EQUIPO EUROPA

V EDITION OF THE FORUM ON THE FUTURE OF THE EU:
EUROPEAN SECURITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

EXTRA CHAPTER:

MILITARY SERVICE ACROSS THE 27 EU MEMBER STATES



Forum on the Future of the EU

EUROPEAN SECURITY in a Changing World

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INTRODUCTION

Why Military Service and Why Now

On 24 February 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine brought the largest war on European soil since World War II to the very doorstep of the European Union. What had seemed unthinkable for decades became, overnight, the backdrop against which Europe must rethink its security.

The conflict on the eastern flank has reignited issues of growing importance: while at the June 2025 summit in The Hague, NATO allies committed to allocating 5% of GDP to defence and security by 2035, within the EU, a defence union (and even a European army) appears to be emerging as the next natural step in the integration process.

All of this ties into a broader lesson. Ever since the Gulf War, it has been taken for granted that technology would make wars shorter and almost surgical in nature, and that precision would replace mass. Ukraine and, more recently, the war in Iran have proven the opposite. These are wars of attrition, which drag on and in which industrial production capacity, ammunition reserves and resilience matter just as much as technological superiority. That premise has proven to be wrong, and so have the priorities that were built upon it. Perhaps increasing spending isn't enough; might a change in mindset be necessary?

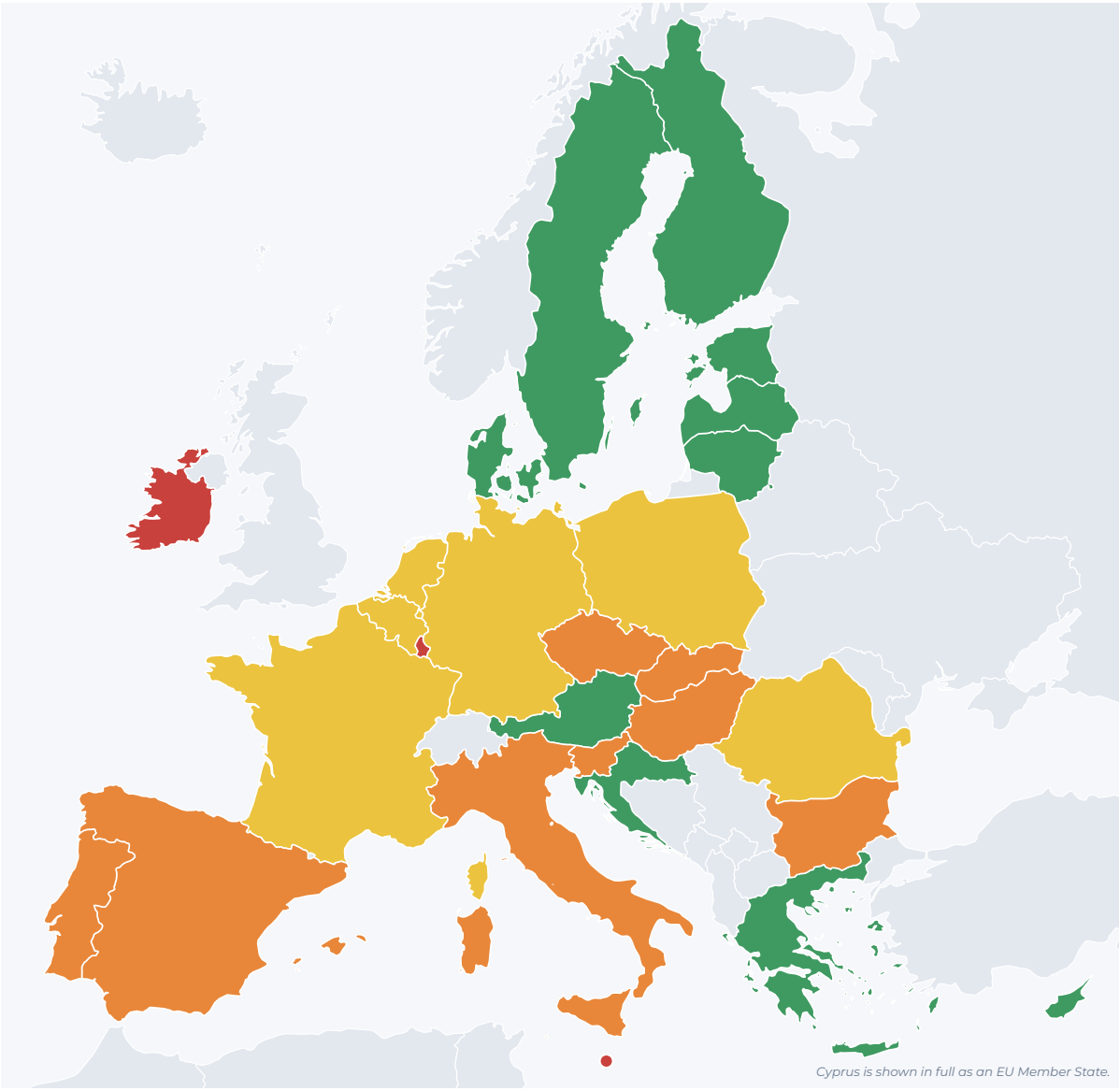
It is almost impossible to discuss the intersection of youth and national defence without thinking about military service. But what is the actual situation in the European Union? This Extra Chapter stems from that question.

> Several analysts from the Policy Proposals Document have come together to produce 27 fact sheets all following a common structure: legal status, eligibility and selection, service design, personnel and reserves, and mobilisation mechanisms. The fact sheets group the Member States into four categories based on the nature of their military service.

This chapter neither advocates for nor opposes conscription. **Its goal is more modest and, we hope, more useful: to provide a comparable overview of the situation in each Member State, so that a debate that often devolves into sloganeering can be grounded in data.**

MILITARY SERVICE MODELS

across the 27 EU Member States



Cyprus is shown in full as an EU Member State.

A **CATEGORY A: 10**
COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden.

B **CATEGORY B: 6**
DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Romania.

C **CATEGORY C: 8**
PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.

D **CATEGORY D: 3**
PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH NO RECENT TRADITION OF COMPULSORY SERVICE

Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta.

Source: own elaboration.

Base map: Natural Earth

A

CATEGORY A

COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

10 Member States

- Republic of Austria
- Republic of Croatia
- Republic of Cyprus
- Kingdom of Denmark
- Republic of Estonia
- Republic of Finland
- Hellenic Republic
- Republic of Latvia
- Republic of Lithuania
- Kingdom of Sweden





COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Male conscription, voluntary professional service and militia reserves.
Legal basis	Federal Constitutional Law, Art. 9a; Wehrgesetz 2001; Zivildienstgesetz 1986.
Legal entry into force	Introduced on 7 September 1955; current framework enacted in 2001.
First implementation	15 October 1956.
Competent authority	Minister of Defence; Federal President for call-ups exceeding 5,000 personnel.
Emergency mechanism	Operational mobilisation and extraordinary military exercises (Wehrgesetz 2001).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Compulsory service applies to male Austrian citizens, generally aged 18–35, with liability beginning at 17. Medical and psychological assessment normally takes place at 18 and determines fitness and eligibility. Women may volunteer but are not conscripted. Austrian citizens abroad retain applicable obligations. Fit or partially fit men may be called up; there is no lottery. Deferments are possible on educational, medical, family or economic grounds, subject to legal requirements.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Basic military service lasts six months and includes physical conditioning, military skills, weapons handling, discipline and role-specific training (Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, n.d). As of July 2026, monthly remuneration totals €625.57, excluding rank allowances; accommodation, meals and transport are provided free or subsidised. Conscripts may go on to militia service or a professional military career; voluntary training service generally lasts 12 months to four years, with possible extensions.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

In February 2026, Austria had approximately 14,200 professional soldiers and 15,000 basic-service conscripts. In 2024, 16,361 men entered service out of 28,778 assessed as fit. The militia reserve comprised approximately 33,000 personnel.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Under the Wehrgesetz 2001, the Federal Minister of Defence may call up to 5,000 militia and reserve personnel for operational service, subject to Federal Government authorisation; above this threshold, authority rests with the Federal President. Mobilisation covers national defence, internal security and assistance in major disasters; call-up orders may be issued individually or, when military requirements demand it, through public announcement.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Compulsory basic military training for male Croatian citizens, alongside voluntary service and a reserve component.
Legal basis	Defence Act (Zakon o obrani) and Act on Service in the Armed Forces, amended in 2025; conscientious objection regulated through alternative civilian service.
Legal entry into force	Amendments adopted on 24 October 2025 and in force from 13 November 2025.
First implementation	The first intake of 800 conscripts was called up to report for basic military training in March 2026.
Competent authority	Ministry of Defence and Croatian Armed Forces.
Emergency mechanism	General or partial mobilisation of reserves in wartime, imminent threat or major emergencies.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Military liability begins at 18. Male Croatian citizens are registered at 18 and normally undergo basic military training in the calendar year they turn 19; men may be called up until 30 in specified circumstances. Women are not subject to compulsory training but may volunteer. Citizens residing abroad remain subject to registration requirements, and a medical assessment determines fitness and eligibility. Conscientious objectors may perform alternative civilian service; only ten of the conscripts called up for the first intake declared conscientious objection.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Basic military training lasts two months (eight weeks) and is conducted at military barracks in Knin, Slunj and Požega. Training covers weapons handling, basic tactics, physical fitness, first aid, self-defence, communications and modern equipment, including drones.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The first intake comprised 800 called-up conscripts, alongside 446 volunteers.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Male conscription in the National Guard (Εθνική Φρουρά), combining conscripts, professional and contract military personnel (ΣΥΟΠ) and reservists.
Legal basis	National Guard Law 19(I)/2011, as amended, including Amendment Law 39(I)/2025.
Legal entry into force	2011; Amendment Law 39(I)/2025 established a voluntary enlistment route for women.
First implementation	Compulsory service established in 1964 under National Guard Law No. 20/1964; first enlistment on 15 June 1964 (National Guard Law 20/1964, Art. 4).
Competent authority	Minister of Defence; the Council of Ministers issues call-ups and may reduce the length of service (Art. 20(4)).
Emergency mechanism	In war, mobilisation or emergency, the Council of Ministers may extend active service, prolong reserve liability, call up older men and suspend certain exemptions (Arts. 18, 20, 22, 23).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Article 18 establishes a military obligation for male Cypriot citizens and for men with at least one parent of Cypriot origin, even without citizenship. General liability runs from 1 January of the year they turn 18 until 31 December of the year they turn 50, and the initial service obligation applies until 45; seventeen-year-olds may enlist voluntarily with parental consent (National Guard Law, Art. 18). Call-ups are issued by the Council of Ministers, generally or by individual, class, district or category, without a lottery; registers draw on administrative records and declarations made in the year men turn 16, and those called up are medically classified from I/1 to I/5. Exemptions cover medical unfitness, specified family circumstances and permanent residence abroad, among others, and conscientious objectors may perform longer alternative military or social service (National Guard Law, Arts. 47–48). An electronic enlistment service (e-Κατάταξη) is available.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Article 20(3) retains 24 months as the statutory reference period, which the Council of Ministers may reduce under Article 20(4); since 2016, the ordinary period actually served has been 14 months. Service is performed in National Guard units, with postings determined by the institutional procedure rather than the conscript's choice. Existing employment is suspended during service, with reinstatement under statutory conditions (National Guard Law, Art. 72).

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The reserve includes those who have completed ordinary or alternative service, and the Territorial Guard (Εθνοφυλακή) forms part of the reserve structure for local and regional defence (National Guard Law, Arts. 6, 43–44). Published estimates based on *The Military Balance 2024* indicate approximately 12,000 active personnel and 50,000 reservists; these are historical estimates, as no consolidated official figures for 2026 could be verified.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

In war, mobilisation or emergency, the Council of Ministers may extend active service, prolong reserve liability beyond 50, call up older men and suspend certain exemptions (National Guard Law, Arts. 18, 20, 22, 23). The Minister of Defence, on the Commander's recommendation, administers reserve call-ups by name, class, category, specialism or area (National Guard Law, Art. 45).

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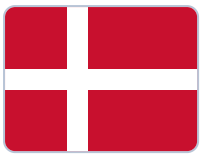
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COUNTRY PROFILE

KINGDOM OF DENMARK

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Compulsory military service for men and women, with volunteers given priority before selection by lottery; since February 2026, service generally lasts 11 months, with 12-month exceptions for designated units.
Legal basis	Conscription Act (LBK No. 225 of 13 March 2006), amended by Act No. 715 of 20 June 2025.
Legal entry into force	The 2025 amendment entered into force on 1 July 2025.
First implementation	Gender equality in call-up applies from July 2025; the 11-month period began in February 2026.
Competent authority	The Folketing and the Ministry of Defence; the Personnel Command (formerly the Danish Armed Forces Personnel Board) determines conscript requirements and issues call-ups.
Emergency mechanism	Article 19 of the Constitutional Act governs the deployment of military forces, including in international operations.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Everyone who turns 18 is invited to Defence Day (Forsvarets Dag), a preliminary session that informs young people about military service and assesses their fitness; since the 2025 amendment, attendance is mandatory for both women and men who turn 18 after 1 July 2025. Candidates are classified as suitable, suitable with restrictions (in which case enlistment depends on their own willingness) or unsuitable; volunteers receive priority, and any remaining places are allocated by lottery. Deferments may be granted on educational or personal and family grounds, and conscientious objectors may perform non-military service. Foreign nationals are not generally subject to the obligation, although specific arrangements may apply.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Standard service comprises five months of basic training followed by six months of operational service in the Army, Navy, Air Force or Emergency Management Agency; exceptions include 12-month programmes in designated units, such as the Royal Life Guards and the Guard Hussars Regiment's Cavalry Squadron, and a nine-month programme in the Emergency Management Agency. Act No. 715/2025 also addresses remuneration, personnel conditions and leave.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

As of December 2025, the Danish Armed Forces had 17,400 military personnel, excluding conscripts, and 10,200 civilian employees. The defence agreement aims to increase the annual conscript intake towards 6,500 by 2033. The Home Guard includes 13,400 active volunteers and 30,000 reservists.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Total Defence Force can be mobilised within 30 days, although the triggering circumstances are not precisely defined; Article 19 of the Constitutional Act provides the constitutional framework for decisions on deploying Danish forces.

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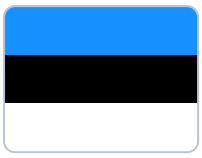
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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Selective compulsory military service for male citizens, with a voluntary component for women and for men entering extended training or professional service; conscientious objectors may perform alternative civilian service (Military Service Act, Arts. 5, 15–16, 38–40).
Legal basis	Military Service Act 2013; in a subsidiary capacity, the National Defence Act 2015 (crisis management, war and mobilisation).
Legal entry into force	Current Military Service Act adopted on 13 June 2012.
First implementation	1 April 2013.
Competent authority	Government of the Republic, Ministry of Defence, Estonian Defence Forces and President of the Republic.
Emergency mechanism	Parliamentary decision on mobilisation or a state of war, implemented by the Government, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces (National Defence Act, Arts. 17–28).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Initial military service is compulsory for male Estonian citizens aged 18–27 (Military Service Act, Art. 37). Non-citizens and foreign permanent residents are not subject to compulsory service but may apply voluntarily, and service is voluntary for women (Military Service Act, Art. 2.1). Persons liable to serve are entered in a mandatory military register and called up for assessment (Military Service Act, Art. 11), with physical and psychological fitness examined by the relevant commissions (Military Service Act, Art. 27). Selection is a general call-up of men who have reached the age of service, according to the needs of national defence and without a lottery (Military Service Act, Art. 2.2.1). Exemptions include persons who have reached 28, have served in a foreign state's armed forces or are registered as doctors or nurses (Military Service Act, Art. 39), and service is postponed on health and certain other grounds (Military Service Act, Art. 38).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Basic military service lasts 8 or 12 months, and alternative civilian service between 8 and 12 months (Military Service Act, Arts. 46, 60.1). Monthly pay ranges from €115 to €230, depending on rank and unit, and conscripts receive free accommodation and meals, leave and reimbursement of holiday travel (Military Service Act, Art. 54). After basic service, personnel may continue as reservists, non-commissioned officers or officers in training, or voluntary professional military personnel, although there is no automatic route into professional service (Military Service Act, Arts. 56, 83–84).

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

Estonia has around 7,100 active personnel and an annual intake of around 4,100, most of whom are conscripts; the declared reserve numbers 41,200, and no data are available on voluntary participants.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Parliament decides on mobilisation or a state of war, typically on the President's proposal; the Government organises its implementation, and the Ministry of Defence and the military command carry it out (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, Arts. 127–129; National Defence Act, Arts. 9–11, 17–28).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF FINLAND

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	General male conscription and voluntary military service for women, alongside professional armed forces and a large trained reserve.
Legal basis	Conscription Act (Asevelvollisuuslaki 1438/2007), as amended; Act on Women's Voluntary Military Service (285/2022).
Legal entry into force	Conscription Act 1438/2007, as amended; the extended age limit of liability (65) has applied since 1 January 2026.
Competent authority	The Finnish Defence Forces' regional offices administer call-ups and service assignments; the Defence Forces and, for designated conscripts, the Border Guard conduct training.
Emergency mechanism	Partial or general mobilisation, decided by the President of the Republic on a proposal from the Government.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Male Finnish citizens are liable for military service from the calendar year they turn 18 until the end of the year they turn 65; the extended age limit took effect on 1 January 2026, with transitional rules for older cohorts. Initial conscript service is normally completed by the end of the year a person turns 30. Women may volunteer if they are Finnish citizens and start service no later than the year they turn 29; they may withdraw during the first 30 days, after which the same obligations generally apply. Conscientious objectors may apply for unarmed service or non-military service, which lasts 347 days, and Åland residents with the right of domicile are subject to a special exemption regime.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Initial military service lasts 165, 255 or 347 days, depending on training and role; officer, non-commissioned officer and designated specialist training lasts 347 days. Daily allowances are €6.15, €10.20 or €14.25, according to the service period, and accommodation, meals, clothing and healthcare are provided. Eligible conscripts may receive housing, student-loan interest and family assistance through Kela.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Defence Forces report approximately 900,000 reservists and a wartime strength of 280,000 personnel: the former is a broad reserve estimate, the latter the planned wartime force. The Ministry of Defence projects a reserve of approximately one million by 2031. Cumulative refresher-training limits are generally 80, 150 or 200 days, depending on personnel category.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The President of the Republic decides on mobilisation of the Defence Forces on a proposal from the Government, and Parliament must be convened immediately if not sitting. The Conscription Act distinguishes partial from general mobilisation and regulates service during mobilisation and extraordinary service.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Compulsory military service for eligible male citizens, generally for 12 months; women may volunteer.
Legal basis	Law 3421/2005 on Conscription, substantially amended by Law 5265/2026.
Legal entry into force	Law 3421/2005: 12 December 2005; Law 5265/2026: 10 January 2026.
First implementation	Most 2026 reforms took effect in early 2026; pay changes in February and female enlistment in June 2026.
Competent authority	Ministry of National Defence, the Government Council for National Security (KYSEA) and the Head of State.
Emergency mechanism	Additional call-up measures may apply during war or mobilisation; failure to report without lawful justification may result in draft-evasion penalties (Law 5265/2026, Art. 239).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Compulsory military service applies to male Greek citizens from the year in which they turn 19 until the end of the year they turn 45; reserve obligations generally last until the end of the year they turn 60. Women aged 20–26 may volunteer for 12 months of Army service, subject to annual quotas. Deferments may be granted for studies, medical conditions or permanent residence abroad, among other grounds, and conscientious objectors may qualify for alternative civilian service.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Full military service generally lasts 12 months, with reduced periods of nine or six months for eligible conscripts. Since the 2026 reform, new conscripts are generally assigned to the Army, and training includes a ten-week initial phase followed by specialisation and unit-based training. Monthly pay is generally €100 in border regions, including Thrace and the Aegean, and €50 in the mainland interior. After completing service, eligible personnel may re-enlist as short-term contract soldiers (ΟΒΑ). Recognised qualifications or experience may provide advantages in subsequent public-sector recruitment.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Greek Armed Forces total around 143,000 personnel, according to unofficial records. Recruitment takes place in four annual intake periods (ΕΣΣΟ), and the 2026 reform introduced voluntary female enlistment, initially with up to 100 places. A separate voluntary reserve system also exists.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

General or partial mobilisation is coordinated by the Government Council for National Security, while the Ministry of National Defence oversees military implementation; reservists may be called up by ministerial decision following a proposal from the relevant branch of the Armed Forces.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Selective male conscription alongside professional armed forces and a volunteer National Guard open to women.
Legal basis	State Defence Service Law, adopted by the Saeima in April 2023.
Legal entry into force	19 April 2023; conscription had been suspended since 2007.
First implementation	Conscription reintroduced for men from 1 January 2024.
Emergency mechanism	Under an increased military threat, the Cabinet may call up reservists for up to 72 hours.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Male citizens aged 18 to 27 are liable for service and are called up within twelve months of turning 18 or of completing secondary or vocational education; women may volunteer and are not subject to the lottery. Volunteers are enrolled first and remaining places are filled by random selection. From 2026, men living abroad are also summoned for a health check, although until 2027 permanent residents abroad cannot be called up. Of roughly 47,000 young people theoretically eligible, only around 7,000 remain after health and other exclusions. Exemptions include health grounds and certain prior service, and draft evasion is a criminal offence.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Service lasts 11 months in a National Armed Forces or National Guard unit, without choice of service type; volunteers may instead take a five-year National Guard route. Volunteers receive €600 a month (net) and free university study, conscripts selected by lottery €300, and all a €1,100 discharge payment; after six months, a professional contract may be signed.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

208 volunteers began service in January 2025 and 757 in July 2025. The July 2026 draft required 1,470 recruits, and 1,503 volunteered, including 46 women. Conscripts made up about a quarter of the intake in January 2026. The development plan targets 31,000 personnel by 2030 (4,000 conscripts, 8,000 professionals, 12,000 National Guard members and 7,000 high-readiness reservists).

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

After service, former conscripts join the reserve and must attend up to seven days of annual training for five years.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Selective male conscription alongside professional armed forces, voluntary service and an active reserve.
Legal basis	Constitution, Article 139; Law on Military Conscription and Alternative National Defence Service (No. I-1593).
Legal entry into force	6 November 1996; current wording introduced by Law No. XIV-2729 of 13 June 2024 and applicable since 1 January 2026.
First implementation	Conscription was suspended in 2008 and reinstated in March 2015; the first intake began service on 24 August 2015.
Competent authority	The Minister of National Defence sets the annual number of conscripts; the Military Commandants' Command administers conscription.
Emergency mechanism	The Seimas imposes martial law and announces mobilisation (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Art. 142).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Lithuanian men, including those living abroad, are called up from age 18 until they turn 22; volunteers may serve until they turn 39. Women are exempt unless they volunteer or hold a degree in medicine or nursing. Young men must contact the conscription authority at 17 and undergo a medical examination; in 2024, 51% of those examined were declared unfit. Volunteers are called first, and the remaining places are filled by a computerised random ballot supervised by independent observers. Deferments apply to students, parents of young children and cases of disproportionate harm, and conscientious objectors may perform 12 months of alternative service.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Service lasts nine months; it may be shortened by up to three months, and students may instead complete modular training of 90–200 days. Conscripts receive meals, accommodation and €340.40 per month plus performance-based bonuses, totalling €5,283.60–8,835.60 over nine months.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

In 2024, 3,920 conscripts reported for service against a plan of 3,845, and around 5,000 are expected to be called up in 2026. Professional posts were filled to 92.1% of a ceiling of 12,820. The active reserve held 31,168 conscripts at the end of 2024, which does not establish the total number of trained reservists. Active reserve service lasts 15 years.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Seimas imposes martial law and announces mobilisation. In the event of an armed attack, the President decides immediately and submits the decision to the Seimas, which approves or revokes it (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Art. 142).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

KINGDOM OF SWEDEN

A COMPULSORY SERVICE IN FORCE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Selective, gender-neutral conscription alongside professional armed forces.
Legal basis	Total Defence Service Act (Lag 1994:1809 om totalförsvarsplikt).
Legal entry into force	1 July 1995.
First implementation	Compulsory assessment was reactivated in 2017 and basic military training in 2018.
Competent authority	The Government determines the activation and scope of compulsory service; the Swedish Defence Conscription and Assessment Agency (SDCAA) manages assessment and enrolment, and the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) conduct training.
Emergency mechanism	Service during heightened alert by personnel assigned to wartime duties; readiness service (beredskapstjänst) ordered by the Government.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Swedish citizens of both sexes are liable for military conscription from the calendar year they turn 19 until the end of the year they turn 47. Almost all Swedish citizens turning 18 who are registered as resident in Sweden must complete an initial questionnaire, subject to specified exceptions. Selection is based on medical, psychological and physical suitability and defence requirements, not a lottery. Conscientious objectors may apply for weapon-free status; those granted it cannot be assigned to weapons-related training or enrolled in the Armed Forces against their will, but remain subject to other total-defence obligations.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Basic military training normally lasts 6–15 months, depending on role. Conscripts receive SEK 200 per service day, accommodation, meals, healthcare, eligible travel benefits and an education premium calculated by reference to their accumulated daily allowance; the fee for the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (högskoleprovet) is covered, subject to conditions.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

In 2025, 8,136 conscripts began training. The SAF employed 30,442 people across personnel categories, which is not an active-duty military headcount, and the Home Guard (Hemvärnet) had 23,069 members. Wartime assignments normally cease no later than ten years after the latest service period, unless special reasons justify an extension.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Personnel assigned to wartime duties must serve during heightened alert. The Government may also order readiness service (beredskapstjänst), normally limited to 180 days per person, and determines its scope and termination; the competent agency normally issues call-up notices (Total Defence Service Act, ch. 4, ss. 7–9).

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B

CATEGORY B

DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

6 Member States

Kingdom of Belgium

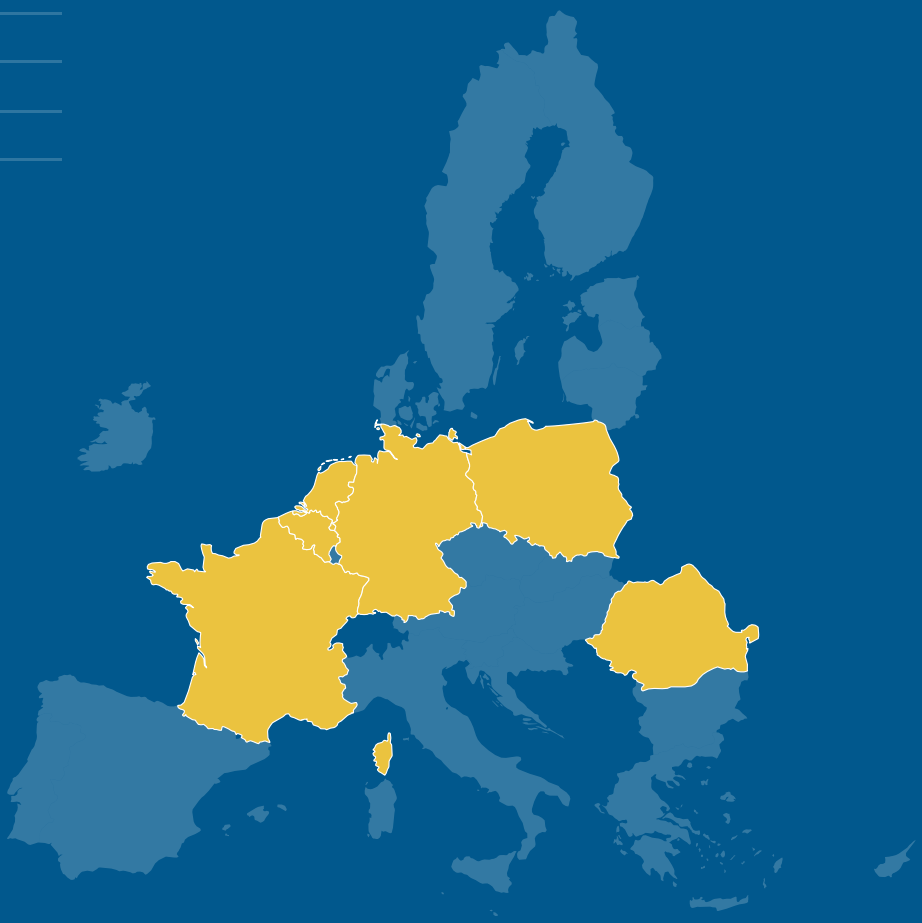
French Republic

Federal Republic of Germany

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Republic of Poland

Romania





COUNTRY PROFILE

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional forces with a one-year voluntary paid military service; call-up suspended.
Legal basis	Coordinated Militia Laws of 1962; Law of 28 February 2007 on active-duty status.
Legal entry into force	General draft ended in 1994 under Art. 1bis; voluntary service law adopted in October 2025.
First implementation	First voluntary intake in September 2026, with 500 places.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Candidates must be Belgian, have completed compulsory education and be no older than 25, with no gender restriction, and pass two days of medical, fitness and psychometric tests and a psychological interview.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Volunteers serve a year as full-time reservists: ten weeks of basic training, then a specialisation in regular units. They earn around €2,000 net a month plus housing, meal vouchers, transport and healthcare, and may then join the reserve, seek a professional contract or return to civilian life.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

On 1 January 2025, the armed forces counted 26,389 active personnel and 6,400 reservists; under Article 183 of the Constitution, the contingent is capped at 30,300 soldiers by the end of 2026, of whom 3,950 are reservists. The first 500 places drew 3,248 applicants.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The programme is not a wartime mobilisation mechanism but a one-year reserve-building initiative organised by the Ministry of Defence. Its primary home-front role is securing critical national infrastructure in times of crisis or heightened security. Recruits then remain reservists.

6 REFORM STATUS

Law approved. Adopted in October 2025 under an emergency procedure. **Reform direction.** Recruitment of at least 14,800 active members, 5,600 reservists and 4,800 civilians over the legislature, with further intakes planned for October 2026 and 2027. **Conditions for compulsory activation.** Reinstating conscription requires amending Article 1bis of the militia laws; there are currently no active registration procedures or operational draft mechanisms.

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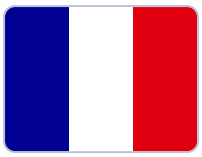
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COUNTRY PROFILE

FRENCH REPUBLIC

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces with expanding reserves and, since 2026, a voluntary ten-month military national service; compulsory call-up is suspended.
Legal basis	Law No. 97-1019 of 28 October 1997; Law No. 2026-791 of 16 August 2026.
First implementation	Call-up suspended by the 1997 reform; first voluntary national-service intake in September 2026.
Competent authority	Ministry of the Armed Forces; reinstating compulsory call-up requires a new law.
Emergency mechanism	General mobilisation by decree adopted in the Council of Ministers; partial mobilisation under the applicable statutory procedures (Code de la défense, Arts. L2141-2, L2141-4).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

The new national service is open on a voluntary basis to French women and men aged 18–25, who sign a non-renewable ten-month contract, beginning after their 18th and before their 26th birthday, and acquire military status; selection considers motivation, skills and operational needs. Civic registration at 16 and the compulsory one-day Journée de mobilisation before 18 are civic obligations, not military service (Code du service national, Arts. L113-1, L114-2).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Service consists of one month of initial military training and nine months in a unit, with missions restricted to French territory, including overseas territories; the inaugural intake, in September 2026, comprised approximately 3,000 volunteers.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The 2024 social report recorded 199,618 military personnel in full-time-equivalent terms and 44,344 first-tier operational reservists, and the National Guard reported 51,961 reservists in the first half of 2026. The 2026 budget envisages 4,400 additional operational-reserve contracts, for a planned total of 52,000, a budgetary target rather than a recruitment outcome.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Defence Code provides for general mobilisation by decree adopted in the Council of Ministers and for partial mobilisation under the applicable statutory procedures, and persons subject to reserve availability obligations may be called up individually or collectively (Code de la défense, Arts. L2141-2, L2141-4, L4231-3–L4231-5). These powers do not reinstate compulsory military service, which would require separate legislation.

6 REFORM STATUS

Law approved. Law No. 2026-791 updated the national service framework. **Reform direction.** The military programming law targets 80,000 voluntary operational reservists by 2030. Planned national-service intakes are 4,000 in 2027 and 10,000 by 2030. **Conditions for compulsory activation.** Compulsory call-up can only be restored by a new law.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Voluntary military service with compulsory registration of men, alongside career soldiers.
Legal basis	Basic Law, Art. 12a(1); Military Service Act (WPflG), as amended by the WDModG of 22 December 2025.
Legal entry into force	Compulsory basic military service was suspended on 1 July 2011 but not abolished; the WDModG has applied since 1 January 2026.
Competent authority	Federal Office for Bundeswehr Personnel Management and Bundeswehr Career Centres.
Emergency mechanism	Full conscription provisions apply automatically in a state of tension or defence (WDModG, Art. 1).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Since January 2026, German citizens born after 31 December 2007 receive an online questionnaire on their willingness and fitness to serve, compulsory for men and voluntary for others; compulsory medical screening of men is scheduled from 1 July 2027. Enlistment remains voluntary and is based on suitability, not on a lottery.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

The New Military Service (Neuer Wehrdienst) lasts at least six months; voluntary conscripts serve six to eleven months, while commitments of twelve months or more are served as temporary-career soldiers. Monthly pay is at least €2,600 gross.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

On 30 September 2026, the Bundeswehr had approximately 186,200 active soldiers, within the statutory growth corridor of 186,000–190,000 set for 2026; around 10,800 were serving under the New Military Service.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

In a state of tension or a state of defence, the full set of conscription provisions, including compulsory basic military service, applies automatically; otherwise, only the registration and screening provisions are in force (WDModG, Art. 1).

6 REFORM STATUS

Law approved. The WDModG was adopted by the Bundestag on 5 December 2025, approved by the Bundesrat on 19 December 2025 and has applied since 1 January 2026.

Conditions for compulsory activation. Outside a state of tension or defence, compulsory service may only be reactivated by a separate Act of Parliament (§ 2a WPflG). If volunteers fall short, the Bundestag may adopt needs-based compulsory service (Bedarfswehrpflicht).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces; conscription remains legally in force, but compulsory attendance is suspended.
Legal basis	Constitution, Article 98; Compulsory Military Service Framework Act (Kaderwet dienstplicht); Conscientious Objection to Military Service Act (Wet gewetensbezwaren militaire dienst).
Legal entry into force	Compulsory attendance was suspended on 1 May 1997; registration was extended to women from 1 January 2020.
First implementation	Conscription operated historically; no new conscripts have been called up since 1997.
Competent authority	Ministry of Defence and the Netherlands Armed Forces.
Emergency mechanism	Compulsory attendance may be reactivated in exceptional circumstances, including war, subject to government action and the applicable legal framework.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Registration for military service applies to Dutch citizens, both men and women, from the year they turn 17. Those registered remain subject to the legal framework for military service, although registration does not automatically entail assessment, selection or call-up. The Netherlands does not conduct routine selection for compulsory service, and personnel are recruited primarily on a voluntary basis; the government could reactivate compulsory attendance if required, subject to the relevant legal procedures.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

The Netherlands relies on voluntary recruitment. The service year programme (Dienjaar) allows participants, generally aged 18–27, to undertake a paid military placement lasting approximately one year, receiving initial training before contributing to an operational unit.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The government aims to expand the defence workforce to approximately 100,000 by 2030, strengthening recruitment and reserve participation without reinstating routine compulsory service.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Kaderwet dienstplicht provides the legal framework for compulsory military service, which could be reactivated in exceptional circumstances, including war.

6 REFORM STATUS

Reform direction. In September 2026, the government announced plans for a new service model (Dienmodel) to expand recruitment and increase defence capacity; the proposal prioritises voluntary participation while considering progressively more obligatory measures, with selective compulsory call-up as a last resort.

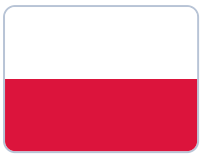
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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF POLAND

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces supplemented by voluntary basic military service (DZSW), territorial military service (WOT) and the active reserve, together with compulsory military qualification of men.
Legal basis	Homeland Defence Act of 11 March 2022.
Legal entry into force	Peacetime call-ups discontinued from 1 January 2010; compulsory basic military service remains in the 2022 Act but is dormant (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 152).
Competent authority	Minister of National Defence; military recruitment centres (WCR) conduct qualification and appointments.
Emergency mechanism	Mobilisation is ordered by the President of the Republic (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 2(16)).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Polish citizens are liable to military service from the age of 18 until the end of the year in which they turn 60, or 63 for non-commissioned officers and officers (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 5). Military qualification is compulsory for men in the calendar year in which they turn 19, and volunteers of both sexes may apply from 18 (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Arts. 59–60).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Voluntary basic military service lasts up to 12 months: basic training of up to 28 days ending with the military oath, followed by specialist training of up to 11 months (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 143). Pay is PLN 6,500 gross per month in 2026, with free board, accommodation and medical care.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

At the end of June 2026, more than 220,000 soldiers were serving, including 155,000 professional soldiers, nearly 39,000 WOT soldiers and more than 14,000 in DZSW.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Mobilisation is ordered by the President of the Republic (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 2(16)). In the event of a threat to state security, mobilisation or war, the Council of Ministers may require all persons aged 18 to 60 to attend military qualification (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Art. 59(10)).

6 REFORM STATUS

Conditions for compulsory activation. Compulsory basic military service may be introduced by a regulation of the President, issued on a motion of the Council of Ministers; it would last nine months, extendable by up to six, for persons found fit and under the age of 35 (Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny, Arts. 152–155).

Reform direction. 2026 was designated the “Year of the Reserves”, and the universal voluntary defence training programme wGotowości runs from 7 March to 21 November 2026. Voluntary reserve training is to rise from up to 1,000 participants in 2026 to 20,000 in 2027 and 40,000 a year from 2028.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

ROMANIA

B DEBATE ON REINTRODUCTION OR EXPANSION, OR REINFORCED VOLUNTARY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional and voluntary military service; compulsory service suspended in peacetime since 1 January 2007.
Legal basis	Law No. 395/2005; Law No. 446/2006 on the preparation of the population for defence, as amended in 2026.
Legal entry into force	Compulsory service suspended on 1 January 2007; Law No. 5/2026 introduced voluntary basic military training.
First implementation	Compulsory service historically operated under Romania's post-1990 defence legislation; the current voluntary training programme was established in 2026.
Competent authority	Ministry of National Defence and Romanian Armed Forces.
Emergency mechanism	Military service may become compulsory for eligible men aged 20–35 upon mobilisation, a state of war or a state of siege.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Romanian citizens aged 18 or over may perform military service. In peacetime, compulsory service is suspended and the Armed Forces operate primarily on a professional and voluntary basis. From 2026, men and women aged 18–35 who have not previously completed military service may voluntarily apply for basic military training of up to four months, subject to selection and medical fitness.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

The voluntary basic military training programme lasts up to four months and is open to men and women aged 18–35; participants are selected following medical and other eligibility assessments and serve as voluntary soldiers during the training period.

4 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Upon mobilisation, a state of war or a state of siege, military service becomes compulsory for eligible men aged 20–35.

5 REFORM STATUS

Law approved. Law No. 5/2026 introduced voluntary basic military training of up to four months for men and women aged 18–35.

Debate. In October 2026, the Ministry of National Defence warned that an alleged conscription notice was fake and confirmed that compulsory military service has not been reinstated.

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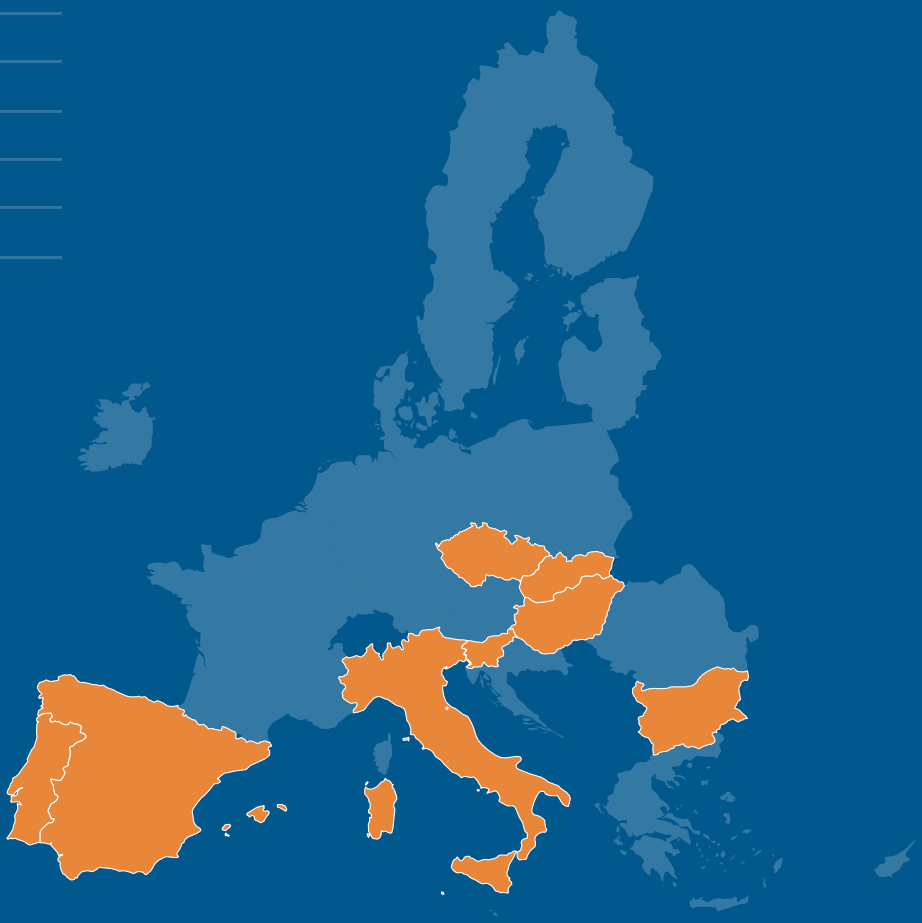
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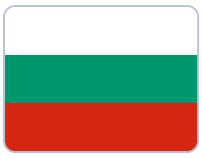
CATEGORY C

PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

8 Member States

Republic of Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Hungary
Italian Republic
Portuguese Republic
Slovak Republic
Republic of Slovenia
Kingdom of Spain





COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces in peacetime, with standby conscription for war or emergencies.
Legal basis	Defence and Armed Forces Act; Article 116 is the key provision allowing conscription to be reintroduced in crisis situations (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 116). Reservists are regulated by the Law on the Reserve of the Armed Forces.
Suspending norm	Amendment to the former Defence and Armed Forces Act, passed by the National Assembly on 31 May 2007, which abolished conscription with effect from 1 January 2008.
Legal entry into force	1 January 2008.
First implementation	1 January 2008.
Competent authority	The President of the Republic, on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, declares general or partial mobilisation (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 19.3).
Emergency mechanism	War, martial law or a state of emergency (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 116).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Bulgarian citizenship is required. The minimum age is 18, both for voluntary service and for conscription in an emergency; the age limit for compulsory conscription in the event of mobilisation has historically been set at 27, although the obligation to serve may be extended up to 45. Compulsory service, if activated, would apply to men, while voluntary service is open to both men and women (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 97.1). Registration and medical assessments are compulsory, and selection would take the form of a general call-up in the event of mobilisation (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Arts. 116, 279). Conscientious objection has been recognised since 1991 (Constitution, Art. 59.2).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

The initial contract for professional military service is for three years. Voluntary reservists receive a monthly salary based on their post and rank, and reservists on active duty are entitled to leave and legal protection of their jobs (Law on the Reserve, Arts. 44–45).

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Bulgarian Armed Forces have 36,950 active personnel and a declared reserve of 3,000. There are no compulsory recruits, and no specific data are available on voluntary participants for 2026.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Mobilisation is ordered by the President of the Republic on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 19.3; Constitution, Art. 100), following a declaration of war, martial law or a state of emergency (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 116).

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Compulsory military service was suspended on 1 January 2008 by an amendment to the former Defence and Armed Forces Act passed on 31 May 2007; the 2009 Act is a later recast of that legislation.

Requirements to reactivate. The law permits its reinstatement only in the event of war, martial law or a state of emergency (Defence and Armed Forces Act, Art. 116).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

CZECH REPUBLIC

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces with compulsory military duty (branná povinnost) retained in law but no routine conscription in peacetime
Legal basis	Act No. 585/2004 (Conscription Act), supplemented by Act No. 222/1999 (Defence of the Czech Republic) and Act No. 45/2016 (Service of Reserve Soldiers).
Suspending norm	Act No. 585/2004 (Conscription Act), in force since 1 January 2005; no routine call-ups in peacetime.
Competent authority	The Government coordinates defence and mobilisation, while Parliament decides on a state of war and certain international defence commitments.
Emergency mechanism	Compulsory service may be activated during a state of national threat or war.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

The military obligation begins on the day after a citizen turns 18 and ends at 60. There is no compulsory registration or recruitment in peacetime. Conscription proceedings include an assessment of medical fitness.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Reservist training limits range from three to ten weeks a year, plus up to 14 days for exceptional exercises; active reservists may receive a recruitment bonus of up to CZK 30,000 for each full year of service and up to CZK 3,000 per day for deployment abroad. Employers must release employees for authorised training and exercises.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Czech Army's recruitment plan aims to increase professional personnel from approximately 25,000 to 30,000 and active reservists to 10,000 by 2030; the planned intake for 2026 is approximately 2,250 recruits.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Under Article 43 of the Constitution, Parliament decides on a state of war and on participation in defensive systems of international organisations of which the Czech Republic is a member.

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. No routine compulsory call-ups have taken place in peacetime since the Conscription Act entered into force on 1 January 2005.

Requirements to reactivate. In a state of national threat or war, the Government sets mobilisation requirements and the number of citizens to be called up.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

HUNGARY

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces, the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF), with a volunteer reserve; by statute, the HDF rests on volunteerism in peacetime and on volunteerism and general conscription in a state of war (Act CXL of 2021, s. 58(1)).
Legal basis	Fundamental Law, Article XXXI; cardinal Act CXL of 2021 on National Defence, in force since 1 November 2022.
Suspending norm	Act CIV of 2004 amended Article 70/H of the then Constitution with effect from 1 January 2005, so that adult men became liable to military service only in a state of emergency or of preventive defence; conscription thus ceased in peacetime.
Emergency mechanism	Compulsory military service applies only in a state of war (Fundamental Law of Hungary, Art. XXXI).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

The Fundamental Law makes national defence a duty of all citizens, requires a volunteer reserve system and limits compulsory military service for adult male citizens domiciled in Hungary to a state of war (Fundamental Law of Hungary, Art. XXXI).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

There is no compulsory service in peacetime; the main voluntary route is the reserve, with two- to five-year contracts, basic training within the first year and call-ups of up to six months of actual service every three years (minimum seven days a year). Reservists earn HUF 24,000–36,000 a day while serving, plus a HUF 150,000 joining fee and a HUF 50,000 monthly availability fee (Ministry of Defence Decree 13/2024, ss. 9(1), 11(1), 23(1), 24(2), 25(1), 44(1), 45(1) and Annex 1).

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

By law, the reserve comprises volunteer reservists, defence employees who have volunteered for wartime service, and trained and untrained liable men (Act CXL of 2021, s. 71(2)).

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The National Assembly may declare a state of war by a two-thirds majority of all Members in the event of war, armed attack or a collective defence commitment (Fundamental Law of Hungary, Art. 49).

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Conscription has been suspended in peacetime only, since 1 January 2005.

Requirements to reactivate. A state of war, declared by a two-thirds vote; peacetime conscription would require an amendment to the Fundamental Law, also by a two-thirds majority.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

ITALIAN REPUBLIC

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional, volunteer-based armed forces; conscription suspended since 1 January 2005.
Legal basis	Constitution, Art. 52; Legislative Decree No. 66/2010, Military Code (possible reinstatement); Law No. 380/1999 (women's voluntary service); Law No. 772/1972 (conscientious objection).
Suspending norm	Law No. 226/2004, in force since September 2004; the suspension took effect on 1 January 2005.
Competent authority	Government and Ministry of Defence; reinstatement by presidential decree.
Emergency mechanism	Reinstatement in a state of war, national emergency or serious international crisis.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Initial fixed-term volunteers (VFI) are recruited through competitive selection between the ages of 18 and 24, subject to citizenship, medical, psychological and aptitude requirements, and recruitment is gender-neutral. Conscription lists continue to be updated in case military service is reinstated. Citizens and resident foreign nationals may also join the voluntary, non-armed Civil Service. In an exceptional conscription scenario, members of the civilian police forces and the National Fire Brigade would be excluded from call-up.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Volunteers train first at the Volunteer Training Regiments (RAV). VFI personnel normally serve for three years, with a possible one-year extension, and after 24 months may compete for three-year fixed-term (VFT) status, which can lead to permanent service. Volunteers who complete a three-year term receive approximately €1,290 per month.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Army, Navy, Air Force and Carabinieri make up a total force of approximately 270,000 personnel. Legislative Decree No. 58 of 2 April 2026 provides for a State Auxiliary Reserve of up to 10,000 volunteers.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Under Article 78 of the Constitution, Parliament decides on a state of war and grants the Government the necessary powers; under Article 87, the President declares it.

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Since 1 January 2005, under Law No. 226/2004.

Requirements to reactivate. Reinstatement by presidential decree, following a resolution of the Council of Ministers, during a state of war, a national emergency or a serious international crisis, if volunteer and eligible former personnel are insufficient (Decreto legislativo n. 66/2010, Art. 1929).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Voluntary military service in peacetime; National Defence Day remains compulsory.
Legal basis	Law No. 174/99 (Military Service Act); Organic Law No. 3/99; Law No. 29/82 and Organic Law No. 2/2021, which set the organisational framework of the Armed Forces.
Suspending norm	Law No. 174/99 (Military Service Act); conscription suspended in 2004.
Legal entry into force	Organic Law No. 2/2021 entered into force on 10 August 2021.
Competent authority	Ministry of National Defence (recruitment); President, Government and Assembly under their constitutional powers.
Emergency mechanism	Constitutional provisions for states of emergency, siege and war, and for exceptional military recruitment and mobilisation.

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Portuguese citizens are subject to military obligations from 1 January of the year they turn 18 until 31 December of the year they turn 35. National Defence Day is compulsory regardless of gender, while military service itself is voluntary in peacetime, and candidates undergo medical and psychological assessments. Conscientious objectors may qualify for alternative civilian service.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Voluntary service is offered under two main arrangements: the Voluntary Service Regime, generally lasting 12 months, and the Contract Service Regime, normally lasting two to six years.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

In April 2026, the Minister of National Defence reported a force of 24,517 military personnel. The aim is to reach 32,000 by 2028. Those who complete military service enter the availability reserve for six years after leaving active service.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Assembly of the Republic authorises the President to declare war and make peace. Mobilisation may be military or civilian, general or partial, and is ordered by the Government through a decree-law adopted in the Council of Ministers.

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Compulsory conscription was suspended in 2004, while National Defence Day remains compulsory. Registration ceased to be compulsory from 2010.

Requirements to reactivate. The National Defence Law provides for exceptional military recruitment and mobilisation in states of emergency, siege and war.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces in peacetime, with a latent framework for compulsory conscription in the event of a crisis or war.
Legal basis	Act No. 570/2005 on Defence Obligations; Constitutional Act No. 227/2002 on State Security in Times of War and Emergency.
Suspending norm	Act No. 570/2005 on Defence Obligations, in force since 1 January 2006.
Competent authority	The President of the Republic, on the Government's proposal.
Emergency mechanism	Conscription may be reinstated in the event of war or an emergency that cannot be managed by the professional armed forces (Constitutional Act No. 227/2002, Art. 1).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Slovak citizenship is required (Act No. 570/2005, Art. 2.1). The minimum age for voluntary and professional service is 18 (Act No. 346/2005, Art. 13), while the defence obligation applicable in an emergency begins at 19 and continues until 55; it applies to men, whereas voluntary service is open to both men and women (Act No. 570/2005, Art. 5). In peacetime, a register of citizens subject to the defence obligation is kept by the district offices (Act No. 570/2005, Art. 2.1.a), and medical assessments of fitness are mandatory (Act No. 570/2005, Art. 2.1.b). In an emergency, selection would take the form of a general call-up by year of birth (Act No. 570/2005, Art. 10). Conscientious objection is recognised and leads to alternative, unarmed service (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Art. 25.2).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Compulsory service does not apply in peacetime. Voluntary and professional service is usually contracted for three to six years, with possible extensions (Act No. 346/2005, Art. 21). Reservists called up for training are protected in their employment, and the State reimburses employers for wage costs.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Armed Forces have approximately 15,850 active personnel. Recruitment is voluntary, with 8,700 voluntary participants; no data are available on the size of the declared reserve.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Mobilisation is ordered by the President of the Republic on the Government's recommendation, in the event of war, a state of emergency or a direct threat that the professional forces cannot counter (Constitutional Act No. 227/2002, Art. 1).

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Conscription has not applied in peacetime since Act No. 570/2005 entered into force on 1 January 2006.

Requirements to reactivate. War or an emergency beyond the capacity of the professional forces (Constitutional Act No. 227/2002, Art. 1).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces in peacetime, with reserve conscription for wartime.
Legal basis	Military Service Act, which regulates military service in peace and war; voluntary service is governed by the Regulations on Voluntary Military Service.
Suspending norm	Military Service Act, Art. 62a: peacetime conscription ended on 31 December 2003 (Military Service Act, Art. 62a).
First implementation	January 2004.
Competent authority	The National Assembly declares a state of war or a state of emergency on the proposal of the Government (Constitution, Art. 92).
Emergency mechanism	Conscription may be reinstated in the event of war or an imminent threat (Military Service Act, Art. 22.3).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Slovenian citizenship is required, and voluntary service is open to those aged 18 to 30 (Regulations on Voluntary Military Service, Art. 3.1). Should conscription be reinstated, the call-up would apply to those turning 19 in the calendar year, or at 18 at their own request (Regulations on Voluntary Military Service, Art. 1). It would apply to men, by general call-up by year of birth; the Ministry of Defence keeps a register of conscripts, and medical assessments are carried out. Conscientious objection has been recognised since 1991 (Constitution, Art. 123).

3 SERVICE DESIGN

Voluntary military service lasts 13 weeks, five of basic training and the remainder of specialised training, in units of the Slovenian Armed Forces. Volunteers receive financial compensation, voluntary service is considered a temporary employment relationship, and volunteers may join the professional force afterwards.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

The Slovenian Armed Forces have 7,250 active personnel and a declared reserve of 950. There are no compulsory recruits, recruitment is voluntary, and no data are available on voluntary participants.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Parliament declares a state of war or a state of emergency, while the Government and the Ministry of Defence implement the mobilisation plans, in the event of war, a state of emergency or a direct and imminent threat (Constitution, Art. 92).

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Compulsory military service has been suspended since 2003; peacetime conscription officially ended on 31 December 2003 (Military Service Act, Art. 62a).

Requirements to reactivate. The law provides for its reinstatement in the event of war or an imminent threat (Military Service Act, Art. 22.3).

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COUNTRY PROFILE

KINGDOM OF SPAIN

C PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH COMPULSORY SERVICE SUSPENDED

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Professional armed forces; an exceptional compulsory-reservist mechanism is retained.
Legal basis	Constitution, Art. 30; Royal Decree 247/2001; Organic Law 5/2005; Law 39/2007; Law 8/2006.
Suspending norm	Royal Decree 247/2001 suspended compulsory service from 31 December 2001.
Legal entry into force	Royal Decree 247/2001 entered into force on 11 March 2001, the day after its publication.
First implementation	Suspension effective on 31 December 2001; fully professional armed forces from 1 January 2002.
Competent authority	Council of Ministers, with prior authorisation by the Congress of Deputies for compulsory reservists.
Emergency mechanism	After Congress authorisation, the Government may declare compulsory reservists among Spaniards aged 19–25 (Law 39/2007, Arts. 136–140).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Ordinary recruitment is voluntary. After parliamentary authorisation, the Government may declare compulsory reservists among Spaniards turning 19 to 25 that year, applying objective birth-year criteria to all of them or to a specified number. Conscientious objectors need no separate recognition procedure and may only be assigned to general-interest organisations that do not require the use of weapons (Law 39/2007, Art. 138); incorporation is subject to medical, psychological, physical and aptitude assessment.

3 SERVICE DESIGN

There is no compulsory peacetime service. Voluntary reservists may be activated for training of up to 30 days a year or for authorised service; the 2026 call offered 500 new voluntary-reservist places.

4 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

Special-availability reservists are mostly former long-term troops who enter that status at 45 and remain available until 65. Defence planning aims for 127,500 active military personnel by 2029, and the 2026 personnel plan provides 11,913 new military places.

5 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Professional forces come first, then the exceptional incorporation of voluntary and special-availability reservists by the Council of Ministers and, if insufficient, compulsory reservists after Congress authorisation (Law 39/2007, Arts. 136–140).

6 SUSPENSION AND REACTIVATION

Suspension. Compulsory military service (the “mili”) was suspended from 31 December 2001, and Organic Law 13/1991, which governed it, was repealed by Organic Law 5/2005. **Requirements to reactivate.** Only compulsory reservists, after Congress authorisation.

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D

CATEGORY D

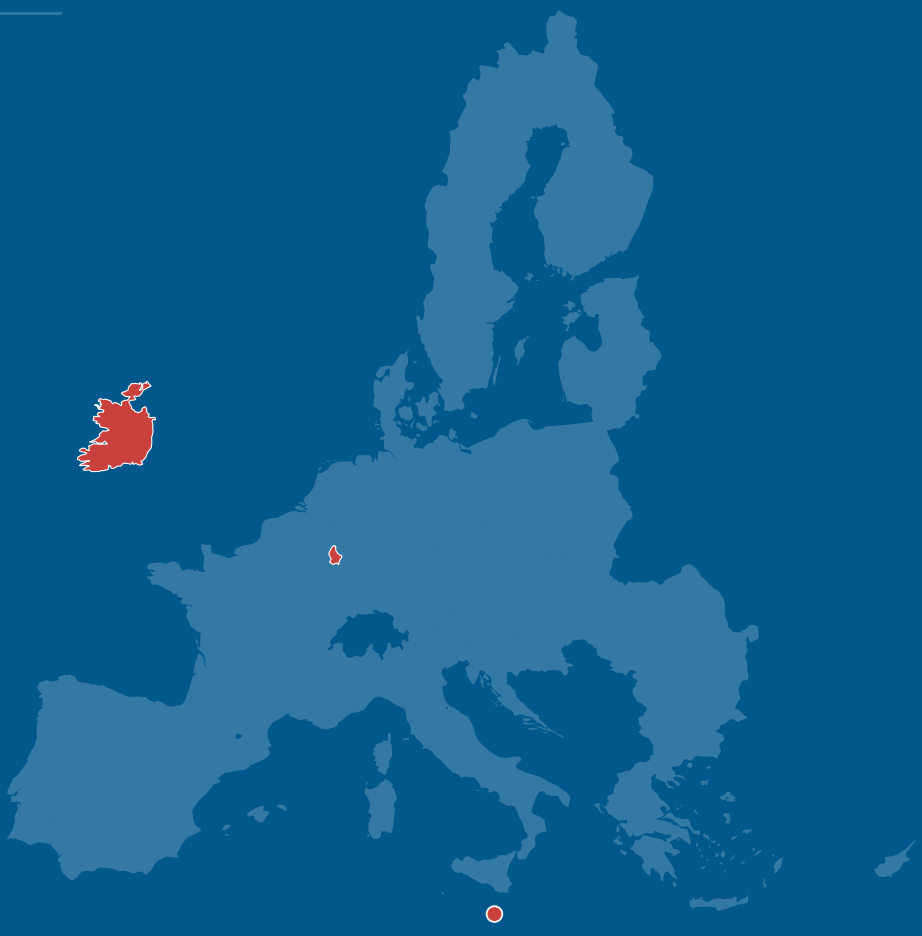
PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH NO RECENT TRADITION OF COMPULSORY SERVICE

3 Member States

Ireland

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Republic of Malta





COUNTRY PROFILE

IRELAND

D PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH NO RECENT TRADITION OF COMPULSORY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	All-volunteer professional force, the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), with army, naval and air components, supported by a part-time volunteer Reserve Defence Force (RDF); there is no compulsory military service.
Legal basis	The Constitution vests the right to raise armed forces exclusively in the Oireachtas and supreme command in the President; the Defence Act 1954 empowers the Government to raise and maintain the Defence Forces.
Legal entry into force	The Defence Act 1954 has been in force since 1 January 1955.
Competent authority	The Government exercises command of the Defence Forces, under the direction of the President, through the Minister for Defence.
Emergency mechanism	State of emergency declared by Government order; Defence Forces placed on active service and reservists called out by proclamation.

2 ACCESS TO THE ARMED FORCES

Entry is voluntary, competitive and for a fixed period. Applicants for General Service and cadetships must be at least 18 and under 39 on the closing date for applications. Irish citizens, EEA nationals, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are eligible if ordinarily resident in Ireland; persons discharged from any armed force for misconduct or medical unfitness, or convicted of a serious offence, are excluded. Selection comprises psychometric tests, a fitness test and interview, a medical examination, Garda vetting and security clearance, which alone may take from six weeks to nine months.

3 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

On 31 March 2026, the PDF numbered 7,778 personnel, against an establishment of 9,739; the Government's target under Level of Ambition 2 is 11,500. In 2025, 790 personnel were inducted, the highest figure in 20 years; the target for 2026 is 850 inductions. The RDF comprises the First Line Reserve, made up of former PDF members, and the Second Line Reserve (Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve), with an establishment of 4,069. On 31 August 2024, the Second Line Reserve had an effective strength of 1,553 and the First Line Reserve 167.

4 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

War may not be declared without the assent of Dáil Éireann. The Government may declare a state of emergency by order, which must be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas; during an emergency, it may place the Defence Forces on active service and, by proclamation, call out reservists on permanent service. Certain reservists may also be called out when defence operations are in preparation or in progress, or in aid of the civil power (Defence Act 1954, ss. 4, 5, 87, 88, 90).

5 DEFENCE MODEL

Militarily non-aligned. Article 29.4.9° of the Constitution prevents Ireland from joining an EU common defence under Article 42 TEU.

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COUNTRY PROFILE

GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

D PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH NO RECENT TRADITION OF COMPULSORY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	Fully volunteer army under civilian control since compulsory military service was abolished in 1967 (Loi du 29 juin 1967, Arts. 2–3).
Legal basis	Law of 29 June 1967 abolishing compulsory military service; Grand-Ducal Regulation of 22 September 1967 on the status of army volunteers.

2 ACCESS TO THE ARMED FORCES

Because service is voluntary, requirements are more specific than in other European cases. Besides common conditions such as Luxembourg nationality and being 18 on the day of enlistment, candidates must have a "considerable knowledge of the three administrative languages", German, French and Luxembourgish. Selection is competitive: candidates are ranked by their results in computer-based tests, military physical fitness tests, medical and dental examinations, a psychological profile and a motivational interview, and selected according to the number of places available.

3 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

Given the country's size, the Luxembourg Army has only around 1,230 active members, 12% of them women. Owing to its small size, there is currently no reserve component.

4 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

Mobilisation arrangements rely on joint command structures and integrated bilateral arrangements rather than general popular mobilisation, such as the binational medium combat reconnaissance battalion built with Belgium.

5 DEFENCE MODEL

Collective security. Because of its small size and military force, the country relies heavily on international integration rather than on a large national army. Its defence model rests on collective security through NATO and the European Union, together with a specialised, fully volunteer national force.

SOURCES

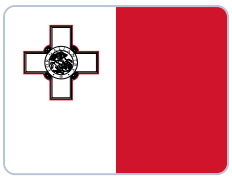
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COUNTRY PROFILE

REPUBLIC OF MALTA

D PROFESSIONAL FORCES WITH NO RECENT TRADITION OF COMPULSORY SERVICE

1 LEGAL STATUS

FIELD	INFORMATION
Current model	All-volunteer professional force, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM), supported by a small Volunteer Reserve Force (VRF); there is no compulsory military service and therefore no exemptions or alternative service.
Legal basis	Malta Armed Forces Act (Cap. 220), which authorises the President to raise and maintain an armed force "by voluntary enlistment" (Malta Armed Forces Act, Art. 3(1)).
Legal entry into force	1970.
Competent authority	The ministry responsible for home affairs and national security acts as the Ministry of Defence; defence policy is determined by Cabinet and overseen by Parliament.
Emergency mechanism	If national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen, the President may retain regular-force members, call out reserves and embody the territorial force (Malta Armed Forces Act, Arts. 10, 26, 32).

2 ACCESS TO THE ARMED FORCES

The 2025 call for regular-force soldiers required applicants to be Maltese citizens, aged 18 by 31 December 2025 and under 30 on 30 April 2026, among other conditions. Selection comprises a physical efficiency test, an interview, a military test and a medical examination, and vacancies are filled in order of merit.

3 PERSONNEL AND RESERVES

Selected candidates enlist as Gunner Recruits and complete basic training of up to five months, with a salary of €16,915 a year during training and €20,225 thereafter. In 2022, the AFM comprised 1,452 soldiers and 153 officers, supported by 194 volunteer reservists and 54 civilians. VRF recruitment is voluntary.

4 MOBILISATION ARRANGEMENTS

If national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen, the President may retain in service regular-force members due for transfer to the reserve, call out any reserve force on permanent service and embody the territorial force; each order must be communicated forthwith to the House of Representatives. (Malta Armed Forces Act, Arts. 10, 26, 32–34). VRF reservists may be called out by the Commander only with their consent.

5 DEFENCE MODEL

Neutral and non-aligned. Malta declared its neutrality in 1981 and enshrined it in the Constitution in 1987: Article 1(3) defines Malta as a neutral state that refuses to participate in any military alliance. It participates in the Common Security and Defence Policy on the basis of a declaration annexed to its Accession Treaty, but has remained outside PESCO. Malta is not a NATO member, but cooperates with it through the Partnership for Peace.

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CONCLUSION

Readiness Is Not Declared, It Is Demonstrated

This chapter dispels two comfortable illusions. The first is that small professional forces deployed by choice, the post-Gulf War model, still suffice on a continent where high-intensity war is again conceivable. Ukraine has shown how much personnel, munitions and time such a war consumes. The second is that Europe can simply conscript its way out of the problem. Conscripts without instructors, equipment and command structures are entries on a register, not deterrence.

The 27 profiles show a continent adjusting unevenly, along the path of least political resistance. Where the threat feels proximate, compulsory service is operating and being redesigned. Elsewhere, governments favour voluntary schemes, mandatory registration and powers to compel that have been dormant for well over a decade. The gap lies between what the law allows and what a state could field: legal authority to mobilise is not capacity to mobilise.

Three conclusions follow.

> **1. Compulsion is a national choice, within a shared legal order.** National security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State (Article 4(2) TEU), and the Union acts only within the competences conferred on it (Article 5(2) TEU). The Court of Justice has held that a state's decision to ensure part of its defence through compulsory service falls outside Union law, although military organisation is not immune from it in every respect. An EU-imposed conscription model would have no basis in the Treaties, and this chapter does not argue for one.

> **2. The Union can seek comparability, not uniformity.** Article 42(7) TEU obliges Member States to assist, by all means in their power, a Member State that is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, consistently with NATO commitments and respecting the specific character of certain Member States' policies. It does not oblige anyone to field reserves for others. The strategic inference is ours: that commitment is only as credible as the national capacities behind it. The Treaties already provide the channel, since Member States undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities (Article 42(3) TEU), and the annual defence readiness report endorsed by the European Council in October 2025 is its natural venue. Within it, voluntary aggregate reporting should separate three categories that are routinely conflated: personnel legally registered in a reserve; personnel effectively trained; and personnel assigned to units and, where applicable, equipped and deployable. Only the third is readiness.

> **3. Legitimacy is a condition of readiness.** Union law does not prescribe the terms of national service, and the Charter binds Member States only when they implement Union law (Article 51(1)). Yet equality between women and men is a value the Union professes (Article 2 TEU). Compulsory service is sustainable only if citizens perceive its burdens as fairly distributed and its obligations as legitimate.

Deterrence rests not on what a statute permits but on what a state could field, trained and equipped, on the day the call goes out. Europe can leave the design of conscription to its capitals. It cannot leave to chance the evidence of readiness.

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