

**POLICY REGARDING VETERANS OF THE DEFENCE FORCES AND
THE DEFENCE LEAGUE**

**ESTONIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
2012**

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“We will not leave anyone behind on the battlefield. Not in Afghanistan, nor later at home where young men and women who were severely wounded relearn how to live their lives, or simply cope with post-combat stress. In these stories, there is no “simply” or anything that is simple.”

Toomas Hendrik Ilves

I Introduction

Estonia’s national defence is based on the citizens’ will to defend their country and unselfishness. The Republic of Estonia values all men and women who have fought for our independence and participated as members of the Defence Forces on foreign missions and contributed to building and securing the national defence of Estonia.

Estonia is not a trailblazer in this field: the world’s nations and states have centuries of experience in recognizing the achievements of soldiers and officers who have returned from the battlefield or been discharged from military service. The tradition of remembering the fallen, caring for the wounded and injured and supporting the families of the fallen goes back just as far into the past. The term “veteran” was adopted in Ancient Rome over 2,000 years ago and many elements of Roman veterans policy retain their salience even today. For instance, the 1919 Estonian Land Act, which granted land to those who fought in the War of Independence, was a 20th century echo of a similar Roman law.

The young Republic of Estonia had to defend its freedom in the War of Independence, which claimed the lives of thousands of men and women with an even larger number of those wounded and injured, including those with permanently disabling injuries. Alongside the provisions of the Land Act, the Estonian state also supported War of Independence veterans in a number of other ways, such as giving them free education until graduation from university.

Both before attaining independence and after defending it, Estonian men have had to serve and fight in the militaries of other countries. Estonian independence was negated at the outset of World War II as a consequence of a pact between two totalitarian superpowers. These powers flouted the international rules of war and mobilized inhabitants of occupied areas into service, one of them for decades on end. Estonia was no exception: one of the few ways of avoiding mobilization was to flee to Finland and join the military there.

In terms of their veterans policy, Germany, Finland, the Soviet Union and now, Russia, have supported their former servicemen and the family members of those who fell in battle. In various ways, these veterans policies have extended to Estonian soldiers and officers, whether they are retired tsarist soldiers, Red Army or German Army veterans or former “Finnish boys” – those who went to Finland to fight.

Some of the Estonian men who fled to the West in 1944 continued their battle on the battlefield of the Cold War, hoping that this would directly or indirectly contribute to overcoming the Soviet Union, which had occupied Estonia. Many of the men who came of

age in Estonia after the World War II were forced as Soviet army conscripts to take part in Soviet military operations. These men, too, are war veterans, and they share in the support system of the country in whose military they fought.

Losing national independence did not extinguish the hopes of Estonian citizens to regain independence. Thousands of men and women resisted the occupiers whose goal was to destroy Estonian statehood and its adherents for good; thousands of men and women fell victim to political repression – be it perpetrated by Soviets, Nazis or both.

The Republic of Estonia pays tribute to all Estonian citizens who have fought in the name of the country's independence, and it supports them in many ways¹. In the period 1991-1994, they entered the service of the recently reinstated Estonian state – and were prepared to defend it with arms if need be, laying the foundation for what is now the Defence Forces and the Defence League.

Estonia has to this point lacked an integral approach to Defence Forces and Defence League veterans. The following document deals with the veterans who have participated since the restoration of Estonian independence in international military operations as members of the Defence Forces and Defence League. Members of the Defence Forces and active members of the Defence League who were injured in the line of duty have been added to the recipients of benefits, allowances and incentives.

From 1995-2012, close to 2,300 people have participated in international military missions. In these operations, 130 people have been wounded and injured, 34 of them severely. Defence Forces members and active Defence League members injured in discharging their duties are additional to these. About 1,000 of veterans have now left the Defence Forces. Other soldiers and officers who were on the missions continue to serve in the Defence Forces.

This document is the part of Estonian veterans policy that is aimed at ensuring that the abovementioned people and those closest to them can enjoy a decent and dignified quality of life and that their contribution is recognized by society. It does not neglect the military men and women and Defence Leaguers who made the ultimate sacrifice – their lives – and the families of the fallen.

The Republic of Estonia's operational programme sets the deadline of December 2012 for developing a veterans policy².

In this document, the experts from the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Forces, Defence League and the Defence Resources Board have, in cooperation:

- defined the term “Defence Forces and Defence League veteran” and articulated the principles of veterans policy;
- determined the basic principles of veterans policy;
- made proposals for implementing veterans policy.

The goal of veterans policy is to provide professional support for veterans and work toward more recognition of veterans in society. Veterans policy is aimed at recognizing all veterans as well as assisting those in need in the most appropriate manner.

The document sets out the principles of veterans policy for the years 2013-2017. The Parliamentary National Defence Committee is briefed each year on the implementation of veterans policy. The veterans policy is to be updated for the next period by 2016.

¹ Riigikogu 14.02.2012 declaration “Bestowing recognition on Estonian citizens”

² <http://www.valitsus.ee/et/valitsus/tegevusprogramm>

II Definition

The word “veteran” has several fields of use and it is used differently from one country to the next: it depends on the particular state’s military system, military history and legal system. In Norwegian and Danish veterans policy, a veteran is considered to be a soldier who has taken part in a foreign mission, including those still in active service. In the United Kingdom, Canada and the US, a veteran is any former soldier or officer whether or not they have combat experience. In Finland, war veterans are considered to be only the men and women who fought during the years 1939-1945.³ Discussions on the restructuring of veterans policy are still on-going in Germany: one view is that veterans include veterans of all wars; the other view is that it is confined to men who have taken part in foreign missions since the early 1990s.⁴

In the sense of this policy, veterans are Estonian citizens who have taken part in the service of the Defence Forces in defending the state by military means or in collective self-defence or international military operations as part of the Defence Forces, as well as all Defence Forces and active Defence League members who have been declared as having a permanent incapacity for work as a consequence of physical harm sustained while discharging duties in the Defence Forces or in Defence League military training. The term also includes active Defence League members who were involved as part of the Defence League in resolving a rescue incident, emergency situation or state of emergency as well as ensuring rescue operations, security and cyber security and who, in the line of such duties, sustained physical harm and have been declared as having a permanent incapacity for work.

Thus the definition of veteran extends to Estonian citizens who meet one of the following conditions:

1. they have taken part in the military defence of the country as part of the Defence Forces;
2. they have participated as part of the Defence Forces on either an international or collective self-defence operation on the basis of the International Military Cooperation Act;
3. they have sustained permanent incapacity for work while discharging duties in the Defence Forces or as an active member of the Defence League.

The definition covers the Defence Forces members serving in international organizations and international military headquarters who have been deployed from their place of service on to international operations. Also considered veterans are Defence League members – physicians and other persons – who serve in the Defence Forces during military operations. At the same time, the fact that the definition is restricted to those who served on military operations on the basis of the International Military Cooperation Act means that persons deployed on the basis of the International Civilian Mission Participation Act are not considered veterans in Estonia.

The said definition also covers Defence Forces members and active Defence League members injured while discharging service duties during peacetime, regardless of whether the injury was sustained on Estonian territory or abroad. But the definition does not cover those who sustained physical harm due to an occupational disease. The fact that the definition applies as above supports the logic of the national defence model predicated on a reserve army, as it also takes into account the contribution to national defence made by conscripts, Defence League members and reservists.

³ Suomen Sotaveteraaniliitto <http://sotaveteraaniliitto.fi/>

⁴ Thesen zu einer Veteranenpolitik der Bundeswehr <http://bund.deutscher-veteranenpolitik.html>

Veterans policy and measures

III Veterans policy goals

1. The veterans support system is based in as large a part as possible on the civilian system or functions in integrated fashion with it.
2. Increase in recognition from society forms the essential part of the veterans support system.
3. Support from society is applied for based on the bottom-up principle and thus veterans policy is used to lay the groundwork for greater involvement of the private sector and NGO sector in the veterans support system.
4. Participating on foreign missions is a natural part of active duty, which is why being a veteran is the general rule for those in active duty.
5. Active duty members and their families shall be supported before, during and after the foreign operation.
6. Service members are provided with the physical and mental preparedness before international military operations, making sure they can cope in every aspect during the operation and re-adjust successfully after returning from the operation, both with regard to continuing in the defence forces services and in returning to civilian life.
7. Medical care for injured veterans, rehabilitation and multi-faceted support is based on the principle that the assistance will take place in as decentralized fashion, i.e. as close to the injured person's home as possible.
8. Medical care for injured veterans, rehabilitation and multi-faceted support is based on the principle that continuation of service or employment in the Defence Forces will be incentivized as much as possible.
9. A principle of veterans policy is that no one can be denied veteran status. The benefits and incentives of veterans policy do not apply to those convicted of crimes against the state.

IV Support for injured veterans

4.1. Those injured shall be guaranteed the best possible care and rehabilitation to ensure that they can cope and have maximum working capacity

The Defence Forces shall ensure that injured Defence Forces members receive the best possible care, if necessary in cooperation with partner countries. Those injured persons who are confined to a foreign medical facility and their family shall be supported in the preparations for a visit as well as during the visit, inter alia by appointing a support person

for the veteran. Visits by family members or loved ones of the injured veteran in the medical facility shall be made possible and supported in arranging airfare and accommodations. Family members and those closest to the veteran shall also be provided with assistance for air travel, orienting in the foreign city and translations.

The treatment process will commence in Estonia as soon as the condition of the Defence Forces member allows him or her to be transported home. Where necessary, the Defence Forces shall engage in cooperation with partner countries in a later phase of the rehabilitation in preparing and adapting the prosthetic devices the veteran needs. In case of a loss of limb, the Defence Forces shall provide for up to three prostheses, of which one is intended to fulfil the basic function of the limb. To this point the prosthetic devices have been made in the United Kingdom.

The East Tallinn Central Hospital has in cooperation with the American Office of Defense Cooperation⁵, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Defence established a prosthetics centre in Estonia that will begin to unite rehabilitative care, making of prosthetics and their repairs and which is aimed at everyone who needs post-amputation rehabilitation services. It is planned to open the centre in 2014.

Defence Forces members who are injured in Estonia receive primary care at their unit's medical centre or the Defence Forces health centre; later, where necessary, treatment is continued at Seli Health Centre. If an injured Defence Forces member requires care that the Defence Forces medical system cannot offer, he or she shall be sent to a civilian hospital for treatment. If necessary, the family of the injured veteran shall be provided accommodations in the vicinity of the hospital.

The Defence League shall provide the equivalent measure of necessary assistance to an active member of the Defence League injured in military training organized by the Defence League.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

4.1.1 The Defence Forces shall train support persons who provide support to the injured Defence Forces member and their family during the medical care period in the foreign country and during rehabilitation. Medics, chaplains and others working in the Defence Forces and who are members of the Defence League shall be trained as support persons. As of now, 11 support persons have been trained, but if the numbers of the injured increase they will not be sufficient and the Defence Forces must ensure that the system is sustainable. Basic training teaches soldiers to adapt in a crisis, cope with depression and problems related to physical disability etc.

4.1.2. Under current procedure, the state provides compensation for travel and accommodation costs for two of the people closest to the injured veteran on up to two occasions. One visit can last up to 10 calendar days. At the same time, there are situations that require greater flexibility. For instance, UK medical facilities require a family member or analogous person to be present at bedside of a coma patient at all hours in order to make decisions on behalf of the patient. That means that the person must be with the injured person for more than 10 days in a single stretch. Besides this, it should be considered that family members must serve in shifts, and thus more than two trips must be made possible. This requires the entry into force of the regulation "Conditions, extent and procedure for covering expenses related to health care services, medical devices, medicinal products and medical care for defence forces and alternative service" being drafted in the Ministry of Defence, which sets out the possibility to respond in flexible fashion in special cases.

⁵ Office of Defense Cooperation, ODC

4.1.3. Injured veterans in Estonia shall continue to receive support according to the current system.

4.1.4. Amendments shall be introduced into the Defence League Act to allow the Defence League to provide care and rehabilitation to injured veterans.

4.1.5. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the prosthetics centre shall be furnished with the necessary fittings and equipment.

4.1.6. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the members of the prosthetics centre recovery and rehabilitation team shall be provided with the necessary specialist training.

4.2. In-service training and retraining for injured veterans in active service shall be supported

In-service and re-training for veterans is generally a preparation for a civilian career, but for injured veterans this means preparation for *either* a military or civilian career. Compensation of tuition can be applied for for studies at any educational level, both in priority fields for the Defence Forces and other fields. Injured veterans who are no longer in active service can also apply for reimbursement of tuition when preparing to study at an educational institution accredited in Estonia. A veteran whose tuition has already been defrayed by the Defence Forces may not apply a second time.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

Supporting veterans' in-service and re-training is one of the most direct ways of socially rehabilitating veterans, especially injured veterans. The said support also will likely have a positive effect on recruitment to Defence Forces service. Currently veterans are not supported in the abovementioned amount; for instance, the Defence Forces reimburses injured veterans' tuition based on the percentage of their disability.

The Defence Forces supports injured veterans' in-service and re-training in accordance with the plan prepared at career counselling. In-service and re-training for injured veterans means training measures that will ensure that the veteran can cope in a military or civilian career. The amount of tuition to be compensated stems from the plan prepared at career counselling, but the amount shall not exceed the educational level that follows the veteran's existing level of education. Injured veterans who have been released from active duty, compulsory military service or reserve service can apply to have training costs compensated on the basis of the plan compiled at career counselling to enter an educational institution accredited in Estonia. Currently no systematic career counselling for veterans is taking place, but it is planned that it will cover both uninjured and injured veterans.

4.2.1. To provide additional support for re-training and in-service training for the injured veterans, the Defence Forces shall by July 2013 make proposals for the precise procedure for compensating tuition.

4.2.2. According to this procedure, changes must be made in the Defence Forces Service Act in 2014 to expand in-service and re-training opportunities for injured veterans. The current time limit for reimbursing tuition must be abolished and the range of educational institutions must be expanded to include not just civilian institutions but study opportunities at commercial training providers. Furthermore, the scope of compensation of tuition shall no longer be linked to the percentage of the disability.

4.2.3. To offer veterans career counselling service, Defence Forces psychologists must be given the necessary training and permission must be sought in 2013 for use of a professional suitability test.

4.3. Long-term support shall be provided to the injured veteran and his or her family

The Defence Forces logistics centre support centre shall continue working with veterans and their families in the longer term as well, offering psychological and social counselling where necessary.

To keep the income of persons evacuated from the operation theatre due to injury or illness from becoming diminished the Defence Forces shall maintain the service relationship and pay monthly allowance in a share comparable to the foreign mission remuneration until the end of the tour of duty.

Veterans shall be paid a single benefit in the case of losses caused by physical harm.

Injured Defence Forces members shall on the basis of the Defence Forces Service Act be paid a pension for incapacity for work, and this shall be more extensive than the pension for incapacity for work awarded for other reasons. It shall be paid during the period of incapacity for work until the old age pension age is reached.

To allow injured active duty personnel to continue service, the Defence Forces shall offer such personnel a service location that complies with their skills, abilities and qualification.

Injured active duty personnel who have left the Defence Forces can use living quarters belonging to the Defence Forces for three years.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

4.3.1. The support activities described in clause 4.3 must be continued.

4.3.2. Payment of a single benefit in one instalment. According to the current Defence Forces Service Act, an injured veteran is to be paid a single benefit in one instalment. The Defence Forces Service Act, which enters into force on 1 April 2013 and the Defence League Act set forth that the single benefit is to be disbursed in instalments, and the second and third instalment is to be preceded by determination of the percentage of the person's disability. Such a requirement is a disincentive for the wounded in treatment compliance in the first three years: the better they comply with their treatment, the less support they receive. Determination of the annual incapacity for work period means additional doctor's appointments, which is unfriendly toward wounded personnel and puts a burden on the healthcare system. Changes are to be made in the Defence Forces Service Act as well in the Defence League Act to set forth that the single benefit is to be paid out in one instalment.

4.3.3. Increasing the benefit for injured Defence Forces member (currently the *pension for incapacity for work*). To do so, the base amount that is the basis for the incapacity for work benefit must be increased. This requires an amendment to the Minister of Defence regulation, "Wage scale for active duty personnel's peacetime positions with a military rank" and the levels of wages must be increased, as this results in an increase in the pension for incapacity for work. In determining the incapacity for work pension, three groups must be taken into consideration (enlisted men, junior NCOs, senior NCOs, junior officer, senior officer) where the incapacity for work pension for the persons in the first two groups is determined according to the maximum for the group. The following principles shall be the basis for determining the incapacity for work pension: if the pay grade of the person's position is T6 or greater, the pay grade shall be used as the basis; if the pay grade of the person's position is

between T4 and T4, the pay grade T5 shall be used as the basis; if the pay grade of the person's position is between T3-T1 the pay grade T3 shall be used as the basis.

4.3.4. Upon reaching old age pension age when the incapacity for work pension is no longer paid, the injured veteran's real income may not be reduced. To this end, an allowance equal to the incapacity for work pension must be paid to the injured veteran also after he/she reaches pension age.

4.3.5. Extension of assistance to the injured veteran's family members. In addition to psychological and social counselling provided to family members of active duty personnel who sustain physical harm while carrying out their duties in an international military operation, the same assistance must also be extended to all family members of veterans who sustain physical harm due to discharging their duties. To do this, the Defence Forces Service Act and the Defence League Act must be amended.

4.3.6. Veterans with special needs who have difficulties moving, communicating or coping in their dwelling require an everyday living environment conforming to special conditions to cope as independently as possible and with as little outside assistance as possible. For injured personnel continuing active duty, the Defence Forces must convert the personnel's employer-provided dwelling for the needs of each injured person. This with the consideration that when a unit moves, each new living quarters must be adapted for the injured person.

4.3.7. Injured personnel wishing to leave active duty may use the employer-provided living quarters for three years after leaving the service. Under the Social Welfare Act, local governments have the obligation of arranging for adapted living quarters for special needs people, and they should do this for injured personnel returning to their home locality, even though currently compliance with this duty is not always ensured due to lack of resources. Thus, for each such case, the Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence must engage in cooperation with local government and be prepared to provide financial support for the work to convert the quarters. For veterans with special needs leaving active duty, the living quarters belonging to the veteran shall be adapted once and in the case of later moves, the veteran shall arrange for the work to be performed at his or her own expense.

4.3.8. In severe cases where as a consequence of the health impairment the injured Defence Forces member is not capable of coping independently due to the health condition and special needs, daytime or 24-hour care at a nursing care facility with a respective activity licence shall, where necessary, be arranged.

4.3.9. The Defence Forces support centre shall support injured Defence Forces members in preparing the documentation needed to apply for disabled status and the Ministry of Defence Ministry shall propose to the Ministry of Social Affairs that the disability determination system be reviewed.

V Support for those closest to fallen veterans

5.1. Long-term support shall be provided to the injured veteran and his or her family

The funeral of a fallen Defence Forces member shall be organized by the Defence Forces and the funeral for a fallen Defence League member shall be organized by the Defence League, in both cases in conjunction with the deceased's family. Planning the funeral ceremony shall proceed in consideration of the religious affiliation of the deceased Defence Forces or Defence League member and the wishes of the family. The fallen Defence Forces member shall be buried in the cemetery selected by the family. The state or the Defence League shall bear the costs of organizing the funeral to the extent of 20 times the state death grant.

A one-time compensation shall be paid out in the case of the death of a Defence Forces or Defence League member. The recipients of the compensation shall be the family members and other close relatives of the person.

In the case of the death of a Defence Forces member, the child, parent or widow is eligible to survivor's benefits. The basis for calculating the survivor's benefits is the amount to which the Defence Forces member's pension is accounted for. In the case of a conscript or reservist attending reserve training, the basis of the determination shall be the calendar's most recent monthly average gross wage in the calendar year.

The family of a fallen active-duty Defence Forces member who uses living quarters provided by the Defence Forces may live there for a further three years.

The Defence Forces support centre shall support the families of the fallen in the longer term as well, offering psychological and social counselling where necessary.

Family members of the fallen have the opportunity to receive rehabilitative care at Seli Health Centre for 14 days a year. For the first year after the death of the Defence Forces member, family members shall be provided, if necessary, with a larger amount of rehabilitative care at the Seli Health Centre.

The Carolin Illenzeer Fund supports the education of children whose Defence Forces parent(s) were killed or severely injured. Secondary education in Estonia is paid for by the state and thus children's extracurricular education and activities are currently supported. The fund will start paying scholarships to children studying at university.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

5.1.1. Those closest to the fallen will continue to be supported pursuant to the procedure currently in force.

5.1.2. Increasing survivor's benefits payable for fallen Defence Forces members' family members. To do so, the base amount that is the basis for the survivor's benefit must be increased. This requires an amendment to the Minister of Defence regulation, "Wage scale for active duty personnel's peacetime positions with a military rank" and the levels of wages must be increased, as this results in an increase in the survivor's benefit. The regulation will enter into force on 1 April 2013 with the new Defence Forces Service Act.

5.1.3. Extension of assistance to the deceased's family members. In addition to psychological and social counselling provided to family members of active duty personnel who are killed while carrying out their duties in an international military operation, the same assistance must also be extended to all family members of veterans who are killed due to discharging their duties. To do this, the Defence Forces Service Act and the Defence League Act must be amended.

VI Assistance measures for veterans

6.1. Support prior to military operation

6.1.1. Defence Forces members headed to the theatre of operations shall be given the best possible training

Aside from military training, Defence Forces members being deployed shall be given specialized psychological training that lays preconditions for better withstanding psychologically critical situations. In addition, they shall be notified of social benefits receivable in the event of possible injury.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.1.1.1. Psychological training. Continue specialized psychological training for Defence Forces members being deployed.

6.1.1.2. Developing training. The current level of information provided prior to deployment regarding social guarantees and regarding psychological training must be improved, especially with regard to commanders. The best way is to supplement and update the Estonian National Defence College with studies in psychology, sociology and culture on various levels.

6.1.1.3. Making feedback more efficient. To continually improve the current training procedures, research must be continued among those being deployed and returning to get a regular and direct feedback. The Defence Forces shall take into account the results of studies in preparing subsequent rotations. Besides this, the Ministry of Defence shall order opinion studies from those returning from operations to get feedback over 3-5 years on the situation of veterans after they return from the theatre of operations and to improve training and veterans policy of those Defence Forces members being deployed.

6.1.2. Support shall be provided for preparedness of family and people closest to the Defence Forces member being deployed

To support the Defence Forces member's family, the Defence Forces shall hold information events in different places around the country where the Defence Forces members are invited along with their families and the people closest to them. The information days are to take place twice per tour of duty – one before the operation and one during the operation. At the pre-deployment information day, families will get a general idea about the theatre of operations and local conditions. They will also be briefed on possibilities for staying in contact and given legal and other, practical advice. A psychology lecture will be held and, if necessary, a discussion on problems related to departure and return of family members. The information day is held in every county with at least five families with a family member who is being deployed.

An Internet forum has been set up (website <http://mil.ee/mpt>), whereby those closest to active-duty personnel can communicate, and where the commander of the contingent, chaplain and others can post entries, and articles on local media, advice and useful links etc can be added. The Defence Forces support centre is responsible for the functioning of the forum.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.1.2.1. Organizing information days and interactive environment. Organizing information days, information telephones and Internet forums must be continued. It is also necessary to implement additional measures that promote social interaction between mission families, such as women's associations, family days etc.

6.2. Support during military operations

6.2.1. Better personal support in the theatre of operations shall be enabled

The goal of personal support is to ensure the mental health, motivation and subjective well-being of the personnel so that they can maintain esprit de corps. The Defence Forces has established a welfare programme for this purpose, ensuring Defence Forces personnel in the operation theatre communication with those at home, use of the Internet, sports opportunities and other entertainment. For units of at least platoon size, the Defence Forces shall organize

visits by senior state officials and the Defence Forces top commanders and arrange for performances by Estonian artists.

Where necessary, a chaplain shall accompany a unit of at least company size in the theatre of operations, ensuring spiritual counsel and assisting in organizing ceremonies.

If necessary, a team of psychologists shall be temporarily transferred to units to provide crisis counselling and psychological support.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.2.1.1. Implementation of welfare programme. To better coordinate the welfare programme, it would be expedient to consolidate its activity in one support service centre regarding which a proposal is set out in section 9.2. The implementation is supported by the Defence Forces general staff public relations department.

6.2.1.2. Ensuring crisis readiness. As crisis assistance and psychological support the Defence Forces shall by the end of 2012 ensure that psychologists are prepared to be deployed, at a critical time and on the orders of the commander, to the theatre of operations.

6.2.1.3. Providing chaplaincy. Chaplains shall continue to be deployed in the theatre of operations, to serve in units of company size.

6.2.2. The families of and people closest to the Defence Forces members serving on operations shall be supported

During the operation, the Defence Forces shall enable those closest to Defence Forces members to use an Internet forum. A 24h hotline shall also be open for ensuring emotional support and counselling in resolving practical concerns. There shall also be an opportunity to turn to the support centre.

One month before the end of the operation, a second information day shall be held for families where those closest to the Defence Forces members can discuss, with a psychologist, the possible problems they can encounter and solutions, and where they shall be given practical information on flight times, administration week and other aspects.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.2.2.1. The support activities described in clause 6.2.2 must be continued.

6.3. Support for those returning from military operations

6.3.1. A post-operational adjustment phase shall be organized

Returning from a theatre of operations to peacetime conditions is a change of life comparable to deployment itself, and could result in difficulties adjusting for Defence Forces members and their loved ones. To ease the transition, the Defence Forces shall organize a peacetime adjustment period, including a medical examination and group sessions led by psychologists. During the adjustment period, the Defence Forces members are still together, spending time among comrades with similar experience, only in peacetime conditions.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

The administration week currently is to take place immediately after the return from the operation. However, it is known that psychological and social problems emerge over a longer period, often after many months have passed. Thus it is likely that many problems will initially go unaddressed. Those closest to Defence Forces members do not take part in the

adjustment programme, nor do those who returned from the operation earlier, including injured Defence Forces members, necessarily take part in the common administration week.

6.3.1.1. After the mission, the Defence Forces shall organize a rehabilitation and relaxation period along with their families in spa and health centres. This is the initial part of the post-mission adjustment process, allowing the Defence Forces members to get reaccustomed to family life and reconnect with family emotionally.

6.3.1.2. By decision of the Defence Forces commander-in-chief, the peacetime adjustment phase strategy may in cases of special need be supplemented. There are three proposals to this end.

First, a unit returning from operation is sent to a third country for a decompression week before returning to Estonia. The decompression taking place in a third country allows a transition into ordinary life to be organized in graduated manner and in a neutral yet controlled environment. Personnel in this environment will have an opportunity to see a psychologist, which in addition to the benefits provides a way of establishing cases where a person is potentially in need of psychological support. The decompression week taking place outside Estonia is a chance to defuse tensions in a neutral environment. The administration week outside Estonia can be organized independently or in conjunction with allies⁶.

Secondly, a second administration week for handing over weapons and medical checks in Estonia shall be organized for units returning from third countries. Considering the size of a unit and the conditions in the theatre of operations, the commander-in-chief of the Defence Forces may elect not to send a unit to a third country and hold the administration week in Estonia, where in addition to handing over weapons and medical checks, psychological support is also offered to veterans. Thus, the measures described in the first and second point are combined.

Thirdly, two months after returning from a military operation, a recuperation week shall be organized, where the returnees spend time at Seli Health Centre or another place selected by the Defence Forces in Estonia where a psychologist monitors the state of the veterans and, if necessary, provides counselling to them.

It would be most expedient to implement the said three solutions in combined fashion, which will ensure, on one hand an easier transition from the theatre of operations conditions to those of home, and also ensures longer-term supervision.

6.3.2. Cooperation will take place in local governments to ensure veterans have the support they need as close to their home as possible

Veterans who leave active duty return to their former home and communication with the Defence Forces becomes weaker. At the same time, medical, social and psychological problems can crop up only upon returning to one's hometown. Thus it is important for local governments to be informed of possible problems affecting those with theatre of operations experience – problems which come up in transition to civilian life or in connection with permanent physical injuries. For this reason, the Ministry of Defence in conjunction with the Defence Forces, shall train social workers in local governments.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.3.2.1. Raising awareness of local government employees. A training programme aimed at local governments for raising the awareness among local government social workers of the particularities of veterans' needs has been planned in the Defence Forces service department

⁶ The concept of a decompression week taking place in a third country is also used by e.g. the UK and France.

of the Ministry of Defence for 2013. The Ministry of Defence must ensure that there is a budget for local government training in future as well.

6.3.3. In-service training and retraining for veterans is supported

In-service training and retraining for veterans are preparations for a civilian career that take place during active duty. The Defence Forces supports in-service training and retraining for veterans pursuant to the plan prepared at the veteran's career counselling. Compensation of tuition can be applied for for studies at any educational level, both in fields considered priorities by the Defence Forces and other fields. A veteran whose tuition has already been defrayed by the Defence Forces may not apply a second time.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

The Defence Forces supports in-service training and retraining for veterans pursuant to the plan prepared at the veteran's career counselling. The amount of tuition to be compensated depends on the length of the active duty: up to five years – maximum 400 euros per academic year; over five years – maximum 1,000 euros per academic year. A veteran whose tuition has already been defrayed by the Defence Forces may not apply a second time. The tuition is paid to the veteran on the basis of the invoice issued to the veteran by the educational institution, if he/she commences studies as a part-time or full-time student pursuant to the career plan either while in active duty or having left Defence Forces service. At the moment there is no systematic career counselling for veterans. The said career counselling must take place both for healthy and injured veterans.

6.3.3.1. To provide additional support for re-training and in-service training for veterans, the Defence Forces shall by July 2013 make proposals for the precise procedure for compensating tuition.

6.3.3.2. In accordance with the said procedure, amendments are to be made to the Defence Forces Service Act.

6.3.3.3. Creation of a career counselling system. To offer veterans career counselling service, Defence Forces psychologists must be given the necessary training and permission must be sought in 2013 for use of a professional suitability test.

6.3.4. Veterans shall be supported with labour market incentives

The Defence Forces shall support continuing of active-duty personnel's service in the Defence Forces. Upon leaving the service, veterans shall be supported in finding employment in civilian fields. The example of many countries shows that a large percentage of veterans fall into a labour market risk group and they make up a significant share of the total unemployed population.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

6.3.4.1. A veteran who is leaving the service may participate in trainings with the objective of gaining knowledge and skills for participating in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship training is held for those who actually wish to start a business. The entrepreneurship programme will give veterans the potential to be beneficial for society and offers men and women who have made a contribution to Estonia career opportunities as an employer. In order for veterans to integrate rapidly into the labour market, the introduction of employer wage subsidies should be considered. The number of people going into business for themselves can be forecasted to be comparable with the Estonian average – 4-6 per cent of inhabitants are self-employed/entrepreneurs.

VII Measures for increasing social recognition

The essence of social recognition of veterans is founded on recognition of the veteran as one who has fought for Estonia as well as recognition of the veteran's family. Strategic communication in the area of administration of the Ministry of Defence plays a noteworthy role in providing publicity for the contribution of veterans and increasing their prestige. It is important that civic associations, government institutions and companies be included in activities related to recognition of veterans.

7.1. The Ministry of Defence, the Defence Forces and the Defence League shall promote and support public events aimed at veterans

Commemoration of anniversaries related to veterans and the fallen is an important part of achieving social recognition.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

7.1.1 Veterans Day. On Veterans Day, veterans and their families are valued. The approach sought puts focus on people rather than form or format; the focus is on recognizing and increasing the prestige of veterans as individuals and their families. Veterans' Day is 23 April. The preparations for the day will draw on civic organizations, non-profit associations and companies as well as local governments, and likewise on veterans and their families.

7.1.2 Monument. The monument erected at Camp Bastion to remember the Estonian Defence Forces members who fell in Afghanistan will be brought back to Estonia after the withdrawal of the Estonian infantry company from Afghanistan and placed in a suitable spot.

7.2. Strengthening support from civil society and the private sector

To implement the bottom-up principle of social recognition, as broad a level of support as possible must be achieved from society. Civic associations and charity organizations are to play a considerable role in this regard. It is reasonable idea to support at least one broad-based veterans' organization and charity fund as well as an organization aimed at a narrower target group (the wounded, the relatives of the fallen). Promoting charity makes up a major part of social recognition.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

7.2.1. Charity. Since 2011 the Carolin Illenzeer Fund has organized charity events aimed at raising funds and non-monetary contributions for supporting the education and extracurricular activity of children of Defence Forces members injured or killed in the line of duty. The charity can be expanded to support the injured Defence Forces members themselves; for instance by way of sales of keepsakes featuring the relevant insignia. The campaign can be developed on the basis of the initiative launched in 2012 by the National Defence College's **officers' school cadet council** and the Estonian Injured Veterans Association.⁷ The Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence must be aided in coordinating campaign marketing.

7.2.2. Veterans associations and civic associations that support veterans. Support will be provided for and cooperation will take place with civic associations whose goal is to support veterans and their families. The goal of the broad-based veterans' non-profit association is to unite as large a number of veterans as possible into an organization that would allow a forum for self-help, organization of additional support for and recognition of veterans as well as to direct charity work. The Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces support the creation of

⁷ See "Kadetikogu kogus vigastatud sõdurite toetuseks raha" ("Cadet association raises money for injured soldiers"): <http://uudised.err.ee/index.php?06246944> (27.02.2012)

a veterans' non-profit association to involve as large a number of veterans as possible. The Ministry of Defence supports the non-profit association effective 2013 with funding in accordance with procedure for supporting NGOs and foundations, and shall enter into a relevant agreement for achieving common goals, such as launching the non-profit membership card project and a number of other projects.

Support is provided for the Injured Veterans Association, which has been in operation for 95 years, joining those who have participated in and been injured on the Defence Forces military operations. The Injured Veterans Association and the Estonian War Invalids Assistance Foundation shall be supported in accordance with the Ministry of Defence's procedure for allocating state budgetary funding to non-profit associations, foundations and companies.⁸

7.2.3. Non-profit association membership card. Organizations and private companies can express recognition for veterans through discounts granted on the basis of a non-profit membership card. The membership card is not intended for use as an ID or a certificate issued by an agency for receiving official benefits, but rather as a so-called club card.

7.3 Broader publicity

A key role in achieving social recognition is played by active methods of distribution information. To gain positive attention from the public, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of veterans and the missions to Estonian and world security.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

7.3.1. Exhibit at the Estonian Military Museum. Veteran themes can be treated in the museum's main exhibition. Veterans can also be included in the museum education activities. To do so, the museum will have to develop in cooperation with the Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence the part of the main exhibition dealing with operations, based on veterans policy, and to develop museum education efforts that would increase the prestige of veterans.

7.3.2. National defence studies. Veterans topics shall be dealt with in general educational schools as an elective and lectures shall be organized, based on war stories and experiences. In addition the same range of topics will be dealt with in training national defence instructors starting in autumn 2012 in the framework of in-service training for teachers organized by the Ministry of Defence and in a workbook to be developed in 2013.

7.3.3. Educating people about veterans policy. The principles and activities of veterans policy shall be introduced to both Defence Forces members and veterans as well as to the public through relevant publications and the Internet environment. To this end, after the veterans policy is approved, the Ministry of Defence shall publish on its website the policy objectives and principles, and order the production of a relevant brochure.

VIII Implementation of additional state incentives

Incentives related to provision of public services shall be created in order to add value to veteran status.

Necessary steps for implementation of the policy

⁸ See <http://www.kmin.ee/et/kodanike-uhendusel>

8.1 Co-signing for housing loans

A possibility will be created for state guarantees for down payments on housing loans taken by veterans so that the veterans could get housing loans faster and on more favourable terms.

8.2. Counting time spent on missions twice toward active duty seniority

Mission experience significantly increases the value of Defence Forces members; Defence Forces members thereby become key resources who must be valued and recognized more than they have been so far. As a result of this measure, the veteran shall attain the necessary length of active-duty service earlier and his/her service pay shall increase. The veteran shall likewise attain the active-duty length of service necessary in order to be awarded an active-duty service pension on the basis of the Defence Forces Service Act: at least 20 years of active-duty service is required in order for a veteran to become eligible for the active-duty service pension at age 50⁹. Implementation of this measure shall place additional burden on the Defence Forces in administering personnel data. The purposefulness of the implementation of this measure shall be decided upon analysis of the sustainability of the Defence Forces pension system to be performed in 2013. This is a calculation that does not take into account general length of service.

8.3. Income tax incentive. Veterans and their families shall not pay income tax on the compensations, support and pensions payable to the families of injured or deceased veterans. To increase social recognition, income tax has been waived on state assistance.

IX Structures that deal with supporting veterans

9.1. Existing structures

The Defence Forces general staff personnel department has a support services office that consists of psychologist, social, chaplain and sports service, and which develops general guidelines on veterans.

Planning and coordinating of healthcare services needed by veterans, including rehabilitation services provided abroad, shall take place in the Defence Forces general staff logistics department medical service. Healthcare services are provided in Estonia on a need basis either in civilian hospitals and clinics or the Defence Forces logistics centre health centre and in medical centres of Defence Forces units.

The objective of the Defence Forces' support centre is to ensure coordinated social and psychological support for all Defence Forces members participating on missions and those closest to them. The support centre deals with psychological and social preparations for Defence Forces members in the framework of the pre-deployment training, psychological and (crisis) counselling, psychological rehabilitation in the post-mission period, organizing rehabilitative care and ensuring social support.

The Defence League has a supportive function in implementing veterans policy. The Defence League covers the entirety of Estonian territory and is capable of providing assistance efficiently to those in need. The Defence League can offer to persons who are involved in the military field activities that help the veteran remain integrated with civilian society and maintain ties with the military field. Developing the support function in the Defence League, especially in counties where the Defence Forces are not represented, requires fewer resources compared to placing the same responsibility on the Defence Forces.

⁹ Subsection 196 (1) of the Defence Forces Service Act currently in force, subsection 206 (1) of the Defence Forces Service Act set to enter into force on 1 April 2013

Besides this, the Seli Health Centre in the area of administration of the Ministry of Defence organizes outpatient rehabilitative care, and provides physical therapy and nursing care. To this point, Seli has not provided psychological and social support, which an analysis of the centre's development prospects conducted in 2011 found to be one of the largest shortcomings of the centre.¹⁰ Drawing on this, it is planned to develop psychological and social services at the health centre starting in 2013.

The existing structures do not ensure the best solution for supporting veterans, as the units that deal with providing support are dispersed in the area of administration, and the areas of responsibility and chains of command are not clearly defined. There are overlapping areas, where elements of a unit may be administratively and essentially subordinate to different units; for instance, by speciality, the commander of the support centre could be subordinate to the personnel department of the Defence Forces general staff, while administratively under the control of the logistics centre. There is a lack of coordinated command uniting all veterans support structures. Due to this fact, an unreasonable share of resources is spent on coordination between units at the detriment of actual support activities. The situation is made worse by the fact that key positions are vacant.

9.2. Solution for improving the current situation

Establishing a Defence Forces support services centre. A Defence Forces support services centre under the command of the commander-in-chief of the Defence Forces shall be established; it is in charge of the veterans support centre throughout the administrative chain, meaning that both the divisions currently in the Defence Forces general staff – social, psychological and chaplain services – and the logistics centre support centre functions will be consolidated into units. The Defence Forces support services centre also coordinates welfare programmes for servicing units in the theatre of operations. In addition, it would be efficacious to begin providing legal assistance to ensure that veterans have preliminary legal counsel in the case of problem incidents. The Defence Forces support services centre would also coordinate the work of the psychologists and social workers working in the defence districts, if their positions have been created and filled.

This would ensure the unity of the support structure, avoid overlapping areas of responsibility and, and would allow the workforce to be used in an optimal manner. The involvement of personnel with mission experience in the support services centre to be created must be promoted.

9.2.1. To improve functioning of support structures and coordinated command, it would be expedient to create the position of social worker in each defence district and the 1st infantry brigade, which has a direct link to the tours of duty in military operations. Such a nationwide network would ensure social counselling and services in a location as close as possible to the defence forces members, simplifying availability of services.

9.3. Creating a register of veterans and a local government information exchange system

9.3.1. To implement the veterans policy, a precise overview of the size and needs of the veterans community is needed. To this point no all-encompassing database of those deployed on operations has been compiled; if necessary, data from the units' data collections are aggregated. In addition, the existing Defence Forces data collections do not include data on veterans who have left the Defence Forces service. Nor is it currently possible to directly compare Defence Forces data with the national data collection, which is important in the veterans support system with regard to cooperation with local governments.

¹⁰ 20.04.2011 no. 1.1-14/190 analysis of development prospects of Seli Health Centre

To obtain a precise overview of the veterans policy target group, the Defence Forces must compile a register that includes the data on the service records of both veterans continuing as active duty personnel as well as those who have left the service.¹¹

9.3.2. Under the current system, a veteran may receive support and services from the Defence Forces or the local government, but there is currently no exchange of information exchange system connecting them. At the same time, information on the previous or concurrent service and support is essential if effective service is to be provided.

To obtain more complete information on support and services, a unified information system must be created. For this purpose, it would be wise to join STAR – the register of social services and benefits administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs – as this system processes information from local governments and county governments on persons receiving social benefits.

¹¹ Including name, dates of tour of duty, rank, contact details, reason for leaving service, in the case of injured, the date of injury, in the case of a KIA, the date of decease, details for those closest to the veteran.

Appendix: Overview of veterans policy measures

SUMMARY

The word “veteran” is used in many fields and as a result it can also be defined in several ways. It is also understood differently from one country to another. A broader discussion could treat veterans of all wars, but under this specific veterans policy, veterans are **Estonian citizens who have taken part in the service of the Defence Forces in defending the state by military means or in collective self-defence or international military operations as part of the Defence Forces, as well as all Defence Forces and active Defence League members who have been declared as having a permanent incapacity for work as a consequence of a health problem incurred while discharging duties in the Defence Forces or in Defence League military training. The term also includes active Defence League members who are engaged as part of the Defence League in resolving a rescue incident, emergency or state of emergency as well as ensuring rescue operations, security and cyber security and suffered a health impairment and been declared as having a permanent incapacity for work.**

The objective of this document is to ensure that the abovementioned persons and those closest to them can enjoy a good and dignified quality of life and that society recognizes the contribution they have made. Nor does the policy overlook the military men and women and Defence Leaguers who made the ultimate sacrifice – their lives. Nor does it neglect the loved ones of the fallen. In cooperation with their partners, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces have developed a veterans policy that holds a prominent position in the Government of the Republic’s operational programme. The draft veterans policy has been approved by the Minister of Defence and the commander-in-chief of the Defence Forces and it has been discussed in the Parliamentary National Defence Committee and the Minister of Defence’s advisory board. In the course of developing the veterans policy, meetings took place with a number of interest groups and their proposals were also taken into consideration in preparing this policy.

Veterans policy is the basis under which the state provides support to veterans and their families **before, during and after** a military mission. The better a soldier is prepared for the mission, the better he/she can cope during as well as after the military operation. The state desires to offer all veterans the best possible support and succour, from training to healthcare and rehabilitation services and providing solutions to potential problems. The veterans policy is an integral compendium of activities related to veterans – both actions already taken for the good of veterans and those planned in the future. The objective of the veterans policy is to allow veterans, included injured veterans, to continue serving in the Defence Forces, but it **attends to veterans both in the event that they continue in Defence Forces service or leave service.**

OVERVIEW OF VETERANS POLICY MEASURES

MEASURES FOR THE INJURED

- **The injured shall be guaranteed the best possible care and rehabilitation to ensure that they can cope and have maximum working capacity**
 - **Existing measures**
 - Injured Defence Forces members shall be guaranteed medical care both in Estonia as well as, where necessary, in foreign healthcare institutions.
 - In case of a loss of limb, the state shall provide for up to three different prostheses per lost limb.
 - The Defence Forces shall provide support for injured persons confined to a foreign medical facility and their family members during preparations for a visit as well as during the visit, inter alia by appointing a support person for the veteran.
 - The Defence Forces shall compensate hospital visit expenses for those closest to injured veterans hospitalized abroad: compensation for travel and accommodation costs shall be provided for two of the people closest to injured vets on up to two occasions.
 - **Measure to be created**
 - The Defence Forces shall train more support persons who provide support to the injured Defence Forces member and their family during the medical treatment period and rehabilitation in the foreign country.
 - The procedure for foreign visits by those closest to the injured shall be made more flexible .
 - A prosthetic centre shall be established in Estonia. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Defence shall ensure the necessary fittings and equipment and organize specialised training for members of the recovery and rehabilitation team.
- **In-service training and retraining for injured veterans in active service shall be supported**
 - **Existing measures**
 - Injured veterans who are declared unfit for active duty or who are released from service, but who, within two years of being released, commence studies at an educational institution accredited in Estonia, shall be compensated for tuition at the state's expense, depending on their percentage of disability.
 - **Measures to be created**

- The extent of compensation for in-service and retraining for injured veterans shall no longer be linked with the given individual's disability percentage, no term shall be established on commencement of studies, nor shall the range of educational institutions be restricted.
 - A veteran career counselling system shall be established.
- **4.3. Long-term support shall be provided to veterans and their families**
 - **Existing measures**
 - To keep the income of persons evacuated from the operation theatre due to injury or illness from becoming diminished, the Defence Forces shall maintain the service relationship and pay a monthly allowance in a share comparable to the foreign mission fee until the end of the tour of duty.
 - In the case of material and intangible losses due to physical harm, veterans shall be paid a one-time sum in the extent of six to 96 times the average wage (i.e. 5,082 to 81,312 euros).
 - The pension for incapacity for work payable to veterans shall be larger than the incapacity for work pension payable due to other reasons: 40–80% of the average gross wage; i.e. 338-677 euros a month. This shall be paid until the old age pension age is reached.
 - The Defence Forces shall offer the injured Defence Forces member the possibility of continuing in the service.
 - Injured active duty personnel who have left the Defence Forces can use living quarters belonging to the Defence Forces for three years.
 - Where necessary, the support centre shall offer psychological and social counselling to the injured and their families.
 - **Measure to be created**
 - Payment of a single allowance in one instalment.
 - In addition to family members of those injured in international military operations, the equivalent assistance shall be extended to other injured veterans – for instance, those who have sustained physical harm due in the line of duty in Estonia.
 - Veterans with special needs who have difficulties moving, communicating or coping in their dwelling require an everyday living environment conforming to special conditions, so that they can cope as independently as possible and with as little outside assistance as possible. In the case of injured personnel continuing active duty, the Defence Forces shall arrange for their dwelling to be converted with that specific injured person's needs in mind. For veterans with special needs leaving active duty, the living quarters belonging to the veteran shall be adapted for the person's needs.
 - Where necessary, the injured shall be provided daytime or around-the-clock nursing care at a nursing care facility.
 - A proposal to the Ministry of Social Affairs to review the system for determining disability.
 - Increasing the pension for incapacity for work for injured Defence Forces members.

MEASURES AIMED AT THOSE CLOSEST TO THE FALLEN

- **Long-term support shall be provided to the families of fallen Defence Forces members**

- **Existing measures**

- Social and psychological support provided by the support centre for the family members of the fallen.
- Family members of fallen Defence Forces members have the possibility of receiving 14 days of rehabilitation care at Seli Health Centre.
- The family of a fallen Defence Forces member may use the living quarters provided by the Defence Forces for a further three years.
- In the case of the fallen Defence Forces member, the state shall pay a one-time benefit in the extent of 150 times the average wage (as of 2012, the sum was 132,900 euros) and the recipients of this sum are the family members and other people with a relationship with the deceased.
- The Defence Forces shall pay the costs of the funeral for the deceased Defence Forces member in an amount of up to 20 times the funeral benefit – that is, up to 3,834 euros.
- In the case of the death of a Defence Forces member, the child, parent or widow is eligible to survivor's benefits. As of the end of 2011, the survivor's benefit ranged from 216-321 euros per person.
- The Carolin Illenzeer Fund supports the scholastic and extracurricular education of the children of fallen Defence Forces members and pays scholarships to those children who study at university.

- **Measure to be created**

- In addition to family members of those killed in international military operations, psychological assistance and social counselling shall be extended to other fallen veterans, for instance those closest to veterans who were killed in the line of duty in Estonia.
- Increasing survivor's benefits payable to fallen or KIA Defence Forces members' family members.

MEASURES FOR ALL VETERANS

- **The Defence Forces shall provide the best possible training to Defence Forces members being deployed in a theatre of operations**

- **Existing measures**

- Conducting of research for obtaining direct feedback from those being deployed and those returning.
- Specialized psychological training for Defence Forces members being deployed in a theatre of operations.

- **Measures to be created**

- Supplementing and updating the National Defence College with studies in psychology, sociology and culture on various levels.
 - Expanding studies and analysing results. Supplementing veterans policy.
- **The Defence Forces shall support the families of and people closest to the Defence Forces members being deployed and serving on operations**
 - **Existing measures**
 - Organizing information days, functioning of an Internet forum, distribution of information materials.
 - Opening an around-the-clock information line and helpline.
- **The Defence Forces shall enable the best possible personalized support in the theatre of operations**
 - **Existing measures**
 - The Defence Forces members serving on an operation shall be provided with a welfare programme, as part of which the Defence Forces members are ensured communication with those at home, use of the Internet, sports opportunities and other entertainment, for instance, concerts by Estonian artists in the mission area.
 - A chaplain shall accompany units of at least company size on operations.
 - **Measure to be created**
 - If necessary, a team of psychologists shall be sent to the theatre of operations.
- **The Defence Forces shall organize a post-operation adjustment phase**
 - **Measure to be created**
 - The Defence Forces shall customize the post-operation adjustment phase depending on the operation's location and nature.
 - After the mission, the Defence Forces shall organize a rehabilitation and relaxation period for veterans along with their families in spa and health centres.
- **The Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces shall raise the awareness of local government workers of the actual particularities of veterans needs**
 - **Measure to be created**
 - The Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces shall organize training for local government workers aimed at raising awareness of employees regarding the particular needs of veterans, above all those injured, and including them in the veterans support system.
- **The Defence Forces shall support in-service training and retraining for veterans**

- **Measures to be created**
 - Veterans' in-service training and re-training opportunities shall be extended to veterans who served on military operations.
 - A veteran career counselling system shall be established.
- **The Defence Forces shall support veterans with labour market measures**
 - **Measures to be created**
 - Entrepreneurship training and coaching for veterans wishing to leave the service .
 - Payment of a wage subsidy to employers shall be considered. It would be launched three months after the discharge of the veteran from the Defence Forces.
- **Creating a register of veterans and local government information exchange system**
 - **Measures to be created**
 - The Defence Forces shall prepare a veterans register, which enables a precise overview of the veterans target group, and which would include the data on the service records of both veterans continuing as active duty personnel as well as those who have left the service.
 - Joining the STAR register of data on social services and benefits – administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs – to process the data of Defence Forces members who receive social benefits, which would also ensure the necessary exchange of information with local governments.

MEASURES FOR INCREASING SOCIAL RECOGNITION

- **The Defence Forces shall promote and support the social recognition of veterans**
 - **Existing measures**
 - Charity. Since 2011 the Carolin Illenzeer Fund has organized charity events aimed at raising funds and non-monetary contributions for supporting the education and extracurricular activity of children of Defence Forces members injured or killed in the line of duty.
 - The Defence Forces supports the Injured Veterans Association and the Estonian War Invalids Assistance Foundation established by the former.
 - **Measures to be created**
 - Veterans' Day is 23 April. On Veterans Day, veterans and their families are recognized.
 - A memorial shall be erected to enshrine the memory of the Estonian Defence Forces members who fell in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Organization of veterans. The goal of the broad-based veterans' non-profit association is to unite as large a number of veterans as possible into an organization that would allow a forum for self-help, organization of additional support for and recognition of veterans as well as to direct charity work.
- Veterans' non-profit association membership card. Organizations and private companies can express recognition for veterans through discounts granted on the basis of a non-profit association membership card.
- Exhibit at the Estonian Military Museum dedicated to the contribution of veterans.
- Coverage of veterans topics as part of national defence studies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL STATE INCENTIVES

- **Measures to be created**
 - Co-signing for housing loans.
 - Counting time spent on missions twice toward active duty seniority.
 - Income tax incentive.