

# Demilitarising education:

An essential path towards a  
more peaceful world

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**State policies confront us with an increasing global militarisation;** military expenditure, arms trade, the return of the compulsory military service, military EU budget for R&D, militarisation of borders and the securitisation process of social problems which are being addressed as threats for State security. In this global context, the Spanish State resumes the project of introducing the “Culture of Defence” in schools. Meanwhile, events and fairs presenting professional and educational opportunities to young people in Catalonia continue to maintain the presence of the military.

Militarisation has been mainly justified as a matter of security against transnational terrorism. With a world record of more than 65 million people displaced from their homes, militarism has shown itself unable to resolve global security problems. Rather than looking for progress in matters like policies of cooperation and human safety, militarism -true to its nature- invades all social sectors.

Meanwhile, historical motions such as the 55/XI, approved by the Catalan Parliament, for the Demilitarisation of Catalonia, has still not been put into effect.

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## Context

Over the last years, global militarisation has increased; in 2016, military expenditure has reached 1.6 trillion dollars, arms trade has gone up after 5 years of decrease, military service has been reintroduced in Sweden and is again under discussion in France and Germany. The permanent state of emergency in France puts the army out on the streets, a fact which implies urban and social militarisation. In 2017, the EU approves, for the first time, to dedicate public funds to exclusively military R&D, with an initial funding of 25 million Euros. Border control has become stricter and has been militarised to face the arrival of refugees.

Educational projects, along with its related platforms, have been invaded by this militarism in an increasingly

alarming way. [In 2015, the ministries of Defence and Education have signed an agreement](#) for students to become familiar with the role of the Armed Forces and the concepts of security and defence, also including training for teachers. Subjects who, on the other hand, were already present in the education for citizenship course, among others, which has been withdrawn after the change in government of the Spanish state.

Three years later, the minister of Defence M<sup>a</sup> Dolores de Cospedal has reactivated the agreement, including the subject “Culture of Defence” intending to highlight the role of the armed forces as persons risking their lives for the protection of basic services to other countries, as well as introducing the social relevance of the crown, bestowing both elements with a role of internal and national social cohesion. This measure will

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now be implemented by the autonomous communities and has been justified by the importance of progress in studies of security and defence by means of an educational community which shows itself active in these matters.

But this is not the only open front of the educational community in matters of militarism; this year, the military returns to the Education Fair in Barcelona, the Fair for Mountain Sports and Tourism and the Professional Training Fair in Lleida, and the *Espai de l'Estudiant* (Student's Area) in Valls. All this is happening despite the protests of educational unions, neighbourhood associations and several organisations in the defence of peace, cooperation and human rights, as well as [Motion 55/XI, approved in July 2016](#), for the Demilitarisation of Catalonia.

## The campaign

Since 2008, the Demilitarising Education campaign has been analysing this introduction of militarism in the educational context and acting against it; from actions against armed troops accessing class rooms to protest rallies against the presence of the military in events and fairs offering professional and educational opportunities to young people in Catalonia. In parallel, by giving support to the educational community in order to actively boost values of cooperation, protection of human rights and the culture of peace.

Historical motions such as the 55/XI, approved by the Parliament for the Demilitarisation of Catalonia, are yet to be made effective

Since the very start, the campaign has been expanding and increasing its plurality, with more than 100 organisations and unions all over the Catalan territory joining, sharing one common goal: "no military in any of our educational areas". The echoes the campaign has received in the news media have been growing each year, and this antimilitarist impulse has culminated in a Motion in the *Parlament*, presented in July 2016, for the Demilitarisation of Catalonia, urging the government to address several points, one of them related to the educational field:

*e) Avoid the presence of the military in any educational and training centre, and avoid their presence in educational and promotional platforms such as the Education Fair or the Childhood Fair in Barcelona; the Mountain Sports and Tourism Fair or the Professional*

*Training Fair in Lleida; the ExpoJove in Girona or the Espai de l'Estudiant in Valls.*

[The approval of motion 55/XI was celebrated by hundreds of unions and organisation in the peace environment](#) and represented a historical step forward for the anti-militarist and peace-culture movement. The effective implementation of the motion, however, did not correspond to what was expected. In 2017, one year after the approval in the *Parlament*, the military was again present on all the educational platforms that were mentioned in the motion, despite heavy protest from the side of the organisations which are members of the Demilitarising Education campaign.

The campaign organised protest rallies extending to the area of Valencia, where another group of Demilitarising Education has been founded in 2017 with more than 50 member organisations, which has organised [mobilisations against the presence of the military in the Valencia Expojove fair](#).

Besides the motion 55/XI, several municipalities have presented motions with similar contents, of antimilitarist nature; in Alcover on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016, in order to ban the military from the *Espai de l'Estudiant*, in Barcelona on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016 in protest against the presence of the military in the Education Fair, in Celrà on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 to recuperate sites - previously abandoned by the ministry of Defence- for civil use, among others. In l'Hospitalet de Llobregat on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in the defence of the culture of peace and disarmament, as well as joining the Demilitarising Education campaign, in Valls on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017 in support of Motion 55/XI. In Vic, on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017 for the municipal declaration of commitment with the culture of peace and demilitarisation.

Despite all, this year the same situation will be repeated, the army will return to all educational spaces and fairs in Catalonia, with the exception of Girona. City Hall and Feria of Girona have denied the request of the army's exhibitor for the next three editions, since last year they failed to comply with the ethical code that indicates that symbols or war elements cannot be displayed in the fair.

A few days ago the campaign asked the parties that voted in favor of motion 55/XI (Junts per Catalunya, Esquerra Republicana, Catalunya En Comú Podem and the CUP) to reaffirm their commitment, and to make it effective within the deadline of six months, that is, by September 2018. All of them reaffirmed their commitment, but it remains to be seen whether this time there will be a more effective political application of the motion.

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## Analysis

Faced with this controversy, the military has raised its voice, justifying that the army is a professional opportunity like any other, and that many young people are interested in enlisting. These declarations are part of the objective of the Armed Forces to improve its image towards society and aims at diluting and normalising a debate that goes well beyond the controversy of its presence in educational areas, but where the role of war, violence and the use of force in our society would be put on the table as well.

The message of the armed forces' presence in an educational context is to normalise war on the global scene as a foreign policy tool, which is by no means related to the educational values that our society needs to defend. We would probably never consider that the use of strength and its subsequent victory is an educational value and provides the true power of reason. Militarism needs to build up its own story, based on warfare mythology, where it's common to assign qualities that society considers admirable and which militarism takes ownership of, providing them with a symbolic load and which have a considerable impact on our perspective on the world.

We should at least claim that preparing for the use of violence, even if this is sometimes dressed up as a legal practice under the umbrella of "just wars", is not a professional opportunity just like any other. This represents dedicating the workforce of young people to the use of coercion by means of weapons, which also implies accepting the military values and the warfare story, at the same time assuming the possible annihilation of the other side or your own.

Getting trained to exercise  
violence is not a  
professional output like any  
other

Demilitarising Education insists, time and time again, that the military is not just another professional opportunity, and what it is trying to achieve in the Education Fair is pure recruitment, in a context, moreover, with few professional options for young people.

When introducing the subject of "Culture of Defence", which claims to implement the concepts of security and defence in the educational community, the fact which is overlooked -or simply avoided on purpose- is that in order to progress in any type of studies, we need to preserve critical reflection in the classrooms, and guarantee that contexts will be available in every field to

question the present models, in this particular case, the militarist one.

A thorough exercise of reflection is needed: at present, we dedicate millions of resources to war policies and warfare, violence and the killing of others, to find ourselves afterwards incapable of preparing to assume the consequences, as demonstrated by the horrible refugee crisis, showing us the most horrifying side of the use of armed force and its global impact. The destination of our resources says a lot about the implementation of militarism in the policies of our governments. For example: the GCOMS campaign (Global Campaign On Military Expenditure) which has been promoting initiatives to redirect military expenditure towards social budgets, has promoted [a 2009 article of Time Magazine, describing a study of the University of Massachusetts](#), comparing the jobs that could be created with a budget of one billion dollars of the US military expenditure: 11,600 jobs in the military sector, against 29,100 in the educational sector.

The worldwide role of the military calls for a social debate, just as well as the social policies regarding security and defence, presently based on the secrecy of the State, securitisation, weapons industry profits, the creation of enemies –both internal as external- and on the culture of confrontation.

The road ahead is long, but increasingly more necessary. Demilitarising Education starts where building alternatives is most likely to succeed: the educational world. A change in paradigm is now more necessary than ever.

## Recommendations

-The *Generalitat* and the various municipalities which have presented motions in favour of demilitarisation need to reaffirm and make effective motion 55/XI, regarding the Demilitarisation of Catalonia, in order to go forward towards a Catalonia that aims at pacifism and human security as a way to resolve many of the problems the world is facing.

-The administrations which have approved motions in this direction need, besides making them effective, also to keep working to carry out proposals that can contribute to world demilitarisation; by not allowing the weapon industry to settle on their territories, rejecting military expenditure, military bases, investments in military R&D and arms trade, among others.

-The Congress of Representatives of the Spanish State needs to approve motions in the same direction as that of 55/XI, showing its commitment towards a more peaceful and less militarised world.

-The Spanish State is one of the five main arms traders in the EU, meaning a commitment towards a more

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peaceful world needs to include an embargo on weapons exports.

-If the Barcelona Educational Fair, the Fair for Mountain Sports and Tourism and the Fair for Professional Training in Lleida and the *Espai de l'Estudiant* in Valls want to demonstrate their commitment towards demilitarisation and the culture of peace, they need to watch over the compliance with resolution 55/XI, refuse the presence of the military in their events, and promote and drive projects related to the culture of peace.

-The educational communities are a capital part in the creation process of critical reflection. Therefore, it is important that they demonstrate their rejection of the militarisation of educational areas and the school curriculum, as well as showing a clear intention to work seriously on a culture of peace, cooperation, human rights, history of nonviolence, dialogue, conflict resolution and –management, and mutual understanding.

-The Spanish State should undo its decision to include “Culture of Defence” in its school curriculum, since it represents the militarisation of education and goes to the detriment of the values of peace. Educational policies need to introduce and widen concepts like human security, antimilitarism, pacifism, conscientious objection, nonviolent resistance and human rights.

-The institutions needs to watch over the way forward towards a more and more peaceful world, where militarism, arms trade and military expenditure are rejected in the resolution of global security problems and clearly opt for human security, reductions in military expenditure, offer shelter to refugees and effective compliance with human rights.

-The Catalan civil society has a long historical tradition on pacifism and antimilitarism, and despite the enormous global challenges of security, transnational terrorism and the present conflicts, we cannot fail to

meet the antimilitarist commitment as a way to transform society and the world. Therefore we need to, on one side, keep mobilising people to show our disapproval of all areas where militarism is allowed to be present, and on the other side, put pressure on the administrations so they would approve motions in this direction.

-For political parties to boost policies in their programs towards the culture of peace and effective demilitarisation in education and in security policies. Consult with experienced peacebuilding and peace promotion organisations and bodies.

-This commitment in the program needs to include, as a minimum, proposals similar to motion 55/XI and their effective implementation, and needs to go further in global demilitarisation.

## IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE

[SIPRI webpage on world military expenditure](#)  
[Demilitarising Education Campaign](#)  
[Global Campaign on Military Spending](#)

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