Greece, conscription reform from 2026: more training and stricter rules

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Athens – Greece has approved a comprehensive reform of the conscription system and the training of recruits, included in the "Roadmap for the Transition of the Armed Forces to the New Era" package. The new framework redesigns the **duration and quality of training**, restricts some **deferral windows for study**, tightens controls on **exemptions for health reasons**, and significantly affects the discipline for **Greeks residing abroad**.

Longer training and "Army first" model

One of the most significant changes concerns the organization of conscription: **conscription will no longer ordinarily involve the Navy and Air Force**, but will be **focused on the Army**, with limited exceptions for very specific technical profiles (e.g., aeronautical mechanics, maritime, etc.).

On the training front, the approach shifts to a more structured path:

- **10 weeks of basic training** (with simulators and modules also related to drones and technologies),
- followed by further specialized and operational training in high-readiness units.

The framework confirms a **standard duration of 12 months**, but maintains/introduces a **reduced duration of 9 months** for categories and destinations considered priorities. In particular:

- **9 months** for those enlisting “as first called” immediately after high school,
- and **9 months** for those serving in high-demand areas or units (such as border regions and specific units indicated by the Ministry).

In parallel, the idea of an initial period in high-readiness units is reinforced, with possible transfers closer to residence only after a few months of service.

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Deferrals for study: reduced age limit

Study-related deferrals remain, but with a clear trend: **less time margin**. An example cited in the reform summaries is the reduction of deferral up to **25 years** for four-year university courses.

The political message is explicit: to avoid excessively long deferrals and encourage fulfilling the obligation at an age closer to the educational path.

Greeks abroad: attention to definitions, while tightening on “medical waivers”

For the diaspora, the known legal basis remains that of the “permanent resident abroad,” which generally relies on criteria such as:

- **11 years** of continuous residence abroad, or
- **7 years** of continuous residence and work abroad.

The reform, however, also aims to **tighten and make more controllable** the requirements and procedures (documentation, conditions for maintaining status, and impact of stays in Greece). It is a delicate point because, if applied rigidly, it can affect those alternating periods abroad and extended stays in the homeland (family, work, temporary returns).

The system of exemptions for health reasons is **tightened**. The declared goal is to reduce abuses and make the process more traceable and uniform, especially on more controversial assessments.

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Buyout: higher threshold

Another symbolic change is the tougher stance on early “exits”:

- the age to access the **buyout** is moved **further forward** (in the lines presented by the Ministry: up to **40 years**),

- with a revision of the economic parameters as well.

The package also includes a measure to reduce the pool of defaulters: **temporary incentives** are provided for those who return and regularize their position by a set deadline (in institutional communications: until **December 31, 2027**).

Why this reform matters

The paradigm shift is twofold: on one hand, **more training and greater standardization**, on the other, **less ambiguity** on deferrals, eligibility, and exceptions. For those living outside Greece, the central issue is understanding **how the foreign residence criteria will be applied** and **which stays** in Greece might jeopardize the status.

News link: https://www.mod.mil.gr/en/ministry-of-national-defence-bill-roadmap-for-the-transition-of/