

Germany, the return to compulsory military service becomes law. Women and non-binary people excluded. Here's how it works

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Germany takes a historic step: after years of political debate and international pressure, the federal government has approved a new model of **military service**, which will come into effect **from January 1, 2026**. It is a hybrid system, based on volunteering but with the possibility of introducing the obligation if the necessary numbers to strengthen the Bundeswehr are not reached.

The plan will involve **about 700,000 young people** born in 2008 or later, who will receive an official communication. Women will also be contacted, albeit without any obligation to respond.

The announcement came from **Jens Spahn**, president of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, who described the reform as the start of a “modern military service”:

> *"We will have a greater commitment to voluntary service. We want to establish a binding growth path in the law, with a semi-annual reporting obligation to the Bundestag. Society must always know where we stand in building our defensive capabilities."*

According to the schedule, **in a month the draft will officially become operational**, albeit initially on a voluntary basis: each enlisted volunteer will receive a basic compensation of **2,600 euros gross per month, equivalent to about 2,000 euros net**.

What happens if the number of volunteers is not reached

Federal Defense Minister **Boris Pistorius** emphasized that Europe looks to Germany not only for economic and material resources but also for human contribution.

On the advice of military leaders, a growth path with specific objectives has been defined, directly included in the law and monitored by the Ministry of Defense through a semi-annual report to the **Bundestag.** The set goal is based on commitments made within NATO and foresees a total force of about **260,000 active service soldiers** (with a target range between 255,000 and 270,000 units) and about **200,000 reservists**.

Therefore, it will be essential to increase the armed forces personnel, given that today the Bundeswehr has **182,000 active service military personnel** and about **49,000 reservists**.

But what will happen if the volunteers are not enough?

If the numbers are not reached, the compulsory form of military service will be implemented. The draft will not be used, except as a last resort.

Pistorius explained that, before recruiting new mandatory conscripts, strict **exclusion** criteria will be applied, for example:

- **Presence of two siblings already in military service**
- **Belonging to the police forces**
- **Volunteers already enlisted in civil protection**
- **Recognized conscientious objectors**
- **Women and non-binary people**

Only after exhausting all these criteria can a random selection be resorted to, **considered “the last option.”**

How the new model was born

The key elements of the reform were already known:

- the service remains **voluntary**, as requested by Minister Pistorius;
- **All men will be formally subject to the draft obligation**, which will only be activated if necessary, i.e., if voluntary service does not guarantee the number of recruits required by the armed forces.

The Ministry of Defense expects that **the first effective recruits can be enlisted from July 2027**.

Those born in 2008 will be the first affected.

Mandatory questionnaire from 2026

One of the pillars of the new system is the **online questionnaire** that all men will have to complete starting in 2026, including information on:

- **Health status**
- **Physical fitness**
- **Level of education**
- **Availability for service**

Women and non-binary people can instead participate voluntarily in the completion.

The questionnaire will serve to make an initial assessment of the candidates and verify who might be suitable for armed or civil service.

Why Germany returns to the draft

The CDU/CSU has secured the definition of a binding growth path for military personnel until **2035**, based on commitments made with NATO.

If these objectives are not met, the law allows for the gradual return of compulsory military service.

The principle remains that of **voluntariness**, particularly supported by the SPD. But, if this approach is not sufficient, the new model provides for the possibility of randomly recalling candidates.

The first generation required to participate in the mandatory visit — if necessary — will be those **born from 2008 onwards**.

Conclusions

The draft reform marks a profound change in German defense policy. In a complex international context, **Berlin aims to strengthen the Bundeswehr**, increasing personnel and ensuring greater military response capability.

The hybrid model, voluntary but with the possibility of obligation, **represents a compromise solution between the needs of national security and the German tradition of protecting individual freedoms**.

2026 will be the decisive year: Germany will officially return to discussing **military service**, and hundreds of thousands of young people will be called to participate in this new course.

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