

Netherlands country report to the 9th International Conference on WTR/PTC

- 1 Name of organisation
Stichting Euro's voor Vrede, Netherlands
- 2 Report submitted by
Bart Horeman
- 3 Organisational structure
Regular supporters/donors (ca. 900) and Supporters of our special campaign (ca. 400)
Board (5 members, meets 4 to 6 times a year)
Staff (2 parttime (1 fulltime equivalent))
- 4 Budget
approx. € 40.000 annually
Main categories of spending: staff costs, office costs, newsletter, campaign.
Income: donations, interest and grants.
- 5 Goal
Euro's voor Vrede aims at a reduction of government military spending with a simultaneous rise in government spending on non-military peacebuilding activities.
- 6 Report of recent activities
 - A. Special campaign "*Release money for non-violence!*"
This campaign, which is aimed to raise support for the idea that government should spend more on nonviolent peacebuilding initiatives, began in 1999 and will last until 2002 (when it will be reviewed). The campaign consists of spreading our leaflet 'Release money for non-violence!' to inform the public of the potential of nonviolent peacemaking and to ask them to support our campaign. Supporters receive more background information and receive our newsletter to inform them about peacebuilding initiatives and about the campaign itself. By now we have spread 40.000 leaflets of which approx. 2% has returned. Although the response seems rather low, those who responded seem to be strong supporters, as a large majority of them were prepared to support the campaign financially. Because of the campaign, the decline in our donor base which was taking place since the beginning of the 1990s has been reverted into a steady increase.
 - B. Newsletter "*Nieuwskrant Euro's voor Vrede*"
Since 1999 (the start of the campaign) we have tried to adapt our newsletter to write more about peacebuilding initiatives and less about anti-military actions. The policy has been that we reserve the frontside of our paper for peacemaking articles and the backside is reserved for war tax resistance articles. In practice the backside is easily filled, but it is hard to fill the front. In the last two years we have produced 3 newsletters a year, instead of the planned 4. Due to our successful campaign, the circulation has risen from approx. 1200 to 1500.
 - C. War tax resistance
In the last years the number of people that actually withheld (part of) their tax money has been relatively low. It is estimated that approx. 20 refused to pay for war and sent the money instead to the Peacefund. Likewise the alternative tax form "V-biljet", to define how much one contributed to the Defence budget, was not widely used. In total 14 individuals informed us that they had sent the V-biljet to the national tax service to protest against compulsory paying for war and war preparation.
- 7 Relationship with *Civilian Peace Services Foundation (BVTN)*
As in previous years, we have been a major supporter of this organisation. In the last years we have shared our office with BVTN and both our staff members have been working for BVTN. Since August 2002 BVTN has its own first parttime staff member.
- 8 Contacts with politicians.
In the last years our contacts with politicians have been low. We hope to increase this in the coming years.

Netherlands country-report(continued)

- 1 Does a specific Peace Tax law proposal exist in your country ?
Yes. The first bill was made in 1989 and withdrawn in 1997, a new bill has just been drawn in 2002 and has not yet been introduced (see below).
- 2 A. What would be the name of the proposed law ?
Both law proposals were named "Wet Gewetensbezwaren Militaire Bestemming Belastinggelden" (Law on Conscientious Objection to the Military Destination of Tax money), abbreviated as Wet GMBB.
B. Please give a brief outline or summary of it.
The new law proposal suggests that conscientious objectors may request that their tax money is put into a special government fund with the guarantee that this money is not used for the military budget.
- 3 Has it been introduced and / or discussed in parliament (when, how often, which were the results)?
In 1989 the law proposal was introduced in parliament. It was amended in 1992. It was discussed in various bodies (amongst them the Council of State, the highest advisory body of the government) in 1993. It was discussed in two parliament commissions, the Finances commission and the Defence commission. Parliament never voted on the law proposal and it rested in a cupboard without anything happening. In January 1997 the law proposal was withdrawn.
The new bill has been drafted in 2002 and has just been brought to the attention of some parliamentarians. The bill has been amended so as to accomodate most of the objection to the first bill.
- 4 What can you say about history, development, stages and future aspects of such a proposal which might be of interest to other Peace Tax campaigners?
 - a. The law proposal was made during the Cold War, but introduced and discussed when the Cold War was over. Possible parliamentary support for the law therefore decreased as many MPs did no longer see the need of it.
The law was introduced by two MPs who wanted to give support to the law because they felt such a legal initiative of citizens should be supported. These two MPs left parliament before the law was discussed and another MP (Green Left party) took over, but he also left parliament and the Green Left party in parliament was left with a law proposal but none of the then sitting MPs was really supporting the proposal. When we asked the Green Left party what they would do, they decided to withdraw the law proposal in 1997.
 - b. The law proposal was made by a small group of peace tax campaigners and did not get the support of the broader War Tax Resistance Movement (BWD – now renamed into Euro's voor Vrede). This was caused by the fact that a large group in the BWD was not enthusiastic about any Peace Tax law as such law would never decrease the military budget. But as the small GMBB group got weaker, they were hardly able to put pressure on the MPs to move forward.
- 5 Are there any plans for the future to go on or to become politically active for legislation in your country?
Recently Erik Hummels has drafted a new law proposal. We are investigating if there is political support for this new proposal.
- 6 Please give name and address of a person who can give and receive further information with regard to Peace Tax legislation.
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