

RESUL Statement Regarding Revision of Weapons Directive E 60/2015

http://www.resul.fi/files/1581/RESUL_lausunto_EU_asedirektiivi.pdf

Reserviläisurheiluliitto (RESUL) is a national sports organization and among its members are the Finnish Reserve Officers (Suomen Reserviupseeriliitto), Finnish Reserve (Reserviläisliitto) and its local organizations, Union of National Defence Guilds (Maanpuolustuskiltojen Liitto) and Finnish Peacekeepers (Suomen Rauhanturvaajaliitto). Anyone can join RESUL by acquiring membership in one of the aforementioned organizations. There are 85 000 members in the member organizations of RESUL. Significant portion of these members have served either the Finnish national service or voluntary national service for females.

Reserviläisurheiluliitto organizes the sports events for its members. Shooting events are the most popular activity and RESUL and its members organize over 13 500 shooting events yearly with over 90 000 participants. This exceeds by far the number of shooting events organized by the Finnish Military for the members of the reserve.

Reserviläisurheiluliitto opposes this proposal in its entirety due to following reasons:

In Finland national defence is still relying on common national service and large reserve. The reason for this is our neutrality and our geopolitical position next to Russia. Finland has 1200 kilometers of eastern border which also is the eastern border of EU in Scandinavia. Military strength is 230 000 soldiers and 95% of them are reserve. It is not feasible to rely on training offered by Finnish Defence Forces alone and also voluntary training is required.

The possibility for voluntary training of marksmanship fundamentals is one of the cornerstones of large combat efficient reserve army. In addition to marksmanship, the possibility of maintaining skills also impacts the motivation of the reserve to participate to national defence activities.

In reserve organizations firearms training serves a vital role as a maintenance tool for the skills acquired during national service and therefore the weapons differ to some extent from traditional shooting sports. Among the commonly used firearms are semiautomatic pistols and rifles, shotguns and carbines. Member organizations of RESUL possess some amount of modern sporting firearms to borrow for new shooters, but for active participation the possibility to purchase own firearms is necessary.

The most common sport is SRA (Sovellettu reserviläisammunta), but semiautomatic firearms are also used for other shooting sports like Falling Plates and basic Marksmanship fundamentals. Different kind of shooting events have proven to be an excellent tool activate young members of reserve to maintain their skills through voluntary practice.

Reserviläisurheiluliitto considers maintenance of shooting skills and physical condition as a duty and a right for each member of the reserve. Practicing of marksmanship on individuals own time and cost serves the cause of national defence. Finnish Defence Forces does not have sufficient resources to offer enough shooting events to maintain the shooting skills of the reserve.

Finland has had a strict gun policy for quite a while and permits are not easy to get. Strict safety measures are continuously enforced in reserve shooting events. The proposed changes do not improve safety in any way but the drawbacks are dramatic.

The restrictions in owning semiautomatic firearms would practically stop most of the reserve shooting events. Restrictions to magazine capacity of a modern sporting rifle would impact the both peace and war time usability of the firearm. Restrictions to online sales of firearms and ammunition would also introduce big challenges because only small part of gun shops maintain a selection of suitable firearms.

These restrictions are related to recent acts of terror, where illegally obtained automatic weapons were used – not modern sporting firearms or weapons designed for sporting use. There are no statistics indicating that additional restrictions to legally obtained firearms should be made. These acts of terror can not be stopped by removing firearm types used in legal and well organized reserve activity.

When it comes to fair treatment of different sports, shooting sports are already extremely controlled and for example environmental restrictions to shooting ranges create lot of challenges. Most of the shooting ranges are built by volunteers and without public support which is often given to other sports. The view of the RESUL is that governments should support organized reserve activities at least by opposing this proposal on EU level.

For the reasons above, RESUL is opposing this proposal in its entirety.