chairperson together with his/her two deputies (the Presidium) with the assistance of the head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(2) All complaints lodged either directly with the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces or through official channels shall be submitted to the executive chairperson without delay. One of the three chairpersons shall be appointed rapporteur for each complaint. At the beginning of each calendar year, the three chairpersons shall agree on an allocation of duties that clearly defines the criteria by which the rapporteurs are assigned the respective complaints.

(3) In the event of cases that clearly do not come under the remit of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, in matters already decided on by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and in cases of lack of entitlement to lodge a complaint, the executive chairperson shall inform the complainant that the complaint will, in all probability, not be dealt with by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.





(4) Complaints lodged anonymously shall be accepted by the executive chairperson. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be notified of such complaints, as well as of reports and statements made by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports concerning such complaints.

(5) If a complaint is made against a decision that may be appealed against by means of ordinary or extraordinary remedy or regarding which a complaint may be lodged with the Constitutional Court or the Supreme Administrative Court, the complainant must be made aware of their right to the above remedies without delay.

(6) The executive chairperson shall notify the complainant of the receipt and further processing of the complaint.

(7) The executive chairperson shall initiate or conduct the ascertainment of facts or an investigation of a complaint by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, including on site if necessary (Section 8 (9)), determine the type of investigation to be conducted and, if necessary, order the submission of an investigation report, including the position statement of the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports.

(8) The executive chairperson shall ensure that the information and documents required for the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces to make a decision on a complaint are available without delay, by no later than six weeks after receipt of the complaint. If this deadline is not met, reasons for failure to meet the deadline shall be reported to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the following meeting.

(9) Requests of the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports pursuant to Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act shall be forwarded by the executive chairman to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces without delay, by no later than when the documents for the following meeting are sent. If a member of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces deems that the evaluation of a case requires further investigations, the executive chairperson shall arrange for such investigations to be conducted without delay.

(10) The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to attend the debates conducted on the report pursuant to Section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act by the relevant committee of the National Council. The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces have the right to take the floor, including repeatedly, during such debates, but without interrupting a speaker. The relevant committee is entitled to require the presence of the chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces during such debates.

### **Ex officio investigation of deficiencies and grievances and investigation of complaints on site**

**Section 6** (1) The Ex officio investigation of suspected shortcomings and grievances in the scope of military service or the investigation of complaints on site requires a relevant decision taken by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.



(2) In cases of particular urgency, if the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces has not convened, the Presidium may make a relevant decision and conduct an ex officio investigation of deficiencies and grievances on site. Section 4 and Section 5 (2), (7) and (8) shall apply mutatis.

(3) The members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be notified without delay of a decision of the Presidium pursuant to paragraph (2). If an on-site investigation is conducted, any member may participate in such an investigation of the Presidium.

(4) In the case of a decision of the Presidium pursuant to paragraph (2), the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be notified of the outcome of the investigation as well as investigations performed and measures taken.

### **Convening meetings**

**Section 7** (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be convened by the executive chairperson at least once a month as a rule after agreeing on the date with the deputy chairpersons and the members.

(2) At the request of at least two members, the executive chairperson shall convene the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces within 14 days.

(3) The meeting shall be convened in written form, including the agenda, and the invitation delivered to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, as well as its advisors, by registered post, if possible eight days prior to the meeting.

(4) The notice shall include the documents necessary for a decision, any measures that have already been taken, as well as a proposal by the rapporteur to be decided on by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(5) Requests to the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports pursuant to Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act shall be listed as a separate item on the agenda. The executive chairperson shall annex to such a statement by the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, which must include the ascertained facts and the reasons for the intended rejection of the appeal a proposal for a statement by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(6) If a member's inability to attend is already established at the time the meeting is convened, the respective substitute member shall be sent the necessary documents by the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. If it subsequently emerges that the member cannot attend, the respective member shall forward the invitation and documents to the substitute member and inform the executive chairperson or the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces of his/her inability to attend.

### **Meetings**

**Section 8** (1) The executive chairperson shall open, chair and then close the meeting once the agenda has been completed. The executive chairperson may suspend the meeting for a short time or adjourn it; the new date shall be established



immediately or communicated separately to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces by the Office.

(2) If the executive chairperson is prevented from attending at short notice, he/she may entrust the deputy specified in Section 1 (6) with the tasks listed in paragraph (1).

(3) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may decide to amend or supplement the agenda.

(4) In the following cases, the complaint – except if an ex officio investigation is launched – shall not be dealt with and the procedure shall be closed:

- a) if the complaint was lodged by a person ineligible to lodge a complaint (Section 2 (1)),
- b) if personal involvement (Section 12 (1) of the General Service Regulations) cannot be proven,
- c) if no grievances related to military service are alleged. This is also the case if the complaint exclusively concerns matters of tenured or contractual civil servants related to service law (and no other grievances in the scope of military service are alleged),
- d) if the complaint is retracted of the complainant's free will,
- e) if a recommendation has already been made with respect to a complaint and there is no reason for reopening the complaint,
- f) if the alleged grounds for complaint are negligible (first sentence of Section 4 (4) of the 2001 Defence Act),
- g) if the limitation period has been exceeded (fourth sentence of Section 4 (4) of the 2001 Defence Act).

(5) In all other cases, the complaint must be dealt with materially. This includes the following cases:

- a) if there is a formal possibility of appealing to the supreme courts or the independent administrative tribunals, but such bodies do not have material decision-making authority;
- b) if the expiry of a deadline does not permit further disciplinary or court proceedings.

If disciplinary or court proceedings are pending in the case of a complaint, the complaint will not be dealt with until a final (non-appealable) ruling has been passed.

(6) If it comes under the remit of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall deal with the complaint or the result of an ex officio investigation (inspection of documents, hearing etc.). With regard to the settlement of a complaint, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall agree on recommendations, or, on the basis of a specific case, on a general recommendation.

(7) In the case of complaints or ex officio investigations where measures have already been taken by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports or agencies within his/her purview, a decision shall be made on whether such measures are deemed sufficient.



(8) All members are authorised to submit motions for decisions of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The advisors shall be given the floor, just like all the members, as often as they wish to have the floor. In addition, the advisors shall provide information at the request of the members.

(9) If the respective rapporteur or a member deems that further investigations are necessary, in particular an on-site investigation, the hearing of complainants or those concerned by the complaint or the summoning of witnesses or experts, he/she shall submit a relevant request to the Presidium or submit such a request during the meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. If such a request is granted, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall set a deadline for implementing the decision.

(10) The decisions made by the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to paragraph (6) shall be signed by the members present at the meeting and forwarded to the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports.

(11) The provisions set out in paragraphs (7), (8) and (10) shall apply mutatis to the procedure for agreeing upon a position statement to be made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to Section 21(3) of the 2001 Defence Act. The meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are not public.

### **Minutes of meetings**

**Section 9** (1) Minutes shall be taken for every meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, containing the names of those present and all decisions taken at the meeting, and shall include a copy of the agenda as an annex.

(2) If decisions are not taken unanimously, ayes and noes shall be included in the minutes. Any member may have a detailed description of the arguments put forward by them for or against a motion entered into the minutes.

(3) The correctness of the minutes shall be examined and signed by the executive chairperson, as well as by the head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The minutes shall be made accessible at the following meeting.

### **Annual report**

**Section 10** (1) By the end of January of each year, the executive chairperson shall send a draft version of the report on the previous year's activities and recommendations of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces (Section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act) to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(2) If the processing of complaints results in recommendations or observations whose importance goes beyond the individual case, then such recommendations or observations shall, upon the instructions of the executive chairman, be included in a note by the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for the purpose of preparing the annual report.



(3) The activities of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces concerning position statements pursuant to Section 21 (3) of the 2001 Defence Act shall be reported on in a separate section.

(4) The final version of the annual report, which takes members' suggestions into consideration, shall, after being agreed upon by the Parliamentary Commission on the Austrian Armed Forces, be submitted to the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports by no later than 1 March.



## **Speech of the President of the National Council, Elisabeth Köstinger, at the annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on 20 November 2017**



Chairmen!  
Federal Minister!  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Looking beyond Austria's borders, there can be no doubt that we are living through tumultuous times. Both our security and defence policy face major challenges.

Far from decreasing, the number of deployments worldwide has further increased. Increasingly rapid technological advances naturally also raise security concerns and give rise to new forms of terrorism, such as cybercrime.

We need to tackle precisely those challenges.

The Federal Armed Forces defend what we hold dearest: our democracy and our freedom. Serving as a soldier is an essential contribution to our society. Protection of our society and our democracy is a topic that we need to take very seriously!

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Austrian Armed Forces and the representatives of the Austrian Armed Forces who are here today. Thank you for your dependable and tireless work in the service of our population!

Joining the Austrian Armed Forces represents an exceptional dedication to serving our country. I have enormous respect for every person who takes that decision.

As Members of Parliament, it is our responsibility to ensure that the right conditions are in place and to pledge to the soldiers that we will take care of our armed forces and every single person in uniform!

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is an important democratic oversight body. It serves as a compass showing the right way for the Austrian Armed Forces.

Most importantly, its work ensures that soldiers' lives are enriched by the time they spend serving in the Austrian Armed Forces, for only in this way will the best soldiers be available for this vital task.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is tasked with investigating complaints and counteracting failings. It serves as a point of contact for our soldiers. The annual report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shows how seriously that task is taken. It is also particularly good news that the number of complaints is decreasing. This is a clear indication of the productive work of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed



Forces and of effective cooperation. Thank you all very much for your successful work!

Society and the world around us are changing. Both the Austrian Armed Forces and we, as an oversight body, need to respond to that change. Not only growing financial pressures and the closure of military bases, but also the increasing willingness of women to serve in the Austrian Armed Forces, are challenges that we need to rise to in a professional manner. We also need to ensure that tensions do not have a negative impact on the day-to-day service of our soldiers.

We must be aware that forms of authority are exercised in the Austrian Armed Forces that is far from typical of our society today. Such authority must be exercised with great care. If unfair treatment occurs in this field, then we must have the courage to denounce it clearly. We must have the courage to protect the victim and to clearly show the offender the limits.

As President of the National Council I advocate a new political style.

The contribution that I can make personally is chiefly in the political sphere. However, I believe that there are approaches here in the Austrian Armed Forces that can be adopted in political life. The Austrian Armed Forces are known for upholding traditional values such as patriotism, discipline and the willingness to make sacrifices. It is our responsibility to show that those values are compatible with values such as esteem, respect and recognition. Furthermore, the army is a world of hierarchies.

These hierarchies are necessary to ensure the strength and effectiveness of the Austrian Armed Forces. However, we should never forget that a military hierarchy is never synonymous with a human hierarchy! We must ensure that the weakest members of the Austrian Armed Forces are accorded the same esteem as the highest-ranking officers.

I wish to thank all the members of the Commission, in particular Executive Chairman Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and the two Chairmen, Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP and Otto Pendl, former MP.

Let me end by urging you to continue taking such good care of our country!

Together let us ensure that our Austrian Armed Forces are just as committed to comradeship and humaneness as to the security of our country.



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## Submission of the Annual Report 2016



The Annual Report 2016 of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was submitted to President of the National Council, Doris Bures on 14 March 2017.



Subsequently, the Annual Report 2016 was handed to Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, Mag. Hans Peter Doskozil, by the Presidium of the Commission.

## Press conference/conference/information event



The Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces presented its 2016 Annual Report to the public at a press conference on 15 March 2017.

## Press conference/conference/information event



The conference of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was held on 5 April 2017 at the National Defence Academy. Following the 540th and 541st meeting of the Commission, a range of key topics were on the agenda, such as the personnel situation in the Austrian Armed Forces, catering logistics and the Commission's internal strategic planning.



The Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces regularly gives presentations to the participants of Key Personnel Training 4 at the Non-Commissioned Officers' Academy.

## Inspection visits



Before the departure for the inspection visit of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces to AUTCON26/EUFOR ALTHEA on 10 and 11 May 2017.



Executive Chairman Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and members of the Commission speaking with soldiers at Camp Butmir on 10 May 2017.

## Inspection visits



The Commission pictured at Camp Naqoura in southern Lebanon during the inspection visit of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces to AUTCON/UNIFIL on 11 and 12 July 2017.



The Executive Chairman of the Commission, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and the Head of the Office of the Commission, Mag. Karl Schneemann, speaking with soldiers at the Austrian "Edelweiß" leisure facility.

## Inspection visits



Militia Commissioner of the Austrian Armed Forces, MajGen Mag. Erwin Hameseder, Deputy Commander of the Land Forces, Brig Mag. Robert Prader, and Commander of the Rapid Operations Command, Brig Mag. Christian Habersatter, pictured during the inspection visit of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces of the COOPSEC17 exercise on 14 September 2017 in Allentsteig.



Soldiers of a militia unit demonstrate their level of training at the Allentsteig Military Training Area.

## International networking



The Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Otto Pendl, MP and the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels (third from the right), during a meeting at the Military Alpine Guide Course at the Hochfilzen Military Training Area on 27 February 2017.



Meeting of the Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and the Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Otto Pendl, former MP with the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels, on 6 December 2017 at the Hofburg in Vienna and the Belgier barracks in Graz, pictured here before the departure to Graz.

## International networking



Discussion of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces with the Parliamentary Military Commissioner of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Parliamentary Assembly in Sarajevo on 11 May 2017



On behalf of the Presidium of the Commission Mag. Karl Schneemann, Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, attended 9ICOAF in London from 8 to 10 October 2017.



## Workshop for soldiers' representatives



At the Belgier barracks, on 28 November 2017, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces spoke with the soldiers' representatives about their day-to-day experiences of military service.



Executive Chairman Mag. Michael Hammer, MP speaking with two soldiers' representatives

## Annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

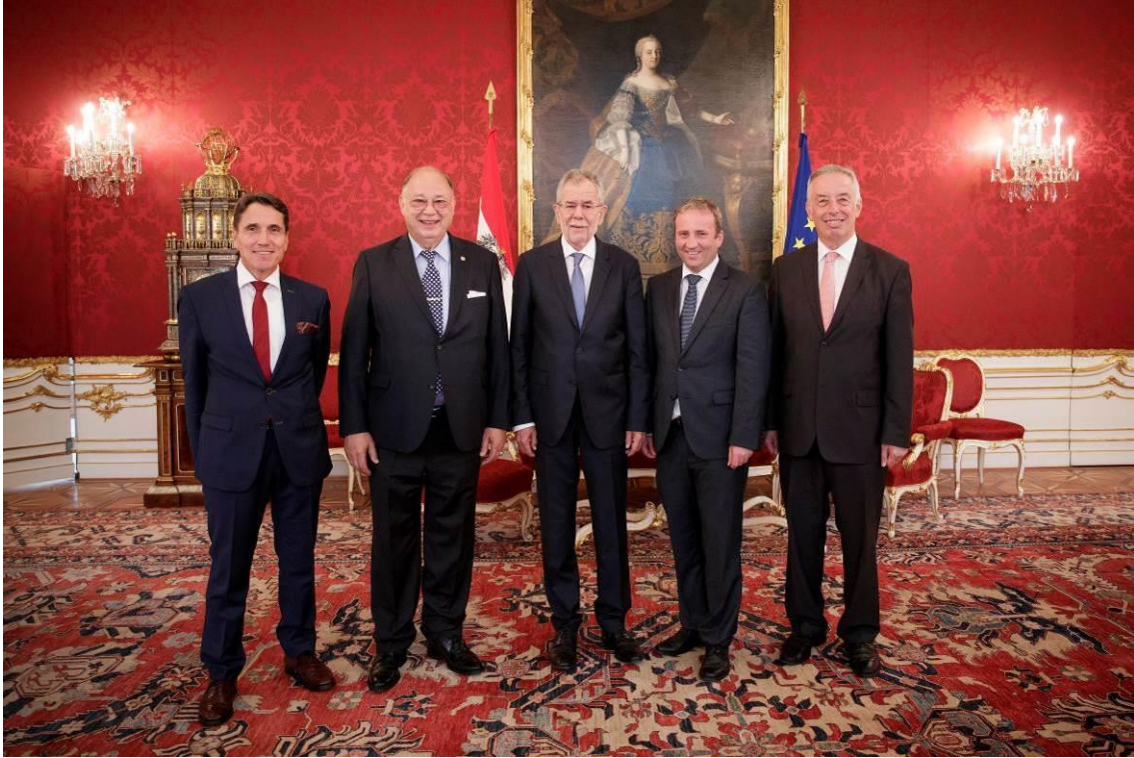


Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP, Executive Chairman of the Commission, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP, President of the National Council, Elisabeth Köstinger, Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, Mag. Hans Peter Dokožil and Chairman of the Commission, Otto Pendl, former MP pictured during the 2017 annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces in the ceremonial hall of the Federal Ministry of Defence (from left to right).



Executive Chairman, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP during his speech in the reception room.

## Inaugural visit to Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen



The Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Mag. Michael Hammer, MP and the two Chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP and Otto Pendl, MP thanked Federal President and Commander-in-Chief, Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen, during their inaugural visit for his support concerning the improvement of the financial situation of the Austrian Armed Forces in the coming years to ensure that the Austrian Armed Forces can fulfil their duties as a strategic reserve of our Republic for the protection of the population. This requires measures including increased recruitment and improvements to equipment and infrastructure.