



Italian soldiers among the lowest paid in Europe: in the United Kingdom a Sergeant can earn over 5,000 euros per month

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While Europe is once again investing heavily in defense, increasing personnel and asking its military for greater operational availability, Italy continues to present significantly lower salary levels compared to those recognized by the main Western NATO powers.

The comparison cannot be considered perfectly homogeneous. Each country applies different systems regarding taxation, seniority, operational allowances, service housing, pensions, and family support. However, when comparing the basic salaries or initial pay of equivalent ranks, a rather clear trend emerges: **Italian military personnel rank at the lower end of the Western European scale.**

The gap starts from the basic soldier

In Italy, a volunteer on initial enlistment has an annual basic salary of about 16,461 euros, corresponding to just over 1,370 euros gross per month, before any allowances and additional components.

The distance compared to other major allied countries is considerable.

In the Netherlands, the initial gross salary of a soldier is around 2,600-2,700 euros per month. In Germany, the pay of a soldier can exceed 2,600 euros gross in examples published by the Bundeswehr itself, while in the United Kingdom, the increases approved for 2026 have brought the initial salaries of the British Armed Forces to levels significantly higher than those in Italy.

Even in France and Belgium, despite different salary structures and costs of living, the initial pay is significantly higher than that provided for the Italian volunteer.

Non-commissioned officers and sergeants: the gap continues

The situation does not change with the transition to permanent service.

In our country, the basic salary of an Italian non-commissioned officer is around 1,700 euros gross per month, while that of a sergeant is just over 1,900 euros.

In the Netherlands, however, a corporal or sergeant can start with a gross salary close to or exceeding 2,800-3,000 euros. In Germany, a Feldwebel, generally comparable to the first levels of Italian non-commissioned officers, receives an indicative gross salary between 3,000 and 3,200 euros; a Hauptfeldwebel with more seniority can reach 3,600-3,750 euros.

The comparison must be treated with caution, but the difference **remains too wide to be attributed solely to the cost of living or different tax pressures.**

Italian warrant officers far from European colleagues

One of the most evident gaps concerns the role of warrant officers, which traditionally represents the backbone of Italian units.

The basic salary of an Italian warrant officer is just over 2,000 euros gross per month. A senior non-commissioned officer in Germany can instead range between 3,600 and 4,500 euros gross, depending on rank and seniority. In the Netherlands, the salaries of senior non-commissioned

officers exceed 4,000 euros.

This is personnel entrusted with increasing responsibilities: managing men, training, employing technologically complex systems, administrative responsibilities, and, in many cases, commanding smaller units.

Yet, precisely in the category of non-commissioned officers, the Italian economic treatment appears particularly distant from that of the main allies.

Even officers earn less

The issue also affects officers of all ranks.

An Italian lieutenant receives a basic salary of about 2,400 euros gross per month. In Germany, the indicative pay of a Leutnant is around 3,300-3,450 euros gross. In Belgium and the Netherlands, the initial pay of officers can exceed 4,000 and 3,700 euros gross per month, respectively.

The gap does not tend to narrow in managerial ranks, such as that of colonel. Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom can guarantee significantly higher economic treatments.

In Germany, for example, a colonel can be placed in levels A16, B2, or B3, with indicative salaries ranging between 6,900 and 9,600 euros per month.

General Officers: a ruthless comparison

The pay gap with other European countries does not disappear as one climbs the hierarchical ladder. However, for general officers, it is necessary to distinguish between fixed salary and overall economic treatment, which can include operational allowances, bonuses, compensation related to command positions, and other additional components.

The European comparison remains particularly significant on the fixed component. In Italy, a Brigadier General had an average salary of about 67,000 euros gross per year, while **in Germany, the basic salary of a *Brigadegeneral* can exceed 130,000 euros gross per year. In the Netherlands, the basic salary of a *Brigadegeneraal* is indicatively over 100,000 euros per year and can further increase with the planned increments.**

The distance is therefore considerable: the fixed salary of a German general can be almost double that of an Italian counterpart.

It is important to remember that allowances, seniority increments, bonuses for particular assignments, and other additional treatments are also recognized for military personnel of foreign Armed Forces.

Special Forces Operators: Abroad They Are Also “Special” in Salary

In France, the *prime de compétences spécifiques* can reach up to **2,000 euros per month**. In Germany, qualified personnel employed in the Special Forces receive about **1,125 euros per month** in addition to their regular salary.

In the United Kingdom, operators of the UK Special Forces, including the SAS, can earn up to over **35,000 euros annually in addition** to a conventional soldier of the same rank. The gap mainly stems from the *Recruitment and Retention Payment – Special Forces*, the allowance aimed at promoting recruitment and retaining highly qualified personnel.

Without delving into the complex system of allowances recognized for the Italian Special Forces, it is evident that amounts of this magnitude are difficult to achieve for the raiders, rangers, and target acquisition specialists in our country.

Even in the elite sector, the same trend emerges: abroad, greater specialization, risk, and difficulty in retaining experienced personnel are rewarded with substantial and clearly quantifiable supplements; in Italy, the treatment appears more fragmented and overall less competitive.

The European Race for Increases

The most significant data does not only concern the current pay levels but the direction taken by other governments.

The United Kingdom recognized in 2026 the third consecutive increase above inflation, bringing the average salary of British military personnel to about 45,710 pounds annually. According to the British Government, the cumulative increases since July 2024 have reached 14.1%.

The Netherlands approved a new agreement providing for a 6.5% increase from September 2026 and an additional 2% from January 2028, along with better remuneration for operational deployment and irregular work.

In other words, **countries that already guaranteed higher salaries are continuing to increase them**, further widening the gap with Italy.

It's Not Just an Economic Issue

The remuneration of military personnel cannot be considered solely as a budget item.

It directly affects the ability to recruit new volunteers, retain specialized personnel, and compete with the civilian sector. IT technicians, maintenance workers, pilots, drone operators, healthcare personnel, and communications specialists now have skills increasingly in demand in the private market as well.

A non-competitive salary therefore risks producing Armed Forces equipped with new means and greater funding, but lacking the personnel necessary to employ them effectively.

Italy has initiated a growth in defense spending in recent years, but a significant portion of the resources will necessarily have to be allocated to the men and women in uniform.

It is not possible to demand greater operational readiness, continuous availability, frequent transfers, deployment abroad, and increasing responsibilities without recognizing adequate economic treatment.

The comparison with other major NATO countries shows that the problem can no longer be postponed: at least in the initial categories, among non-commissioned officers and petty officers, Italian military personnel are among the lowest paid in Western Europe.

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