



France launches new voluntary national military service: 3,000 young people in the Armed Forces, target of 50,000 by 2035

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France officially launches the new **Service national**, the voluntary national military service intended for young French people between 18 and 25 years old. The first inductions began between the end of August and the beginning of September 2026 and will involve, in the initial phase, approximately **3,000 volunteers**, assigned to the Army, Navy, Air and Space Force and various services of the Ministry of Armed Forces.

Ten months in uniform

The service has a total duration of **ten months**. The first month is dedicated to initial military training, after which volunteers are assigned to units and perform operational, technical or support assignments for nine more months alongside professional military personnel.

Participants acquire **military status** in all respects, wear the uniform and receive a minimum salary of approximately **800 euros gross per month**, to which additional allowances may be added. Food, accommodation and equipment are provided by the military administration and a 75% reduction on national rail connections is provided.

The program is open to men and women of French nationality between 18 and 25 years old, but the structure provided by the ministry assigns approximately 80% of positions to the age group between **18 and 19 years old**, while the remaining 20% is intended for volunteers between 20 and 25 years old. Selection takes into account motivation, skills and especially the needs of the Armed Forces.

From infantry to cyber defense

Not all volunteers will be assigned to strictly combat roles. The French Armed Forces have identified three broad employment categories: operational activities, unit support and specialist assignments.

In the Army, for example, positions are available in infantry units, engineering and other operational units, but also in logistics and services. Other young people may be employed in technical, IT, administrative, infrastructural or support sectors, depending on qualifications already possessed. The Armée de Terre alone provides **1,800 positions in 2026**, with the goal of rising to 4,000 in 2027.

The principle is to integrate young people directly into units alongside permanent service personnel and reserves, avoiding the creation of parallel structures intended exclusively for volunteers.

No foreign missions

A particularly important point concerns operational deployment. Young people from the Service national may be used **exclusively on French territory**, both in metropolitan France and in overseas territories.

They therefore cannot be sent on external operations or deployed to war theaters.

The stated objective is rather to contribute to the protection of national territory, support the daily functioning of the Armed Forces and free professional personnel for other tasks.

After ten months, five years in reserve availability

The program also has a long-term function. After ten months, participants will enter the **operational reserve of availability (RO2)** for five years, as is the case for former military personnel.

In this way Paris aims not only to temporarily increase manpower, but also to create over the years a growing pool of citizens with military training already acquired and potentially callable in case of necessity.

It is one of the central elements of the new French model, based on a combination between professional forces, an increasingly numerous reserve and the new national service.

From 3,000 to 50,000 volunteers per year

The projected numbers show that the first class of 2026 represents only the beginning.

It starts with approximately **3,000 young people in 2026**, to increase progressively to **10,000 inductions each year in 2030** and reach, according to the ambition indicated by Macron, **50,000 annual volunteers by 2035**.

The French president has inserted the project into a broader transformation of the military instrument. Alongside the professional army, Paris intends to bring the operational reserve from current levels to approximately **80,000 men and women by 2030**, gradually supplementing it with the force generated by the new national service.

The project will therefore require new infrastructure, accommodation and especially military personnel tasked with training and commanding future classes of volunteers.

It is not a return to conscription. But the possibility remains on the table

For now the French government has been very clear: the new Service national **does not represent the restoration of mandatory conscription** abolished in the Nineties.

The system is born as military, voluntary and selective.

Macron, however, in presenting the project had introduced a significant clause: **in case of serious crisis**, Parliament could authorize recourse also to non-volunteer young people whose

skills have been identified during the *Journée de mobilisation*. In such an exceptional situation, the service could therefore assume mandatory character.

It is an element that places the French decision in the broader process of strengthening mobilization capacity that is affecting numerous European countries.

With the return of the Service national, Paris thus chooses a middle path: **no immediate restoration of the old mass conscription, but the progressive creation of a new military component formed by young volunteers**, designed to increase the depth of the French military instrument and expand the reserve pool.