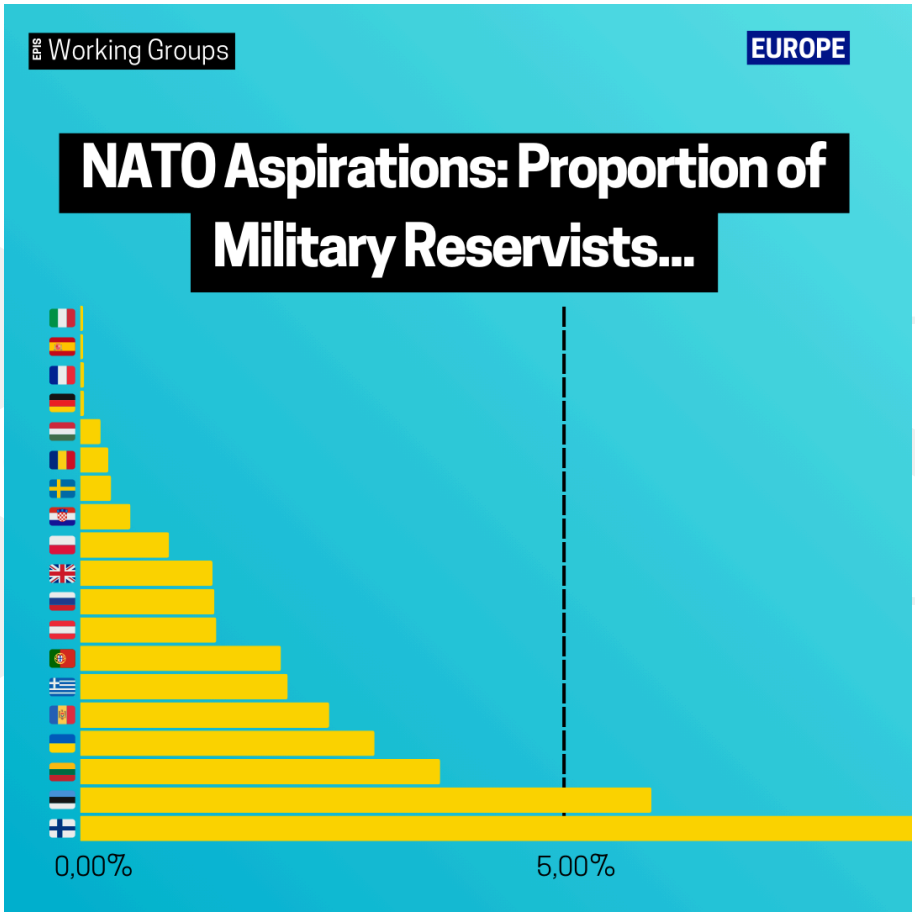
# NATO Aspirations

14 OCTOBER 2024

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## A Worrying Statistic – Numbers at Odds with the Big CIMIC Aspirations of the NATO Alliance

What is Civil-Military Cooperation? Where does it come from? How is CIMIC related to the military reserves? All the questions above are fair, and so this article will take a step-by-step approach to each issue and shed light on the meaning behind the statistics presented.

**What is CIMIC?** Civil-military cooperation is defined by the Official NATO Terminology Database as:

***A military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment and that enables, facilitates,***

***and conducts Civil-Military Interaction to support the accomplishment of missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis, and conflict.***

What CIMIC entails is a fluid relationship between the civilian and military sectors. As the definition suggests CIMIC can be seen as a crucial part of MDO (Multi-Domain Operations) aid in orchestrating military activities in all 5 domains: Land, Air, maritime, Cyberspace, and space.

**Where Does CIMIC Come From?**The concept of CIMIC can be traced back to the World Wars, where the US used to deploy civil-affairs units, but it only took concrete shape in the early 2000s, when in 2001, CIMIC Group North was formed at NATO's request. This group which at the time consisted of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Poland, laid out the base for what was to come in the form of the Multi-National CIMIC group and others.

Essentially CIMIC is a Western defence initiative and has come as a result of progressive attempts by militaries in this hemisphere to streamline their budgets through operational delegation. As budgets were cut and the need for large NATO structures reduced significantly, the Civilian Sector came in handy as a need-based response to NATO capacity building.

**How is CIMIC Related to the Military Reserves and Where Are We Now?** The significance of the relationship between military reserves and CIMIC has been highlighted in the recent Annual CIMIC Foresight Conference, where the EPIS delegation noted down the perspective of Rear Admiral Jeanette Morang of the Dutch Defense Forces. Her insight suggested that civil-military cooperation is in danger due to the fragile understanding of the military by the civilians. She proposes that the main cause of this issue is precisely the ongoing decline of military reserves, specifically in Europe. It is indeed true that in the past, the proportion of Military reserves was much higher, and in turn, it meant that the communication between the military and the civilians would be much more facile when it came to a call for collaboration: either being listening to directives or directly helping military efforts. Now, the big battles are not fought over public support for military operations, but for companies from the civilian sector to understand the means of operation of the military to be an efficient provider of the capabilities it needs. Being a reserve meant that almost all families, coworkers, politicians, and business owners would have had a better understanding of terminology, cause, and expectations.

With the current assessment, this idealistic image seems to be falling into despair. As can be seen most percentages of military reservists to the total population of each country are in the single digits, which in turn poses a question: How can CIMIC succeed if the civilians' lens on the military has grown increasingly opaque?