

Information

from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

Annual Report 2025 (67th Report)

Table of contents

	Page
Foreword	6
The year under review in brief.....	7
1. Alliance and operations	9
Troop commitments.....	9
Protecting the alliance on NATO’s eastern flank	9
Lithuania	9
Poland	11
International crisis management	11
Iraq and Jordan.....	11
Lebanon.....	12
Kosovo.....	12
Financial	13
Voting in the Bundestag election.....	13
2. The Bundeswehr’s financial resourcing	14
3. New military service	15
4. Personnel.....	17
Personnel budget developments	17
Personnel situation.....	17
Personnel and application processing.....	18
Personnel recruitment	19
Public relations and information activities.....	19
Applications.....	21
Digitalisation of the application and scheduling process.....	22
Advice and counselling in the careers centres.....	22
Sustainable recruitment.....	23
Reinstatements and lateral entry.....	23
Personnel retention	25
Re-enlistment.....	25
Transfer to career soldier status.....	25
Civilian initial and follow-on occupational training.....	25
Bonuses	26
Higher education.....	26
Internal labour market	27
Period of service reduction.....	27
Postponement of retirement.....	28
Military performance evaluation system	28
Promotions.....	30
Security clearance.....	31
5. Voluntary military service	33
6. Reserves	34
Home defence forces	36
Assurance of livelihood and other benefits.....	37
7. Women in the armed forces.....	38

8.	Matériel	40
	Clothing and personal equipment	40
	Drones	42
	Digitalisation of Land-based Operations (D-LBO)	43
9.	Bureaucracy and efficiency	43
	Procurement.....	45
	Process management.....	45
10.	Infrastructure.....	47
11.	Leadership development and civic education.....	51
	Camaraderie.....	52
	Initial training	52
	Violation of the free democratic basic order.....	53
	Offences against sexual self-determination	56
	Paratroopers.....	58
	Secondary employment in the Medical Service.....	58
	Military participation.....	59
	Lifesaving acts and acts to help others	59
	Accidents	60
12.	Administration of justice and legal offences	60
	Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts and Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney	60
	Processing Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters.....	61
	De facto military service.....	61
	Moral harassment	62
	Alcohol	62
	Ammunition and weapons losses.....	63
	Crimes against the Bundeswehr.....	63
13.	Compatibility of family and duty	64
	Commuter issues.....	64
	Family-friendly assignment planning	64
	Flexible working time models and conditions.....	65
	Childcare.....	65
	Family support.....	66
	Preparing for national and alliance defence.....	67
14.	Diversity.....	67
15.	Health	68
	Medical treatment	68
	Paramedical personnel skills preservation.....	69
	Disablement pension.....	70
	Mission-related injury.....	71
	Suicide	71
16.	Welfare	72
	Veterans Day	72

Military chaplaincy.....	72
Financial	73
MWR food service.....	75
Sport	76
17. Cases and petitions: Statistical overviews	77
18. Visits, meetings and talks by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces	84
19. Legal basis of the office, duties and tasks of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and servicewomen and servicemen’s right of petition	84
20. Organisational chart of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces	92

Foreword

“As an auxiliary organ of the German Bundestag, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces performs parliamentary oversight duties and submits a written general report to the Bundestag for each calendar year (cf. §§ 1 (1) and 2 (1) of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces Act).”

I was elected to this office by the German Bundestag on 21 May 2025, and thus accepted it with gratitude, respect and a healthy portion of humility, and I will endeavour to execute it with my full commitment and strength. Following 20 years as a member of the German Bundestag’s Defence Committee, it is a special honour for me to now represent our servicewomen and men as their ombudsman.

My predecessor, Dr Eva Högl, was simply outstanding during her time in office, for which, and for the collegial handover of the position, I would like to thank her warmly. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is a special institution with incredible employees, whom I would like to expressly thank for their swift and trusting acceptance of my person and their consistently professional and meticulous work. The processing of more than 4,000 cases in the 2025 year under review exemplifies their impressive commitment.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces protects the rights of service personnel and supports parliament in its monitoring of the armed forces. Furthermore, I also see myself as a spokesperson for our servicewomen and men to voice their concerns to parliament and the general public, and at the same time as a driving force for political action – with the goal of further strengthening leadership development and civic education, and further improving the operational readiness and service conditions of our armed forces personnel.

The security policy situation has changed fundamentally, and Germany is now confronted with a real and immediate threat, with alliances once thought to be secure now subject to change. In such times society both puts its trust in and places extraordinary expectations on the performance of our women and men in uniform. Our Bundeswehr is a strong parliamentary army, that accepts and performs its missions with the utmost responsibility and conscientiousness, and with justified pride. But of course our servicewomen and men require reliable framework conditions to be able to perform their duties to the best of their ability. Along with additional personnel, modern equipment and an improved infrastructure, this also requires the backing and clear support of the body politic and society as a whole, and in this respect I would like to emphasise our Veterans Day in particular, which was held for the first time in the year under review – a visible sign of the recognition, respect and gratitude due. The main event at the Reichstag in Berlin, the seat of our parliament, was an important signal to demonstrate our appreciation for the troops. So, visibility where it belongs – front and centre in society.

Defence policy must not be thought of in terms of legislative periods or constrained by party politics. It must be oriented on the security policy situation. Our country’s overall defence and the protection of our free democratic basic order are permanent, collective national tasks, which now, more than ever, require cross-departmental and inter-ministerial recognition and awareness.

The challenges we face demand clarity and determination from politicians and the body politic.

Over the course of 2025 the members of the German Bundestag have achieved much for the operational readiness and protection of our servicewomen and men. The Federal Government has also implemented important measures to strengthen our military defence capability, and continues to move in the right direction. It is now crucial that we have the courage to face the truth, in order to ensure political goals also become military reality. Announcements and notices must be reflected in operational readiness, and thus in structures, equipment and support.

Responsibility is indivisible, and in such challenging times the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces has an even greater duty to ensure their contribution as part of Germany’s security architecture.

The Commissioner’s Annual Report therefore must not be understood as a defects report, as it identifies challenges, problems and areas of action, and connects them with conclusions and recommendations. Only when difficulties are addressed transparently can we create the basis to develop joint solutions and take decisive action – for the good of our troops and the security of our country.

The year under review in brief

During this year under review the Bundeswehr celebrated its 70th anniversary on 12 November with a pledge ceremony in front of the German Bundestag. As a parliamentary army it has guaranteed the protection of the freedom and values of the Federal Republic of Germany and its citizens since its foundation. For this we owe a debt of gratitude to all active servicewomen and men, reservists and civilian employees. With tireless commitment, courage and camaraderie, they dedicate themselves to our security and our democracy, at a time when the Bundeswehr is also faced with major challenges.

The security policy situation has changed drastically – the focus of German security interests is now on national and alliance defence. At the same time Germany also remains committed to crisis regions around the world. German missions must be more specifically oriented on clearly defined European security interests and must be an integral part of the national security strategy, to efficiently address the area of tension between alliance defence and international crisis prevention.

By releasing the debt brake on defence spending, the German Bundestag has set the necessary financial course for an operational and combat-ready Bundeswehr. To ensure a lasting effect it is now equally important to use the respective monies efficiently. Command structures must be streamlined for the benefit of the troops, personnel numbers must be permanently increased, national and European procurement processes must be accelerated and better coordinated, and servicewomen and men must be relieved of non-military bureaucracy. The blanket reference to “Bundeswehr underfunding” is no longer an excuse as of the year under review. Additionally, the measures required by the Federal Constitutional Court for constitution-compliant military pay, should also be implemented as quickly as possible.

Personnel and its growth remain the key challenges for the Bundeswehr in further strengthening its military capabilities. Demographic trends, the competition for specialists on the labour market, the continuing high drop-out rates and structural deficits are limiting factors here. Without a consistent and sustainable personnel strategy, there is a real risk of a discrepancy between political ambitions and military reality. Particular attention should be paid to lengthy personnel processing procedures, slow-moving security checks and inadequate communication with those affected.

With the introduction of the new military service in particular, the question of whether and how the armed forces’ personnel requirements can be covered is also now far more in the public eye. The targeted increase in personnel to a total of 260,000 active servicewomen and men by the mid-2030s is imperative to achieve the clearly defined and legally established target ranges on the basis of the capabilities pledged to NATO and to successfully implement *Operationsplan Deutschland* (Operational Plan Germany). This is the only way to create credible deterrence, so the established interim targets must therefore be achieved even earlier. The German Bundestag must swiftly and critically examine whether voluntary service is sufficient for this, based on the six-monthly reports by the Ministry of Defence, to be required from 2027. If the current voluntary service model cannot generate sufficient growth, a return to compulsory military service will be the logical next step. The Bundeswehr must already ensure now that it has sufficient instructors and the necessary infrastructure for the foreseeable increase in the number of recruits. The military registration and preinduction examination process must work. It is essential that the new military service model be accepted and not simply rejected out of hand. Clear and reliable communication is essential to ensure young people, and society in particular, see service in the armed forces as a meaningful contribution to a secure future. Existing uncertainty must be converted into trust.

Voluntary military service as a special civic engagement is an important component of the new military service model. It is crucial that it be specifically further strengthened and made as attractive as possible, as it is key for the targeted personnel increases for credible national defence.

The reserve service must be operationally aligned to meet national and alliance defence requirements. To achieve the targeted increase to 200,000 reservists in particular, the Bundeswehr must create incentives to stay involved with the forces after active service. The aim here above all is to recruit young people and ensure the necessary full material equipping of the reserve to active service personnel level by 2035. Bureaucratic hurdles making it difficult to apply to become a reservist must be removed immediately.

Even 25 years on, after the Bundeswehr opened up all areas to women, their potential in the Bundeswehr has not been exhausted, and they still require early and targeted support. Gender stereotypes must be dismantled, and sexism has no place in the Bundeswehr.

Bureaucracy in the armed forces must be examined to determine where it is truly necessary. This above all also means responsibilities must be streamlined and simplified, and command and information channels must be clear and understandable. It must be possible to also make decisions within the unit. The current Bundeswehr and Ministry of Defence structures are too top-heavy, too complicated and, in many areas, ineffective so consistent action is also required here. All processes, regulations and the organisational structure must be thoroughly checked for redundancies, which must be removed or at least adjusted as necessary. Digitalisation must also be accelerated with the utmost urgency. The absence of digital medical records in particular results in personnel processing errors, and considerable frustration among our servicewomen and men.

A rapidly deployable, fully equipped and sustainable Bundeswehr is of the utmost importance. Gilt-edge solutions are a thing of the past, and in the spirit of the *Zeitenwende* (turning point), innovation, material and equipment availability, sovereignty in procurement, sufficient ammunition, functioning logistics and personal equipment, are just as crucial as major defence equipment. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have put the capabilities and importance of drones on full display.

The security policy situation requires a robust and resilient Bundeswehr infrastructure, with an urgent need to accelerate the renovation of many dilapidated barracks. This both supports the armed forces' operational readiness and makes service in them more attractive for our servicewomen and men. The federal states must make even greater use of special regulations for military infrastructure projects, which can also be achieved by reducing planning and procurement bureaucracy. Civilian-military cooperation must be expanded across the board, so that federal states and local authorities are integrated into processes in good time and there is greater acceptance of crisis prevention. It is quite clear that acts of sabotage on Bundeswehr properties will increase in the future, so they must be prepared for as quickly as possible. The legal extension of the military police's powers of defence in this respect certainly is very welcome. Ultimately all armed forces' facilities must be sabotage-proof without exception – hybrid threats included.

As the foundation of the Bundeswehr's values, leadership development and civic education forms the basis for camaraderie and trust in superiors, and is therefore a prerequisite for the armed forces' operational capability. It is essential that the principles of leadership development and civic education are both respected and practised. The task of command supervision is to punish breaches of official duty consistently and without exception. This in particular applies to breaches of the free democratic basic order and violations of sexual self-determination. Anyone who does not recognise the principles of leadership development and civic education, has no place in the Bundeswehr. The military leadership is also responsible for ensuring tradition-fostering measures are implemented. Seventy years after its foundation, the Bundeswehr now of course has its own history with a wealth of points of reference.

Protracted procedures weaken the educational effect of disciplinary law and our trust in superiors. The goal must be to speed up disciplinary and court proceedings, without adversely affecting existing constitutional standards. The legislators have created the conditions for this with the reform of the Military Disciplinary Code. We must now ensure the planned acceleration of procedures also actually materialises in practice. At the very least, transparent communication on the state of proceedings or even completed proceedings can significantly reduce the frustration of those affected.

The compatibility of family and duty is a decisive prerequisite for personal commitment. Maintaining the flexibility of working time models in routine operations achieved in recent years and modernising them for the requirements of the turning point are important for the attractiveness of serving in the armed forces. It is recommended that all members of the Bundeswehr take an in-depth look at the cold start file.

The Ministry of Defence must deliver the "Hair and Beard Decree", which is modern, up-to-date and takes the interests of all Bundeswehr members into account, as quickly as possible, and especially in view of the new military service.

1. Alliance and operations

National and alliance defence remains the Bundeswehr's core mission. In the year under review Bundeswehr service personnel were stationed in several countries on NATO's eastern flank, where they protect our alliance partners in the Baltic region, the airspace over Poland and Romania, and the maritime infrastructure and sea routes in the Baltic Sea.

Despite growing obligations in alliance defence, the Bundeswehr must ensure its contribution to international crisis management to the best of its ability. The stabilisation missions in the Balkans and the Middle East continued in the year under review. German service personnel were directly impacted by the heightened tension in the Middle East at locations in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan.

Following four years of Russia's war on Ukraine in violation of international law, the Ministry of Defence has drawn specific conclusions for its own personnel, which must now be implemented.

Troop commitments

At the end of the year under review, as mandated by the German Bundestag, a total of 977 servicewomen and men were active on nine different deployment abroad. 287 German personnel were deployed in the Balkans as part of the KFOR mission. 36 servicewomen and men were assigned to the EUFOR Althea EU mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the Middle East 315 members of the Bundeswehr were deployed at several sites as part of the COUNTER DAESH/CAPACITY BUILDING IRAQ mission. 211 German UNIFIL mission personnel were on duty off the Lebanese coast. The EU missions ASPIDES with 23, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI with 13, and the NATO mission, SEA GUARDIAN, with 76 personnel, complemented the Bundeswehr's deployment in the Mediterranean. On the African continent the Bundeswehr contributed to the UNMISS and MINURSO missions with twelve and four contingent members respectively.

In addition to the deployments abroad mandated by the Bundestag, a total of just under 30,000 servicewomen and men were also deployed with standby commitments, standing operational tasks and various other obligations. Of these, 1,046 personnel were stationed on NATO's eastern flank in Lithuania, Poland and Romania. In the year under review, 2,303 servicewomen and men trained Ukrainian personnel in Germany as part of the European Union Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM UA) in support of Ukraine.

Protecting the alliance on NATO's eastern flank

NATO's military commitment on its eastern flank has increased in response both to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and to provocations in the Baltic airspace. Germany once again made a substantial contribution in this respect. Along with its permanent presence in Lithuania, the Bundeswehr also contributed to the protection of Romanian airspace as part of air policing operations, and deployed air defence systems in south-eastern Poland. The year under review saw numerous violations of the airspace of several alliance partners, with which German air force interceptors escorted Russian combat aircraft out of NATO airspace.

Lithuania

In Lithuania the Bundeswehr is making a visible and constantly growing contribution to protecting its allies by establishing a heavy combat brigade, which will be fully operational by 2027 with a unit strength of at least 4,800 servicewomen and men and 200 civilian employees. 45 Armoured Brigade – or the **Lithuania Brigade** – was commissioned on 22 May 2025 in the presence of the Federal Chancellor in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, and will consist of 122 Armoured Infantry Battalion, 203 Tank Battalion and the Multinational Battlegroup Lithuania, which was integrated in February 2026. The latter, which until February 2025 was the “enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)” and in which Germany is both the framework nation and the biggest personnel provider, has been responsible for protecting Lithuania on a rotation basis with seven countries since 2017.

The brigade is growing step by step, with the Bundeswehr deploying existing army units to Lithuania and also setting up new units. Its headquarters and the first support units were already on site in the year under review, with the number of Bundeswehr personnel deployed here growing to approx. 500 by the end of 2025. To date the Bundeswehr has been able to adhere to the principle of **voluntariness** when selecting personnel for deployment

in Lithuania. Whether this will also be the case in the future remains to be seen. In the past the Ministry of Defence had already informed that it would have to deviate from this where necessary.

The timing of the main body's deployment and the brigade's full operational readiness also depend on the punctual completion of the required **infrastructure** in Lithuania, but our ally reports rapid progress here. Until completion of the Bundeswehr's biggest stationing location in Lithuania, Rūdninkai, the Lithuanian government will provide properties used for official purposes, so the Bundeswehr personnel deployed up to that point will be infrastructure-ready.

The deployment of the first brigade-size force abroad in the Bundeswehr's history is a major feat in terms of personnel and equipment for our armed forces. The Ministry therefore affords the utmost priority to **equipping** the Lithuania Brigade. The delivery of equipment this requires is, however, exacerbating already existing shortages for the units in Germany. And nor is it only the equipment and materials that are decisive for the attractiveness of voluntary deployment in Lithuania:

- *During the visit by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to Lithuania, several servicewomen and men emphasised that, in addition to financial incentives, factors such as job opportunities for spouses moving abroad, schooling for children and the availability of affordable flights to Germany, also play a key role.*

Early, comprehensive and reliable **information** from the Ministry of Defence, for both interested and already stationed service personnel, is significantly important:

- *There was a request to bundle information, for example with the aid of an app, to inform future unit personnel in good time about the essential framework conditions of the stationing.*
- *One serviceman would like to see better staffing with the Bundeswehr Social Services, which provide advice and counselling.*
- *Another requested that a deployment close to home be provided after his foreign assignment in Lithuania.*

Asked to comment, the Ministry of Defence correctly informed that there is no entitlement to a deployment close to home and that personnel planning over a long-term period is not possible in every case. Personnel management does, however, do its best to take personal wishes into account. The Ministry also informed the staff planned for the Lithuania Brigade's parent headquarters about the framework conditions of the impending deployment abroad at several events, with the participation of subordinate offices. One-on-one meetings with the Bundeswehr's Social Services have also been possible since 2018, and the Ministry of Defence has increased their capacities in Lithuania to guarantee qualified counselling and advice.

The Ministry informs that setting up and expanding the structures for accompanying family members is progressing well. It is encouraging to see that the start of **daycare and school operations** in Vilnius with corresponding school and afternoon care in the year under review, at least for the lower forms and thus for children in particular need of care, essentially went ahead as planned. The primary school in Vilnius even opened earlier than originally planned. During his visit to the troops, however, some servicewomen and men reported to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces that the changing information situation had considerable consequences for families:

- *Some service personnel, for example, had originally decided to take advantage of the relocation allowance, now less favourable for them, to avoid having to rely on an expensive private school. Others would now have to accept long commutes from their home near a private school, as their costs would no longer be covered from the 2026/2027 school year at the latest.*

In such instances it would be helpful if the employer could be more accommodating where the situation has changed unpredictably.

The service personnel deployed to the Lithuania Brigade must decide whether they and their families want to move to Lithuania, or keep their place of residence in Germany. While the relocation allowance covers all costs associated with the preparation and completion of the move, the foreign separation allowance compensates for the costs associated with **maintaining two households**. The decision in favour of the relocation allowance is irrevocable from the date of the deployment and has financial consequences:

- *Two service personnel stated that they had initially decided to claim the relocation allowance. Five months before their deployment they changed their decision in favour of the foreign separation allowance, but the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Infrastructure, Environmental Protection and Services did not accept this. Ultimately the Ministry of Defence agreed with the petitioners, as they had not yet started their service in Lithuania, so the orders could still be corrected accordingly.*
- *In contrast to servicewomen and men who move to Lithuania, separation allowance recipients do not receive a salary advance for rent deposits to be paid when renting accommodation in Lithuania, as several of them pointed out and complained. The Ministry of Defence informs that the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for advance payment policy, has denied the granting of such a salary advance. The Federal Foreign Office, responsible for the Directive on Foreign Separation Allowance, is however currently examining whether the problem can be resolved by amending this regulation.*

Although the Bundeswehr could not remedy the situation in the year under review, it is encouraging to see that it will continue working to resolve the problem. For many servicewomen and men, having to make advance payments with private funds is often a heavy burden or even impossible, especially for those in the junior ranks.

During the year under review the Bundeswehr solved a problem that had been occupying the Multinational Battlegroup since 2021. It has finally completed the **air conditioning** installation in the Rukla accommodation units. Such a long completion time does little for the required attractiveness of a deployment abroad in Lithuania, and must be improved in the future.

Poland

In the year under review the NSATU (NATO Security Assistance and Training Unit for Ukraine) air missile defence task force protected the Polish airspace over the military airport in Rzeszów with some 200 service personnel and two PATRIOT air defence systems. The violation of Polish airspace by Russian drones in autumn 2025, which NATO forces also helped to combat, once again demonstrated the importance of allied vigilance.

International crisis management

Iraq and Jordan

The Bundeswehr is now already in its tenth year of participation in the COUNTER DAESH/ CAPACITY BUILDING IRAQ stabilisation mission in Iraq and Jordan, where, together with other NATO partners, it advises Iraqi security institutions and trains their staff. Added to this are supporting tasks for our alliance partners, such as providing air transport capacities and maritime and air surveillance. The mission focusses on strengthening the Iraqi armed and security forces,

and was not without danger for the German contingent members during the year under review, as the conflict between Israel and Iran intensified in the summer months. They had to seek shelter in protected areas from Iranian drones and missiles or falling debris dozens of times. The Ministry of Defence informed that German facilities were not direct targets and announced that the mission had been accomplished.

- *During a visit by the then Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces in April 2025, the contingent members described how they felt they had been barely recognised by the public and body politic. The respective units are also reluctant to assign personnel due to a lack of awareness of the mission, so it can be difficult to even find service personnel to be deployed here.*
- *Several also expressed the wish to organise joint post-deployment seminars for the entire contingent in order to be able to reflect on the deployment's experiences together.*

The Ministry informs that in many cases this very understandable need cannot be met due to an internal Bundeswehr regulation, which stipulates that the journey time for travelling to a post-deployment seminar should not exceed three hours. The responsible lead unit stated that it always addresses the entire contingent when planning post-deployment seminars. However, some of those involved were exempted from attending the seminar due to the long journey required.

In some cases the Iraqi embassy does not issue necessary **visas** or does not provide them on time, and service personnel are not the only ones affected by this problem. A Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces visit planned for December 2025 was also not possible for this very reason.

Lebanon

The United Nations Security Council unanimously decided to extend the UNIFIL mandate for the last time at the end of August 2025. The mission is scheduled to end on 31 December 2026, and will then be followed by an orderly and safe withdrawal from the theatre of operations. In the year under review the German Bundestag voted to extend Germany's contribution to the UNIFIL mission until the end of June 2026. According to the mandate, the Lebanese security forces will be empowered in the long term to perform the respective maritime and air surveillance themselves. Bundeswehr service personnel therefore participate in training the Lebanese navy. The Bundeswehr is also actively helping to ensure the civilian population has access to humanitarian aid, and the protection of its members stationed in Lebanon must be a top priority in the context of the fragile situation in the Middle East. As the crisis situation in Israel and Lebanon worsened the Bundeswehr deployed additional personnel to Jordan and Cyprus to ensure German citizens could be evacuated when and wherever necessary. With the Hamas attack on Israel, fighting between the Islamist Hezbollah movement and the Israeli armed forces also intensified, which had an impact on the security and threat situation in Lebanon.

For seagoing units, the provision of **shore leave** is an important factor in maintaining the motivation of their crews.

- *A serviceman deployed on the Frigate BRANDENBURG criticised the fact that some of the crew were not allowed to leave the ship in the port of Beirut. The reason was incomplete rabies vaccination.*

An investigation showed that some of the service personnel had not been vaccinated in good time before their deployment began. Although the required vaccine had been reordered, it had been mistakenly delivered to another ship. The ship command's decision to prohibit shore leave for those affected due to the lack of vaccination protection, cannot be questioned in view of the dangers of incomplete immunisation. In future, however, the Bundeswehr must ensure only fully vaccinated servicewomen and men are deployed.

Kosovo

The Bundeswehr's longest deployment also continued in the year under review. Germany has been committed to NATO's KFOR stabilisation mission in Kosovo for 26 years.

- *During a visit to the troops at the end of the year under review the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces exchanged views with the President, the Kosovan Armed Forces Ombudswoman and numerous members of the German contingent. His dialogue partners described the current political situation as "calm but fragile", and said the currently quiet situation on the border with Serbia could quickly change.*

Operational reality differs for Bundeswehr service personnel according to where they are stationed. Those stationed at Camp Film City in the capital Pristina reported a calm security situation. A German task force company is deployed at Camp Bondsteel, where it performs policing tasks in the border area with Serbia, including, for example, patrolling activities, operating checkpoints and enforcing the law at demonstrations that can sometimes become violent.

However, the servicewomen and men stationed here still require better equipment with vehicles and protective gear to be able to carry out their at times dangerous mission. The Bundeswehr should swiftly remedy this situation. They also report that insufficient clothing supplies are a problem here.

- *They miss having a small "swap stock" for the most important wear items, such as boots, socks and waterproof protection gear, as procurement from Germany is extremely time-consuming.*

The desire for a **change of clothes** is of course understandable. The statement requested from the Ministry of Defence had not been provided by the end of the year under review.

Financial

The **foreign assignment allowance** in accordance with the Federal Civil Service Remuneration Act is a regular subject of petitions.

- *In the year under review petitioners once again complained that this, or a discount with it, had not been granted, even long after their return from deployment.*

According to the Ministry of Defence, payment was delayed for technical reasons or because, for example, the mission was only subsequently classified as a special foreign assignment – as was the case with the Gulfstream mission. Those affected have not suffered any lasting financial disadvantages, however financial compensation should be paid as soon as possible to appropriately express the employer's appreciation for service abroad. It would also be beneficial if in future the Bundeswehr determined the financial settlement before the deployment abroad to ensure benefits due can be paid with legal certainty.

The respective **foreign zone level** is also criticised time and again. The German Foreign Allowance Ordinance assigns foreign duty stations to one of 20 zone levels here. The specific assignment is based on statistically determined intangible expenses and tangible additional expenses for the respective period, which are incurred with deployment abroad compared to Berlin. Based on a standardised and globally uniform procedure, a contracting company evaluates numerous criteria for each duty station as part of a data survey, converts them into a euro value and compares them with the values determined for Berlin in the same period. Using these surveys the Federal Foreign Office determines the zone levels with an annual amending regulation on 1 July of each year.

- *Servicewomen and men stationed abroad often feel the zone level is not appropriate for the actual conditions on site, as shown in the year under review by petitions from Sigonella in Sicily, for example, where the foreign zone level has already been reduced for the second time in a row.*

All salary recipients are already aware in the run-up to the foreign assignment that the zone levels are subject to an annual adjustment, as the Bundeswehr expressly points this out in an information brochure given to all those affected in preparation for foreign assignments. The Ministry does not, however, provide a specific explanation of the respective duty station's assignment to a foreign zone level. In future the servicewomen and men affected should be informed about the criteria that are decisive in adjusting the foreign zone level to ensure greater understanding.

The fact that the retroactive adjustment of the foreign zone level is not possible was also criticised in the year under review:

- *The Bundeswehr set up a new base on the Isle of Portland in the UK in February 2025. As the corresponding regulation is always published each year on 1 July, until then there had been no individual assessment for this site. Instead, in accordance with the regulations in force at the time, the zone level was based on the administrative district of London, for which zone level 3 is specified. Portland was only assigned zone level 5 when the revised regulation was issued on 1 July 2025. The payment of the overseas allowance at zone level 5 requested by a serviceman stationed there since 1 February 2025 was therefore only possible from 1 July 2025.*

The Ministry of Defence nevertheless took the petition as an opportunity to obtain a legal amendment to the German Foreign Allowance Ordinance. In future recently established duty stations that are not yet listed in the ordinance can be allocated to a zone level that differs from the administrative district. The tangible and intangible expenses of the respective duty station are thus already taken into account from the beginning of the foreign assignment. Financial disadvantages, such as those seen by the petitioner, are thereby avoided.

Voting in the Bundestag election

The dissolution of the German Bundestag by the Federal President meant early elections would be held in March 2025. Several service personnel stationed on foreign assignments and missions contacted the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to highlight problems exercising their right to vote.

- *Some weeks before the Bundestag elections, the commander of a seagoing unit expressed his concern that not all of the personnel under his command would be able to cast their votes, because the postal ballot documents would only be sent out a few days before the elections.*

- *Several petitions and a special evaluation conducted by the German Armed Forces Command, United States and Canada, showed that not all servicewomen and men stationed in North America had received their ballot documents in time.*

This is unacceptable, but the Ministry of Defence is not responsible for it, as it has demonstrably taken various measures at great expense to enable all servicewomen and men to vote in the Bundestag elections. It made an early request to the Federal Ministry of the Interior to speed up the processing of service personnel postal ballot applications and to send out the documents without delay. Information on the procedure for postal voting for the German Bundestag and sending the “Application for entry in the voters’ register and for a polling card for Germans living abroad” was sent to the foreign offices in January 2025, after the date for the new election was announced. Several couriers were then sent to the countries of assignment to deliver the postal ballot documents to the individual foreign contingents and bring the completed ballot documents back to Germany, where they were handed over to Deutsche Post in good time before the election. The Ministry of Defence was also able to rule out any possible connection with “domestic postal addresses”, which primarily serve to ensure addressability within Germany and contractual arrangements between service personnel stationed abroad and insurance companies and banks. The Ministry of Defence rightly regrets that not all members of the Bundeswehr received their ballot documents in time, however the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces agrees with the assessment that this was due to the exceptionally tight deadlines with the early election in 2025.

The Commissioner also asked the **Federal Returning Officer** for a statement to raise awareness in the future. The Returning Officer explained that the postal ballot documents were sent late because printing could only begin after the election nominations had been formally authorised, which was just 24 days (instead of the usual 52) before the election. The ballots were then immediately forwarded to the local authorities responsible for sending the postal ballot documents. The different printing service providers meant there were regional differences with the start times for sending out postal ballots. The Federal Returning Officer assured that, as part of the ongoing evaluations and in coordination with all agencies involved, they would carefully examine how the corresponding processes could be optimised within the respective areas of responsibility.

Alliance and operations

The security policy situation has changed drastically – the focus of German security interests is now on national and alliance defence. At the same time Germany also remains committed to crisis regions around the world.

German missions must be more specifically oriented on clearly defined European security interests and must be an integral part of the national security strategy to efficiently address the area of tension between alliance defence and international crisis prevention.

2. The Bundeswehr’s financial resourcing

The primary defence budget (Section 14) was allocated approximately EUR 62.3 billion in the 2025 financial year, EUR 10 billion more than the previous year. Actual expenditure in 2025 ran to some EUR 59.4 billion. Industry-related delays, disruptions in project processes and favourable market price trends with real estate and buildings management had already produced shortfalls with the planned expenditure estimates in 2024. In the year under review the Bundeswehr **special fund** was estimated to have an expenditure volume of some EUR 24 billion, of which approximately EUR 19.5 billion was spent. At the end of 2025 approximately EUR 51.5 billion of the special fund was contractually bound beyond 2025. By the end of the year under review, together with the Defence Committee, the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag had approved a total of 103 “EUR 25-million proposals”. The total volume of these proposals ran to approximately EUR 83.8 billion. This “procurement boost” is of course very welcome.

Flexible funding for commanders totalled approximately EUR 20.5 million in the year under review. The average outflow of funds per office was EUR 55,883. Altogether 4,208 procurements were initiated via these budget funds. The average procurement amount was approximately EUR 4,800. In the year under review it became clear that some information on the range of possible uses of budget funds had not yet reached the troops:

- *During visits to troops by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and in their petitions, servicewomen and men once again criticised the fact that flexible funding was subject to excessively stringent regulations and applications were too frequently rejected due to budget guidelines.*

There were also important changes here. One result of the evaluation of the 2022 flexible funding is that, since the 2025 budget, commanders are no longer bound to one budget item for corresponding expenditure, but rather can also use other items within the same budget chapter. This is a step in the right direction towards even more flexibility with procurements. The fact that a new budget item now also enables the procurement of commercially available drones from corresponding framework contracts must in particular be emphasised here. The armed forces made intensive use of this in 2025, and allocated a good deal of the funds available to purchasing micro drones and drone accessories.

The German Bundestag released the **defence budget** from the debt brake in the year under review to enable investment in military necessities, a decision which is very welcome, as ultimately our troops must be well equipped and sustainable. This requires increased personnel, ammunition, military equipment and investments in the military infrastructure. Less bureaucracy with procurements is required and the defence technology industry must get on board so the Bundeswehr can get the military equipment it needs. During troop visits the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces far too often saw that there was still a lack of equipment for training purposes, ranging from simple tyres for motorbikes to modern major equipment, such as the FENNEK reconnaissance vehicle.

Investment is also required to strengthen alliance defence and expand homeland security. The decision taken by NATO member states in The Hague in June 2025, providing for a defence spending increase to 3.5 percent plus 1.5 percent for other defence-related GDP expenditure, is therefore very welcome. Furthermore, the ability to act in the event of casus foederis or states of tension and defence in accordance with Articles 80a and 115a of the Basic Law is also important in this respect. The introduction of a new chapter for “Bundeswehr national and alliance defence measures” in Section 14 of the 2026 budget is helpful here, as it enables simplified accounting and therefore a faster response to threats.

The Bundeswehr’s financial resourcing

By releasing the debt brake for defence spending, the German Bundestag has set the necessary course for an operational and combat-ready Bundeswehr. To ensure a lasting effect it is now equally important to use the respective monies efficiently. Command structures must be streamlined for the benefit of the troops, personnel numbers must be permanently increased, national and European procurement processes must be accelerated and better coordinated, and servicewomen and men must be relieved of non-military bureaucracy. The blanket reference to “Bundeswehr underfunding” is no longer an excuse as of the year under review.

3. New military service

The security policy debate in Germany in the year under review was dominated by the discussion surrounding the reintroduction of compulsory military service. Particularly controversial here was the question of the extent to which a new military service should include compulsory elements. A bill on modernising military service, initially approved by the Federal Cabinet in August 2025, was the subject of broad and necessary discussions, given the differing political viewpoints. Ultimately the German Bundestag amended key points of the draft during the respective parliamentary debates, resulting in a compromise. This required time, which is of course a scarce commodity, given the threat situation and the need to improve the Bundeswehr’s national and alliance defence capability. It has now been four years since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the turning point it triggered. Decisions taken must therefore be implemented swiftly.

The Act on the Modernisation of Military Service passed by the German Bundestag in December 2025 aims in particular to recruit more women and men from the respective temporary-career volunteers and career soldiers, and to increase the reserve service. It therefore grants the Bundeswehr access to the **registration data** of all men liable for military service in the relevant age groups and all those in the reserve service, thus reactivating military registration. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management also has the option of retrieving the registration data of people who are not liable to military service and thus also of providing women with information about activities in the armed forces or informing them of the possibility of voluntarily submitting a declaration of readiness. All those contacted by the Bundeswehr also receive a reference to legally regulated voluntary service schemes.

The act includes specific **targets** for increasing the number of personnel in the Bundeswehr over the next few years, with the goal of increasing the number of active servicewomen and men from somewhere between 186,000

and 190,000 in 2026 to somewhere between 255,000 and 270,000 in 2035. With the available reservists the plan is to increase the total number from somewhere between 70,000 and 80,000 in 2026 to at least 200,000 in 2033. Both comply with NATO's capability targets, which Germany has committed to. From January 2027 the Federal Ministry of Defence must report to parliament every six months on whether it is achieving the specified personnel increase. The act's requirements are therefore sufficiently specific and, above all, verifiable, thus enabling positive adjustments where necessary.

In contrast to the original draft, the legislators have retained the voluntary military service model, but have adjusted the basic military period of service. The minimum voluntary military service period is now six months instead of seven, and the maximum period is eleven months instead of 23. The basic military pay is approximately EUR 2,600, plus a supplementary child allowance of EUR 115 per child.

Commitments of twelve months or more are now completed as a temporary-career volunteer. The legislators have therefore reduced the minimum term of enlistment from two years to one. This status has a higher military pay level, and there are also other incentives, such as grants for car or HGV driving licences (up to EUR 3,500 and EUR 5,000 respectively).

Despite its adherence to the principle of **voluntariness**, the act also includes compulsory elements. In future the Bundeswehr will use a questionnaire to request a declaration of readiness and ability to perform military service. While the information is voluntary for women, all men born on or after 1 January 2008 are obliged to respond, and must also comply with the request for a preinduction examination. The aim of the questionnaire is to establish direct contact with young people, to awaken their interest and thus to recruit sufficient new personnel for the Bundeswehr every year.

A return to compulsory military service is envisaged if there are not enough volunteers or the defence policy situation requires a quicker increase in the armed forces. The German Bundestag can only substantiate **needs-based compulsory military service** with a separate law or act of its own, whereby the number of inductions would be based on the armed forces' needs. If more suitable people liable to military service than the Bundeswehr requires are then available, those to be inducted could be selected per random process. The German Bundestag is also responsible for deciding whether there should be a random or lottery system.

The Act on the Modernisation of Military Service is a key step towards strengthening the Bundeswehr's personnel numbers and is a move in the right direction. Also important here is the fact that a modernised military registration system will allow the Bundeswehr to immediately see the potential of reservists and people liable to military service. It should be emphasised that, according to the act, a person cannot be called up for military service against their will, even after completing the compulsory questionnaire and preinduction examination. And nor does the Bundeswehr send volunteers abroad against their will, to Lithuania, for example. They will only be considered for a special foreign assignment if they agree to this separately and in writing, and the act does not include an automatic mechanism for the establishment (re-establishment) of compulsory military service.

Nevertheless, given the security policy situation and the target of approximately 260,000 active servicewomen and men and 200,000 reservists envisaged by the Minister of Defence, there are still doubts about the prospect of success of the principle of voluntariness. The fact that parliament has defined the **growth targets** for the following years in the act that has now been passed, and has underpinned them with a corresponding obligation to report on target achievement, is therefore entirely welcome. The possible introduction of compulsory military service by law thus takes appropriate account of the herewith associated encroachment upon a basic right. However, if the armed forces are unlikely to achieve the act's target numbers, parliament and the government must react immediately and introduce compulsory military service. Decisions on our country's defensive capabilities cannot be delayed any longer.

It is now imperative that we quickly create the necessary **framework conditions** for the new military service. Preinduction examination centres must be set up, training, accommodation and supply capacities must be built up and the required amounts of equipment, clothing etc. must be provided. In view of the security situation and the commitments made to NATO, a much faster pace is exigent to ensure our country's overall defence in homeland security and national and alliance defence, as Russia's war of aggression makes it abundantly clear that security cannot be simply taken for granted. People who are prepared to defend democracy and its values and who are committed to society are all the more urgently required – in the Bundeswehr, in disaster preparedness, nursing care, or with the fire service, for example. Should the introduction of compulsory military service prove necessary, the Federal Government must offer an alternative civil service for those who then exercise their right to conscientious objection. This would once again provide an opportunity to create a modern compulsory service

model, thereby promoting social cohesion in Germany and permanently expanding and strengthening the overall defence capability for the long term.

New military service

The German Bundestag must swiftly and critically examine whether the Bundeswehr's personnel targets for the new military service are being achieved on the basis of the six-monthly reports by the Ministry of Defence, which will be required from 2027. If the current voluntary service model cannot generate sufficient growth, a return to compulsory military service will be the logical next step.

The Bundeswehr must already ensure now that it has sufficient instructors and the necessary infrastructure for the foreseeable increase in the number of recruits. The military registration and preinduction examination process must work. It is essential that the new military service model be accepted and not simply rejected out of hand. Clear and reliable communication is essential to ensure young people, and society in particular, see service in the armed forces as a meaningful contribution to a secure future. Existing uncertainty must be converted into trust.

4. Personnel

Personnel budget developments

While negotiations on the defence budget, including the personnel budget, are the Federal Ministry of Defence's responsibility, the various services are responsible for the structural detailed planning of the respective posts. On the whole the Bundeswehr still required more established posts in the year under review. It is therefore encouraging to see that the budget legislators provided approximately 10,000 additional military **established posts** for 2025. This trend will continue in 2026 with a further 30,000 established posts, of which 20,000 are earmarked for the new military service, which means the Federal Ministry of Defence will have 222,483 military established posts at its disposal in 2026, an increase of 22 percent compared to 2022, when Russia attacked Ukraine.

Since the 2025 federal budget, the Bundeswehr has been allowed to utilise established posts across career paths in some areas to ensure greater flexibility in managing the limited number of established posts and better options to respond to the respective personnel situation. It can therefore use vacant NCO established posts for servicewomen and men in the enlisted personnel career bracket, when and if required. This flexibility is extremely important for personnel recruitment and the potential for development in the Bundeswehr, and is therefore welcomed for its attractiveness for the Bundeswehr as an employer. Given the target personnel figure of 260,000 active service personnel by the mid-2030s, this positive development must continue, especially with the personnel budget.

Personnel situation

At the end of the year under review the military personnel figure was 184,194 active servicewomen and men, of which 59,447 were career soldiers, 112,578 were temporary-career volunteers and 12,169 were military service volunteers. Fortunately the number of personnel in 2025 was consistently higher than that in the same months during the previous year. By the end of 2025 personnel strength had increased significantly by approximately 3,000 servicewomen and men compared to the year before (2024: 181,174). It was the strongest year for recruitment since compulsory military service was suspended in 2011.

The share of servicewomen and men in the respective rank categories in the year under review was distributed as follows: 21.6 percent officers, 49.1 percent NCOs and 29.3 percent enlisted personnel. Within the Bundeswehr's current personnel structure there is therefore almost one officer for every enlisted member. Whether the armed forces' national and alliance defence duties can really be sustainably performed with such **top-heaviness** is questionable.

Temporary-career volunteers make up the largest of the four status groups. These usually come from a civilian working life, and from 2026 can now commit to between 1 and 25 years, so they can return to another working life at a later date. As the majority prefer a shorter commitment period, they generally leave the Bundeswehr relatively quickly, so the steady increase in the number of temporary-career volunteers with a long **service**

commitment period of 15 years or more is therefore worth noting. The number of service personnel with a fixed commitment period of 25 years alone has increased almost thirteenfold in the past decade – from 667 in mid-2015 to 8,602 in mid-2025.

With entry into force of the *Zeitenwende* article law in the spring of the year under review, the maximum period of service in the Medical Service career bracket is now 30 years instead of the previous 25. The Bundeswehr thus aims to retain highly qualified medical personnel in the long term, without having to facilitate the status change to career soldier, as, unlike professions where reintegration after employment termination at an advanced age is often difficult or even impossible, this does not apply to doctors and staff employed in healthcare professions. Their expertise means a smooth transition from military to civilian working life can be assumed, even after an extended period of service.

The Bundeswehr should also consider greater flexibility in the commitment period for suitable understaffed assignments, in order to increase their attractiveness. This in particular applies to older servicewomen and men who have re-enlisted or been recruited via lateral entry and who, after 25 years of service, are only a few years away from retirement anyway.

A steady increase in the number of career soldiers in the overall military numbers was also recorded. While the figure here was still around 29 percent in 2021, it had already risen to around 32.3 percent by the end of the year under review. At 34.8 years, the **average age** of career soldiers and temporary-career volunteers remained the same compared to the previous year (2024: 34.8 – 2023: 34.6 – 2022: 34.2 – 2021: 33.8). The average age trend, however, only provides a very superficial picture of the actual age structure. A more differentiated analysis of the changes in each age group that influence the average is required here. Interpreting the trend should also consider the fact that deployments differ in their physical requirements and in some areas experienced and well-trained personnel have added value.

Approximately 20.6 percent of the posts above the junior ranks career bracket were vacant at the end of the year under review (2024: 19.9 percent). The number is reduced to 17.3 percent when the additional personnel who perform duties outside of posts in “post-similar” positions are taken into account. Approximately 28.7 percent of the posts were not filled with enlisted personnel. Taking into account those doing voluntary military service, who are regularly deployed outside of posts in the junior ranks, this results in a purely numerical occupancy rate of approximately 96.4 percent.

Personnel and application processing

Many servicewomen and men and reservists again criticised fundamental shortcomings in personnel and application processing in their petitions in the year under review. This in particular applies to the time required and quality of the processing of applications, requests, complaints procedures and communication with careers and assessment centres:

- *One petitioner reported numerous errors in the processing of her application, which led to her being mistakenly recruited only as a military service volunteer, although she had applied as a temporary-career volunteer.*
- *Many criticised the long time it took for the Bundeswehr to reply to applications and requests, the late delivery of documents or the inefficient data maintenance. In one case an application was even deleted by mistake,*
- *and it took more than two years to process a complaint made to the Federal Ministry of Defence, which in turn delayed the processing of further, higher-priority cases. The Ministry also referred elsewhere to the high number of processes and the resultant need for prioritisations in the processing.*

The Bundeswehr’s attractiveness as an employer is directly linked to the quality of military personnel management, whereby the lengthy and sometimes incorrect processing of applications understandably causes considerable frustration, as it often involves important personal decisions that have an impact on people’s future careers and lives.

The reasons for the deficits listed are a lack of staff, the high number of applications and complaints to be processed and insufficient digitalisation. Processes must be optimised here, in other words simplified and above all digitalised and automated, particularly in view of the required and expected future increase in personnel.

The time required and the way complaints procedures are handled by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management also caused considerable dissatisfaction. Servicewomen and men sometimes, for example, cannot understand the reasoning provided in the decisions made. In some cases the content of such decisions is presented in such an abbreviated form that the irritation of those affected is clearly understandable. The Ministry of Defence took an individual case here as the opportunity to instruct the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management in general terms to formulate the reasons for decisions so they are easier for those affected to understand.

Personnel recruitment

The importance of recruitment increased further in the year under review as a result of the discussions surrounding the new military service – and with it the existing challenges also increased. The trend is set to continue, and the number of applications and recruitments will have to increase continuously over the next ten years to achieve the clearly defined and legally established target ranges based on the capabilities pledged to NATO for the targeted personnel growth to a total of 260,000 active servicewomen and men by the mid-2030s. The strategic target of 203,000 service personnel by 2031, already pursued for some time, has therefore increased significantly. Achieving this new goal is a considerable task,

and the framework conditions with which the Bundeswehr intends to generate increasing application and recruitment numbers are also challenging. Demographic trends are producing fewer potential applicants, as competition with the civilian labour market continues to intensify. Added to this are the school reforms in some federal states, where the school leaving examination is now taken after thirteen school years rather than twelve.

- *In the year under review this applied to Bavaria, where the change meant there was no state-wide higher education entrance qualification examination in 2025, and therefore no school leavers qualified to enter higher education could join the Bundeswehr as recruits after leaving school.*

Even if this is only a temporary phenomenon, it nevertheless has effects on the armed forces, and particularly at regional level.

According to the study on public opinion regarding security and defence policy in the Federal Republic of Germany, published by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences in the year under review, only eleven percent of the 16 to 29-year-olds polled could imagine working as a servicewoman or man. Interest has therefore fallen noticeably compared to the previous year, when the figure was approximately nineteen percent. The study does not provide more detailed information on the reasons for this, however two factors it identified as influencing the attractiveness of the Bundeswehr are worth noting. Generally speaking the more respondents know about the missions on NATO's eastern flank, the more interested they are in the Bundeswehr as an employer. Interest in the military profession also increases among young men when they have a positive view of the Bundeswehr's equipment and weaponry and its national defence capability.

Public relations and information activities

Before applying for active duty as a servicewoman or man or a reservist, those interested should be well informed about the possible activities and occupational fields in the armed forces. The Bundeswehr must demonstrate that it is an attractive employer. The Ministry of Defence relies on various **advertising campaigns**, which it communicates via numerous channels – such as nationwide with posters in public spaces, or regionally on bread bags at the local bakery, for example. The Bundeswehr also advertises at career, trade, consumer and job fairs, while camps and visitor days are designed to provide real on-site insights into various armed forces' job profiles. The most successful activities here, according to the Ministry, were those that provided participants a look behind the scenes of various occupational fields with the services over several days.

The Bundeswehr must always ensure here that it conveys a realistic and credible image of the activities and work performed in the armed forces. It is also especially important in this respect, that **misconceptions** about the military profession or specific assignments be avoided from the outset:

- *A former serviceman pointed out that the Discovery Days, an experience week with the armed forces, should illustrate more than just the attractive elements of the Bundeswehr. The challenges and hardships of service*

should also be addressed, so potential recruits know what they are getting into. The petitioner himself had left the Bundeswehr because of mistaken assumptions.

The importance of the Bundeswehr presenting itself honestly and providing applicants the right information is also confirmed by a study into the reasons for dropping out of the Bundeswehr, which it has conducted on a more differentiated level since a revision in 2023. The study shows how misguided expectations quickly lead to disillusionment with the military profession, and to termination of duty.

To ensure its personnel recruitment is more modern and effective, the Bundeswehr now logically posts **job advertisements** in online portals. In the year under review it posted a total of 1,815 such ads, and it announces vacancies on specialist portals. It is also present on digital learning and educational platforms, in particular to reach pupils and students who are not yet actively looking for a job.

As it is essential that the Bundeswehr must regularly review and evaluate its advertising activities, a reporting system monitors the success of such job advertisements in online job portals for optimisation and further development.

Advertising campaigns must of course be proportionate to the armed forces' operational capability. They in particular must not interfere with the everyday duties of active servicewomen and men, which they sometimes do:

- *During a visit to the troops, soldiers from 104 Tank Battalion criticised the fact that a battle tank their unit urgently needed had been moved to Nuremberg at short notice as part of the "Mission 12" candidate camp, to be used for advertising purposes.*

As understandable as the idea of providing interested people with a real understanding of the Bundeswehr may be, the Ministry should nevertheless take more care not to deprive combat units of their equipment.

The Bundeswehr's attractiveness as an employer cannot be conveyed by advertising activities alone. The fundamental acceptance and **reputation** of the armed forces in society also play an essential role, which requires servicewomen and men to be visible to and recognisable by the general public.

- *The Bundeswehr's "Red Storm Bravo" exercise, in which participants trained civilian-military cooperation in Hamburg in a fictitious scenario in September 2025, was not a targeted public relations or recruitment activity. Nevertheless, servicewomen and men reported visible recognition and appreciation from the people of Hamburg.*
- *The "Bollwerk Berlin III" exercise in November of the year under review, in which troops of the Guard Battalion trained in realistic big city conditions, including urban combat in a Berlin underground station, had a similar high public profile effect.*

Irrespective of all the praise and criticism these exercises drew, they demonstrate how they can strengthen the Bundeswehr's presence and perception in society.

Cooperation with the Federal Employment Agency is particularly important when it comes to personnel recruitment. The Bundeswehr reached an agreement in principle with the FEA on more effective cooperation in November 2024. One of the measures already implemented is the Bundeswehr's targeted presence on the Agency's premises, with career coaches present on site, for example. The Federal Employment Agency also offers its employees voluntary information events on armed forces' matters in cooperation with the Bundeswehr, which of course is very welcome. Whether or not this purely voluntary practice reaches a sufficient number of employees should also be considered here.

The positive and practical cooperation between the Bundeswehr and the **Federal Employment Agency** should be further expanded. It should, however, be pointed out that the digital statistical recording of people who apply for and are recruited by the Bundeswehr based on placement proposals or job recommendations from the Federal Employment Agency is only possible within limitations. Optimising the data collection possibilities to better evaluate the measures taken would appear logical here.

Ultimately the satisfied servicewomen and men who recommend the Bundeswehr as an employer on their own initiative, are the best advertisement for the Bundeswehr.

Applications

55,958 people applied to serve in the Bundeswehr in the year under review. The increase in applications recorded in the previous year therefore stabilised significantly (2024: 51,200 – 2023: 43,195 – 2022: 43,908 – 2021: 49,236). The increase here applies to all career brackets.

5,045 applicants withdrew their application, mostly for personal reasons or without giving any. 48 applicants said the application process had taken too long and therefore they had stopped it.

The Ministry of Defence reported that the average time between application and assessment start in the year under review was approximately six weeks. The Bundeswehr is therefore now well ahead its self-imposed target of eight weeks, which on average it had just barely achieved in previous years. According to the Ministry the waiting time also depends on the applicants' preferred dates, however the Bundeswehr shows flexibility here and can generally offer assessment appointments within a week of receiving the application, which of course is very welcome. Petitions and discussions during troop visits nevertheless once again made it clear that many still believe the **length** of the application process is problematic:

- *One serviceman described how more than a year had passed between his application in April 2024 and his recruitment in June 2025.*

In this case he showed perseverance and did not withdraw his application. Many others, however, do not. Far too often long processes cause applicants to look for alternatives, especially if they do not receive an interim message about their application for several months or more. In particular cases where the length of the application process is extended because applications are lost in the careers centre must be criticised here.

The Bundeswehr is fully aware that time plays an essential role in the application process. One measure to accelerate the process is therefore to combine the first counselling session with the assessment, so applicants do not have to travel to the careers centre twice. Irrespective of this, the Bundeswehr is already working on reducing the **waiting times** between application and assessment:

- *A pilot project ran at the Erfurt careers centre in the year under review, in which the career coach made an appointment for the assessment process immediately after the counselling session.*

The services also do their best to schedule the applicants who are successful in the assessment as quickly as possible, however they can only be recruited when all the necessary documents have been submitted, which often results in delays.

- *The process from scheduling through to recruitment took an average of 112 days in the year under review, which is two weeks longer than the previous year (2024: 98 days).*

The Ministry of Defence says this considerable length of time is due to the difficulty of optimally coordinating the applicants' wishes with the actual local time and recruitment possibilities. Another reason for the time required could be the fact that the complex scheduling process is still not very automated, so exploiting the potential of comprehensive digitalisation would of course be logical and expedient.

Of the 55,958 applications received, the Bundeswehr rejected 11,590 on its own initiative. The most common reasons for **rejection** were insufficient cooperation in the application process, health reasons and a lack of mental or character suitability. The increase in the number of applicants the Bundeswehr classified as unsuitable in the year under review was considerable. Of the approximately 25,230 completed military medical examinations for recruitment as a temporary-career volunteer, the doctors in the careers centres classified approximately 2,090 applicants as unfit for service in the year under review. This is approximately 8.3 percent (2024: 6.3 percent; 2023: 5.5 percent).

The Bundeswehr does not recruit applicants who are medically unfit for military service, and does so consistently and correctly. However, many active servicewomen and men, especially instructors, continue to say during troop visits that they believe the **“quantity before quality”** principle applies in the career centres, with basic training including an increasing number of service personnel who are not suitable to serve in the armed forces for health reasons.

- *They reported recruits who were massively overweight, had deafness in one ear, congenital high blood pressure, or torn ligaments that made running impossible.*

Needless to say many young servicewomen and men who do not have the necessary physical fitness at the time of recruitment can be trained in basic training. Recruits must, however, always meet certain health requirements when being recruited, so they can satisfy the high physical and mental demands of military service.

The “**fitness for on-board duty**”, essential for deployment on a ship, is especially important for the Navy.

- *The Ministry of Defence is now recruiting more sports instructors to increase the fitness of the Navy’s servicewomen and men. It will also revise the criteria for maintaining fitness for on-board duty and the respective health indicators, so applicants who do not appear to be sufficiently healthy at the time of recruitment, are not scheduled for on-board posts.*

Requirements and job profiles that are too narrowly defined or are not clearly communicated can cause **frustration** if they result in the rejection of motivated applicants. The contradiction between expectation and reality often only becomes apparent during the selection process. The Bundeswehr only has limited requirements for certain career brackets, which is why many cannot understand the effort invested in the multi-day assessment. If they had known the chances of success were in fact low, a lot of applicants would not have started the process in the first place.

Digitalisation of the application and scheduling process

Digital solutions are absolutely essential in the personnel recruitment area. On one hand the Bundeswehr must cope with the targeted significant increase in application and recruitment figures, without any decrease in the quality and accuracy of the processing. The digitalisation of processes offers considerable opportunities to increase efficiency here. On the other hand, with the application process the Bundeswehr also has the opportunity to present itself to potential servicewomen and men. An impressive and modern digital presence is a key factor to be able to compete with civilian employers.

Unfortunately the “Online Assessment” digitalisation project, now ongoing for almost six years, has still not been fully completed. Online diagnostics have been in the implementation phase for some years now. According to the Ministry of Defence, after adjusting the work schedule and timetable, completion is not expected until mid-2026.

The fact that the “**E-Recruiting**” IT system has finally been certified for processing and storing highly personal data since April of the year under review, so that the digital provision and processing of application documents is possible in principle, is of course very welcome. This, however, is where digitalisation ends, as the complex scheduling process is not fully software-supported. The rapid development of a corresponding digital programme is required to efficiently illustrate and visualise scheduling options in the future, while taking the framework conditions the applicants would like to see into account.

Advice and counselling in the careers centres

The Bundeswehr has 15 careers centres and 99 career information offices, which are directly subordinate to the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management. Career coaches play a key role in personnel recruitment. They are the first personal contact point with the Bundeswehr for anyone interested. Their advice aims to harmonise individual capabilities and interests with the requirements and opportunities of the armed forces. Good and honest information is essential here.

- *The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces regularly receives petitions from servicewomen and men who complain about incorrect information provided by career coaches with the application and scheduling process, with some deciding to leave the Bundeswehr within the withdrawal period as a result. In other cases they were unable to pursue their desired career or position, even though they felt this had been promised to them during the counselling session. Visits to the troops also illustrated a similar situation.*

It is often impossible to clarify the precise content of the counselling later on, because the career coaches asked can no longer remember every single one due to the high number of counselling sessions, or because it is a case of one person’s word against another’s. In isolated cases the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management makes general reference in its concluding statements to the fact that the assignment note had been signed and therefore consent to the assignment had been declared. This assessment cannot be legally objected to, and the fact that the Bundeswehr also meets the training requirements often identified during enquiries is to be welcomed.

It is extremely important that the **expectations** of those interested in the Bundeswehr be taken seriously. In individual cases it may even be better to clearly inform applicants with obviously unfeasible wishes and expectations that the Bundeswehr is not right for them, before they are recruited at great expense in terms of personnel and costs, and will soon be disappointed and leave the Bundeswehr again anyway. The continuous training of career coaches provides the basis for sustainable recruitment and assignment planning that corresponds with the ideas expressed, so that motivation rather than disillusionment prevails later on. Above all it is also about an honest presentation of the obligations that servicewomen and men face when serving in the Bundeswehr, in particular the willingness to travel throughout Germany.

Sustainable recruitment

The increased number of applications was also reflected in the number of new recruits. In the year under review 25,006 servicewomen and men joined the Bundeswehr (including 11,905 temporary-career volunteers) – once again significantly more than in previous years (2024: 20,286 – 2023: 18,802).

To permanently maintain the necessary increase in personnel, the Bundeswehr must ensure the increased recruitments are not countered by an equally higher number of retired service personnel, declaration of commitment revocations or dismissals. A total of 21,924 servicewomen and men left the Bundeswehr in the year under review – 4,505 of them by revoking their declaration of commitment within the six-month probationary period, and 434 by being dismissed by the Bundeswehr.

Despite the positive trends with applications and new recruits, unfortunately the **drop-out rate** has not improved. At the end of the year under review, provisionally this was 19.8% (31 December 2024: 19 percent). As the probationary period had not yet ended on 31 December 2025 for all who had signed up, the number of revocations could still increase by June 2026. In the 2024 recruitment year, for which final figures are available, 4,736 of the 20,286 of those that had begun service withdrew their declaration of commitment within the six-month probationary period. 376 were dismissed, resulting in a final 25.2 percent drop-out rate (2023: 27 percent).

In addition to further professionalised personnel counselling during the period of service, the Ministry of Defence cited the regulation re-introduced into the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act in 2024 as the reason for the positive trend from 2023 to 2024. According to the regulation the **termination** of voluntary military service or revocation of the declaration of commitment with temporary-career volunteers is no longer possible at simply any time, but rather only with one month's notice during the first six months after service begins. While this is basically to be welcomed, many service personnel have criticised this new regulation:

- *Servicewomen and men, for example, regularly complained during troop visits, that those who had declared their withdrawal, usually called in sick until the end of the notice period, and were ill at home and thus absent from the rest of their service. They indicate that the aim of the act, to allow for reconsideration of the decision with a longer period of notice, will not be achieved. Only in extremely few cases could a one-on-one meeting change the decision to leave the Bundeswehr.*

It is therefore important to comprehensively evaluate the effects of the legislative amendment on the drop-out rate. A working group headed up by the Armed Forces Office accepted this task and provided an initial assessment, whereby it recommends retaining the period of notice during the probationary period, due to the first trend reversal in 2024. Contrary to developments at the beginning of the year under review, however, this reversal did not continue in the second half of 2025. The fact that the Ministry of Defence sees further need for improvement and intends to continue the working group on drop-out figures, is therefore to be welcomed.

Reinstatements and lateral entry

Reinstatements and lateral entries are important instruments for recruiting personnel, especially in view of the current skills shortages. The Bundeswehr can benefit from valuable previous military experience, qualifications and expertise, particularly when re-employing former service personnel, who are well-versed in the structures, processes and requirements of military service, and therefore do not require a lengthy training period. Their return is often associated with high motivation and a strong identification with the armed forces, which can have a positive effect on camaraderie and commitment.

Some 5,784 people had applied for **reinstatement** in the Bundeswehr by the end of 2025, which is a significant increase of approximately 30.5 percent compared to previous years (2024: 4,433 – 2023: 3,753). Unfortunately, the unwelcome trend that more applications do not result in more actual reinstatements, was also confirmed. At just 1,674 returns to service, the number here is on the same level as previous years (2024: 1,367 – 2023: 1,655). There was, however, an increase of 36.6 percent in the number of reinstatements over the age of 40 (2025: 209 – 2024: 153).

With many unsuccessful applications for reinstatement, one reason for rejection is regularly met with a lack of understanding:

- *Petitioners do not understand why they are rejected because there are no vacancies, while at the same time the Bundeswehr informs the public that it does not have enough servicewomen and men. The reasons for rejection here are many and varied. In some cases it is not possible to identify assignment options that meet the applicant's wishes, because, for example, the applicant is not qualified for a specific position or there are no posts available for the desired assignment location. With older applicants the requirements of the Federal Budget Code are often not met for the desired assignments. According to the Code, recruitment of over 40-year-olds is only possible if there is an exceptional shortage of equally suitable younger applicants and the reinstatement presents a significant advantage for the Bundeswehr.*

As it so often does, communication plays a decisive role in the counselling sessions. Even before an application is submitted, the Bundeswehr must proactively and specifically identify only those areas of the armed forces where there is an actual need, and therefore good recruitment prospects. Filling the corresponding positions depends on numerous factors, which in particular include individual location and assignment requests. Assigning reinstated personnel here is just as complex as recruiting new personnel.

The Bundeswehr offers **lateral entry** to those who have not taken the traditional route via initial military training, because they have specific professional qualifications that are beneficial to the armed forces, and only require military training. The number of applications for lateral entry into the Bundeswehr increased again by approximately 19 percent compared to the same period last year to 12,980 (2024: 10,932 – 2023: 9,347). The Bundeswehr recruited 599 of these applicants (2024: 534 – 2023: 667). This also shows that rising application numbers are not synonymous with a higher number in recruitments. The most common reasons for rejection, as also with reinstatements, were primarily health reasons, insufficient cooperation in the application process and a lack of demand for the qualifications presented.

Special regulations apply for lateral entrants, which mean they can be recruited for specific assignments with a higher rank than is usual in the respective career bracket – provided they meet the legal requirements. If such lateral entrants are awarded certain **ranks** immediately after recruitment without any previous military experience, for which veteran servicewomen and men sometimes have to work several years, this can however cause dissatisfaction:

- *For example, in addition to career-specific requirements, the prerequisites for lateral entrants to be recruited directly as a warrant officer II, and not as a sergeant as is usually the case, include at least nine years of full-time service that corresponds to the intended assignment with regard to the speciality and level of difficulty. A regular promotion to warrant officer II, on the other hand, requires 16 years of service after appointment as a sergeant.*

The Ministry rightly clarifies that there is no unequal treatment here. In times when skills are scarce, lateral entry serves to encourage qualified and professionally experienced personnel to join the Bundeswehr, particularly for assignments where there are qualified personnel shortages. The shorter period of service for lateral entrants is balanced by the qualifications they have acquired in their civilian careers. Career law accepts the lack of previous military experience in this respect in order to meet personnel requirements with professionally qualified personnel. There are no grounds to question this assessment.

Personnel retention

Re-enlistment

Re-enlisting temporary-career volunteers is an important instrument in ensuring personnel retention. In the year under review the willingness to commit to the Bundeswehr beyond the previously stipulated period of service remained at a good level similar to that in the previous year. By the end of 2025 a total of 10,128 temporary-career volunteers had extended their period of service (2024: 10,110 – 2023: 8,072). This in particular affected the enlisted personnel career brackets with a total of 7,204 re-enlistments (2024: 7,336). The average period of service extension in all career brackets remained unchanged at approximately three years. With 3,129 initial voluntary military service enlistments (2024: 2,562) and the 3,120 career advancements (2024: 2,800) up to the end of the year under review, an increasing willingness by servicewomen and men to remain in the Bundeswehr is still clearly evident.

The challenging situation with established positions, however, continued to limit the options for re-enlistment in 2025.

- *In numerous petitions those affected expressed their lack of understanding as to why the requested period of service extension was rejected, despite the general shortage of personnel and the intensive efforts to recruit new personnel.*

This is understandable and makes it clear that the Bundeswehr must transparently communicate the areas in which re-enlistment is possible to the troops. The **increase in established posts** in the 2025 and 2026 budgets also opens up new room for manoeuvre in this respect.

Difficulties also arise with a re-enlistment if replanning has already been made for the relevant posts without the previous post incumbent being aware of this. Personnel planning is sometimes performed several years in advance, especially if extensive training and training course certificates are required. The amendment to the “*Gespräche in Personalangelegenheiten der militärischen Personalführung*” (meetings for personnel matters relating to military personnel management) service regulation in 2024 is therefore very welcome. This expressly stipulates that, in the event of an impending personnel regeneration, the superiors in the armed forces will ensure early personnel development meetings with the previous post incumbents. They will in particular ask the servicewomen and men if they wish to extend their period of service at their post, or enquire if they can be regenerated in some other way.

Transfer to career soldier status

The Bundeswehr appointed a total of 3,902 service personnel as career soldiers (2024: 2,520) in the year under review. Unlike temporary-career volunteers, these servicewomen and men only leave the armed forces when they reach the respective age limit. The Bundeswehr thus pursues a clear personnel retention objective, keeps qualified personnel in the forces for the long term, affords them career prospects and, above all, prevents personnel shortages. It is therefore encouraging that the Ministry of Defence continues to exploit this potential, and has already increased the structural recruitment requirement for additional career soldiers by 30 percent for all uniformed services and joint areas beginning from the year under review.

The Bundeswehr still does not allow **enlisted personnel** to change their status to career soldier. The Ministry refers to the typically high physical demands of enlisted posts, which older career soldiers are generally no longer able to meet. Given the persistent shortage of personnel in the enlisted posts career brackets, however, it should examine whether the change of status would indeed be beneficial in justified exceptions, especially if a particular qualification rather than physical fitness is key to an assignment, and a transfer could be offered in individual cases. In view of the foreseeable high demand for instructors with the introduction of the new military service, it would also be worth considering allowing suitable, experienced and proven enlisted personnel to change status to force commander or squad leader.

Civilian initial and follow-on occupational training

Civilian initial and follow-on occupational training is a key element of the professional qualification of temporary-career volunteers for their respective military assignments. At the same time it also strengthens the Bundeswehr's

attractiveness as an employer, as the knowledge acquired with this training facilitates the transition to civilian working life after service ends.

The total number of civilian initial and follow-on occupational training participants increased in the year under review compared to the previous year. Altogether 5,891 temporary-career volunteers (2024: 5,363) took part in 477 civilian initial and follow-on occupational training activities (2024: 460). As in previous years, most of the activities were overseen by external civilian training providers, while the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management and the regional careers centres managed and supported their implementation.

The criticism regularly voiced about the quality, content and organisation of the activities underscores the importance of quality-oriented selection of training providers and regular **specialist supervision**:

- *One petitioner reported from a civilian initial and follow-on occupational training course for IT systems electronics technicians that there were no digital learning materials. The Federal Ministry of Defence believes, however, the availability of traditional computer training rooms is completely sufficient for this course. Given the demands of advancing digitalisation, this seems outdated and does not meet the requirements of modern training.*

Civilian initial and follow-on occupational training activities commit service personnel to educational facilities for longer periods, resulting in absences from their units. It is therefore highly logical for the Bundeswehr to examine how civilian initial and follow-on occupational training must be adapted to meet the changed requirements for personnel operational readiness. The goal is to streamline the training period and increase the retention period in the forces. The approach here of reducing the civilian initial and follow-on occupational training activities depending on the respective military background or replacing them with concentrated alternative military training is a step in the right direction.

Bonuses

The payment of bonuses as a monetary incentive is an important instrument for recruiting and retaining personnel. The Bundeswehr can grant temporary-career volunteers an “enlistment bonus” for initial enlistment or re-enlistment. The *Zeitenwende* article law has extended the scope of application here: Enlistment bonuses are no longer limited to shortage areas – they now also include re-enlistments to ensure personnel operational readiness. In the year under review the budget legislators allocated approximately EUR 27.17 million for the enlistment bonuses (2024: approximately EUR 18.94 million), of which EUR 26.51 million was spent (2024: EUR 18.71 million).

The enlistment bonus is not paid until the servicewomen and men are actually deployed to the post entitled to the bonus. In some careers the period until a bonus is granted may even be several years, if, for example, time-intensive training and qualification courses are required before a transfer to the corresponding post is possible. Due to this long time between bonus application and granting, a reliable statement about the effects of the statutory adjustment is not yet possible.

Career coaching also has a responsibility when it comes to approving bonuses:

- *Inadequate or incorrect advice has a direct impact on the bonus payment if errors only become apparent when the period of service is determined, resulting in removal of the bonus guarantee.*

Servicewomen and men rely on the payment of promised bonuses and are in turn bound by the declaration of commitment they submit as a result of the bonus guarantee. With the decision on withdrawal of the guarantee, it is therefore not enough to reject the justified trust of those affected with regard to the not-yet-paid bonus payment. To avoid understandable frustration, the Bundeswehr should generally assume, including in cases of incorrect advice, that the trust in the bonus guarantee is worth protecting and prevents its withdrawal. Career coaches must also be comprehensively trained, particularly with regard to the flexible granting of bonuses facilitated by the legislative amendment.

Higher education

Officers in operational service should have an academic education and scientific skills. The Bundeswehr universities in Hamburg and Munich offer numerous study courses, which are indeed often attractive, but do not

always meet military requirements. Many servicewomen and men do not need their study qualification for their later assignment, which often causes displeasure.

The current imbalance between the study programmes offered and the respective military requirements can in part be addressed by the **specialist careers** for officers in operational service. The goal is to increase specialist expertise via specific assignments and to better integrate this expertise into everyday military life. A specialist career can build on both knowledge provided by the study programme and on relevant previous assignments. In addition to increasing attractiveness, especially for graduates of natural science and technical study courses, this model is also designed to attract specialist personnel from outside the Bundeswehr. Specialist careers are therefore also suitable for recruiting and assigning lateral entrants. A stringent assignment concept, specific staff promotion and career advancement must therefore be ensured here.

Each year students drop out of their bachelor course at the Bundeswehr's universities for various reasons. Of the 1,045 first-year students, in the year under review a similar number to the previous year decided to **drop out of their studies** (2025: 180 – 2024: 181 – 2023: 246 – 2022: 233). Inadequate academic achievements, insufficient motivation and health or personal problems were frequent reasons in this respect, whereby the servicewomen and men affected here can apply for re-enlistment without a study qualification. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management decides on this, while considering the respective need, the disciplinary superior's opinion and the suitability and performance of the person concerned. There is no numerical upper limit for re-enlistment. 85 drop-outs, i.e. almost half, were re-enlisted in 2025 – a clearly positive trend compared to the previous year (2024: 35), when it was just under a fifth.

Internal labour market

The Bundeswehr's internal labour market could be a key instrument in retaining qualified personnel for the long term. Enabling retiring servicewomen and men to find attractive subsequent employment in the civilian sector continues to be extremely important for both recruiting personnel and retaining specialists. Despite slightly more positive trends, however, the transition figures are still too low to consider this an actual internal labour market. Of the 7,368 newly recruited civilian employees in the year under review, only 343 were former servicewomen and men, which is just under 4.7 percent (2024: 4.4 percent; 2023: 3.3 percent; 2022: 3.9 percent).

To date the **central point of contact for the internal labour market** has always tried to increase the accuracy of applications by providing advice and checking the study course completion, because:

- *The final qualifications acquired at Bundeswehr universities are often insufficient or do not meet the requirements advertised for civilian employment with the Bundeswehr.*

Frequently the only way for servicewomen and men who have studied to change to a civilian status group is via career training for the higher intermediate non-technical service. This however means that those affected must complete a further dual study programme, even though they already have a bachelor or master's degree. The Bundeswehr must improve here.

The Federal Ministry of Defence has also further intensified its organisational efforts. Measures to improve internal communication, the expansion of advice and counselling by the Vocational Advancement Service and the extension of digital support services, show minor effects here. At the same time the Ministry also examined the legal framework. An amendment to the Federal Career Ordinance proposed to the Federal Ministry of the Interior will make it easier to acquire a civil service career qualification by recognising the knowledge and skills acquired during military service.

Period of service reduction

Servicewomen and men repeatedly say they would like to leave the Bundeswehr earlier than planned, due, for example, to various circumstances that could not be foreseen when they enlisted.

- *Proof is provided here by numerous petitions concerning rejected applications for a reduction in the period of service. In such cases there is often an employment guarantee from a state or federal police force, the Federal Criminal Police Office or another state agency.*

Saxony-Anhalt even has a special programme for former servicewomen and men with the “*Feldjägerfeldweibel zur Polizei des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt*” project, which enables relevant senior military police NCOs to transfer to the police service, without having to take a career examination. The extent to which other federal states or other emergency services will introduce (reintroduce) their own programmes remains to be seen.

If active servicewomen and men wish to reduce their period of service, to transfer to a police authority or the civil service, for example, the Bundeswehr will approve the application with a case-by-case assessment if the period of service reduction is in the **interests of the armed forces**. This might happen, for instance, if the applicant’s post is eliminated and structural or other aspects do not stand in the way of such a transfer. It is of course understandable that a period of service reduction must be compatible with maintaining operational readiness and must be justified based on the personnel and regeneration situation. Particularly in cases where the period of service is only reduced by a few months, however, it may also be worth considering the public interest in an assignment with the security authorities.

On the whole the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management approved more than 70 percent of the applications for a period of service reduction, with the requested reduction exceeding six months in more than half of the cases – a trend which must also be monitored. The prospect of a reasonable degree of flexibility ultimately offers servicewomen and men career planning certainty and increases the Bundeswehr’s attractiveness as an employer.

Postponement of retirement

In addition to the various instruments for recruiting and retaining personnel, the Bundeswehr must also organise its personnel policy in a way that is sustainably and demographically aligned with regard to age limits.

With retirement the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act distinguishes between the general age limit and the special age limit, which is earlier. Both, but the special age limit in particular, vary according to the respective career. The general age limit for generals, admirals, group captains and captains at sea, for example, is 65 and the **special age limit** is 62, whereas for regular NCOs it is 62 and 55 respectively. Retirement after reaching the special age limit was the norm over the years of personnel cutbacks, but this is no longer the case. A total of 2,108 career soldiers retired in the year under review (2024: 1,979), of which 670 had exceeded the special age limit (2024: 544).

With the increase in the retirement age for servicewomen and men as part of the Act to Restructure Civil Service Law in 2009, the law stipulated that the average retirement age must be increased by 2024 by at least two years compared to 2007. The Bundeswehr already hit the target of at least 57.2 years in 2021, and the average retirement age has since only changed marginally. In the year under review it was 57.8 years.

For some years now the Bundeswehr has used a dialogue-based process to decide on the retirement date, which begins five years before the special age limit is reached. It takes both the operational requirements and the interest of the person concerned in serving beyond this limit into account. If the individual retirement date is postponed for at least two years, those affected are assured there will be no further postponement against their wishes. 858 career soldiers expressed their willingness to serve beyond the special age limit in the year under review (2024: 719). The dialogue-based process and the goal of making the individual retirement date as predictable as possible are to be welcomed, and must also apply in times of structural adjustments and reorganisation.

Military performance evaluation system

Military performance evaluations provide a realistic assessment of the performance and capability of servicewomen and men in the respective evaluation period, and thus enable the selection of the best under the terms of Article 33(2) of the Basic Law. They are paramount in ensuring personal professional development, as they are the basis for making favourable selection and assignment decisions and determining promotion sequences.

The current military performance evaluation system from 2021 is based on the formation of comparison groups, which must be structured according to rank, salary group or status level. A uniform evaluation standard with a grading scale from “A” to “G” applies within the comparison groups. The “A” to “C” grades are scaled as follows here: Five percent of all those evaluated receive an “A”, ten percent a “B” and 15 percent a “C”. To ensure fairness

in individual cases, these guide values may be exceeded by up to five percentage points. Grades “D” and “E” are provided for average or normal performance.

The Ministry of Defence believes the currently applicable evaluation system has become widely established, and informs that the number of relevant complaints has decreased slightly. This welcome trend is also reflected in the number of petitions concerning performance evaluations. Nevertheless, 99 servicewomen and men contacted the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces because of their evaluations (2024: 102 – 2023: 133 – 2022: 129).

Service personnel repeatedly voice the following criticism:

- *Along with revision of the comparison groups, there would have to be greater flexibility in the evaluation system, which is described as a “purely quota system”. It offers nothing to increase their motivation, but instead causes massive frustration. Subjective experience shows there is no prospect of promotion at certain locations.*

The fact that the Bundeswehr is sticking with the current evaluation system, despite the criticism, is not without reason. The Ministry of Defence and its area of responsibility, i.e. the entire area of federal administration, are bound by the strict ruling that stipulates these framework conditions.

Aptly-named **tactical performance evaluations**, with which actual performance demonstrated is not considered in favour of other interests of the assessors, are not permitted. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces nonetheless regularly receives such allegations:

- *Top marks were not awarded based on performance, but rather based on age or ongoing application procedures for acceptance as a career soldier.*

It is almost impossible to verify the allegation of a tactical performance evaluation in practice and ultimately prove it with legal certainty.

Insufficient knowledge of the evaluation system produces displeasure among both the assessors and the servicewomen and men being evaluated. It is therefore extremely important that not only are the assessors properly trained, but, to avoid disappointment, that those being evaluated are also informed in advance about the evaluation procedure. This in particular applies to the complex **coordination process**, which at times appears opaque for those being evaluated – especially when it comes to downgrading by the second assessor:

- *One petitioner claimed she had been told she would receive a “B” in the meeting to discuss the brief assessment, but had ultimately been given a “C”. At the same time others in her comparison group were later upgraded from the announced “B” to an “A”.*

Responsible grading by the first assessor includes not discussing grades until they have been finalised. Good first assessors award honest overall grades they can convincingly defend in the coordination process. The responsibility of the assessors is significant for the acceptance of the evaluation system.

The **conclusiveness** of the overall grade, as decided by the Federal Administrative Court in November 2024, is important.

- *Evaluations had to be rescinded in the year under review if, for example, the first assessor, despite having agreed a “D” grade with the second assessor in the overall evaluation, assessed individual elements in the aptitude, capability and performance evaluation too favourably, which no longer conclusively justified a “D” in the overall grade.*

In practice this regularly results in individual elements being adjusted to the overall evaluation and reduced accordingly in the new performance evaluation, after the old evaluation, which contained contradictions, has been removed. The fact that the original overall grade stays the same cannot be legally contested. However, the servicewomen and men affected often do not understand that withdrawing the first performance evaluation does not automatically improve the overall evaluation.

To avoid disappointment in the complaints or petition procedure, it must be emphasised that the ability to review the professional assessment of performance evaluations is extremely limited, because the first and second assessors have considerable discretionary powers here and the parties involved may also have very different points of view. When reviewing a performance evaluation, the sole focus is therefore on whether arbitrariness or irrelevant considerations have played a role or whether formal errors have occurred. If, during the petition

processing the petitioner is already involved in appeal or court proceedings against the performance evaluation, these must always finish first due to the separation of powers. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is also bound by their outcome.

In June of the year under review the Federal Ministry of Defence adjusted the relevant performance evaluation regulations with regard to **the formation of comparison groups** in leadership positions in line with supreme court rulings. Those who performed a leadership function over a period of time relevant to the evaluation must be accordingly assigned to a comparison group with a leadership function, even if they were no longer assigned the corresponding duties on the evaluation date. All second assessors must now determine whether those being evaluated had a leadership position for at least six months during the evaluation period, taking evaluation contributions into account if necessary. This change is especially welcome, as it takes the previous higher-value activity into account.

Plus, the Federal Ministry of Defence also assumes the evaluation process no longer poses any professional or technical difficulties for most assessors. The slow progress with **digitalisation** must however be criticised. An electronic system will be introduced in 2027 at the earliest, which will make it easier for the respective overall responsible people to monitor both the complex coordination process and compliance with the guideline specifications in their area of responsibility. The Ministry says the delay is due to the prioritisation of digitalisation projects in the recruiting organisation. Even if this is understandable with the current growth situation, the fact that these projects cannot be ramped up in parallel must be criticised.

With regard to the decision by the Federal Administrative Court in October 2024, according to which the assessment of potential may not be used as a selection criterion for a change of status or career without a legal basis, the ministerial draft bill originally announced by the Ministry of Defence for 2025 was not available by the end of the year under review. It is of course regrettable that the **assessment of potential**, which scientific studies have shown to be well suited for selection procedures, currently cannot be used as a further selection criterion. Creating a legal regulation for this should therefore be a top priority.

Promotions

The promotion situation eased noticeably with approval of the 2025 federal budget in the late summer. For many servicewomen and men, the months prior to this were drawn out by a long wait for promotion due to the interim budget management, although they had met all public service career law requirements. Numerous petitions highlighted the associated frustration and doubts about the employer's appreciation.

- *Sergeants, more than 3,100 of whom were waiting an average of one year for their promotion in the autumn of the year under review after meeting the respective requirements, merit special mention here.*

The number of servicewomen and men affected by the **promotion backlog** had already fallen to around 3,200 by September 2025 (2024: 4,006 – 2023: 4,047). With approval of the 2025 federal budget and the resulting increase of approximately 10,000 established posts, the number of servicewomen and men waiting for promotion was, however, reduced to 42 across all career brackets in the autumn of the year under review. The Bundeswehr completely cleared the promotion backlog in the A 8+Z salary group and in the officer career brackets below the A 16 salary group. The waiting situation improved further in January 2026, after sufficient established posts were provided for promotion to A 16 when the 2026 federal budget came into force. This positive trend is especially welcome.

If, as is often the case, there are fewer established posts than service personnel qualified for promotion, aptly-named **promotion and assignment sequences** in particular are determined on the basis of the respective current performance evaluations.

- *In the year under review many petitioners again questioned the procedure for forming promotion sequence groups. If competitors were still classified with their grade (usually better) from the last performance evaluation in the previous status office, they felt "overtaken" and therefore unfairly treated.*

The Ministry of Defence responded to this problem in March 2025 and is now creating a separate promotion sequence group for service personnel who have not yet received a routine performance evaluation in the higher-grade position, which is an appropriate measure.

The Ministry rightly describes the relationship between job management and promotion as complex. An explanatory presentation provided by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management on the intranet since 2022, for example, provides a graphic preparation of the relevant processes for creating the promotion sequence groups and can thus contribute to better understanding. It should therefore be announced to all members of the Bundeswehr, and not just be easy to find for personnel-processing staff.

As a requirement for admission to a promotion sequence group, servicewomen and men must complete various **minimum periods of service** in their current rank, depending on their career. The relevant general regulation, for example, stipulates a period of 16 years after appointment as a sergeant as a period of service requirement for promotion to warrant officer II, of which at least three years must have been completed at the rank of staff sergeant. However, the Higher Administrative Court of North Rhine-Westphalia ruled in several decisions on 25 July 2025 that the established Federal Administrative Court ruling under civil service law on the admissibility of minimum periods of service before reaching promotion maturity is also applicable to service personnel. The troops were quickly discussing this ruling:

- *Initial petitions relating to the decisions of the Higher Administrative Court illustrate the prevailing uncertainty with regard to the ruling's consequences.*

Based on complaints filed by several staff sergeants, the Higher Administrative Court ordered the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management to reassess the respective rejected application for promotion. The complainants were incorrectly *not* included in the selection decisions for promotion to warrant officer II. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management had rejected their promotion, because they had not completed the prescribed minimum 16-year period of service since their appointment as sergeant. The court, however, made it clear that waiting periods may not be longer than necessary to create the actual basis for a performance evaluation and performance prognosis. As a rule an upper limit for such probationary periods would therefore result from the period stipulated for a routine performance evaluation. The Bundeswehr's interest in a balanced age structure or in certain leadership qualities, which should be reflected by a minimum period of service, does not justify any interference with the merit principle. This is therefore the first time that a higher administrative court has deemed the previous regulation regarding minimum periods of service to be unlawful and confirmed a series of first-instance decisions in recent years. Further similar proceedings are pending before the Higher Administrative Courts of Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate.

According to estimates by the Ministry of Defence, a reduction in the minimum periods of service would result in up to 18,000 servicewomen and men **being ready for promotion** in the future, although the exact number would depend heavily on the specific framing of a corresponding legal amendment. Such a development could hardly be absorbed in the short term with a further increase in established posts. There is therefore a real danger that a new, far greater, promotion backlog will develop.

The Higher Administrative Court's ruling is in line with the clearly recognisable tendency of the Federal Administrative Court to also apply the ruling on Article 33(2) of the Basic Law under civil service law without distinction to service personnel. The Federal Ministry of Defence should therefore quickly clarify how it will take account of the principle of selection of the best with promotion to the previously bundled posts in the senior NCO career path in the future, and how it will ensure an equal transition until a new regulation is implemented. Not least in view of the already high workload at the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management, following the introduction of the new military service, it is no doubt advisable to avoid unnecessary complaints and legal proceedings. A well thought-out and prudent new regulation offers the opportunity to create meaningful performance incentives, contribute to the best possible filling of posts, and thus promote operational readiness.

Security clearance

Security clearance is used to protect against extremists in the Bundeswehr and to prevent sabotage and espionage. Due to the years-long high workload at the Federal Office for the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (FOMCI) and the associated challenges, problems with security clearance intensified in the year under review. This long-standing maladministration is at odds with both the necessary increase in personnel and the increased security requirements.

As always, every servicewoman and man, both active and reserve service personnel, must be security vetted before being appointed to a service position. This must be provided before inclusion in weapons training at the latest, and is necessary to perform a security-sensitive duty during the further period of service. The 71,629 applications

for security checks in the year under review reflect a further significant increase in the number of cases at the FOMCI (2024: 67,976 – 2023: 62,809 – 2022: 57,595). At the same time the number of security checks performed in the year under review also increased to 80,444 (2024: 67,894 – 2023: 57,375 – 2022: 52,288). For the first time in many years, the FOMCI has therefore successfully completed significantly more procedures than new applications were received, and the work backlog was thus reduced.

The high workload and in many cases excessively long processing times, have had a negative impact on both the servicewomen and men and on the Bundeswehr's operational readiness. The lack of pre-employment screening for soldiers in the year under review, for example, resulted in approximately three percent of recruits being **released** from initial training. For some training units, even this small proportion produced a considerable amount of additional administrative work and frustration on all sides:

- *The 803 Armoured Engineer Battalion initial training round in April 2025 had 180 recruits. With 16 of them the lack of pre-employment screening for soldiers resulted in their replacement within the first four weeks.*
- *Of the almost 700 recruits who joined 37 Armoured Infantry Brigade at the beginning of 2025, 37, or over five percent, had to be relieved from initial training because neither security clearance nor a limited preliminary result were available in time.*

This often leads to a period of inactivity while waiting in the parent unit and a lack of prospects until leaving the Bundeswehr. At the same time training capacities are tied up and are not available for the recruitment of further applicants. Even in security-relevant areas such as defensive cyber activities or special units, lengthy vetting procedures exacerbate the shortage of personnel. For the servicewomen and men affected, these delays sometimes have serious legal career structure disadvantages and make career planning, preparations for relocations or foreign assignments more difficult.

- *One petitioner criticised the long time required for his security clearance, which prevents him from attending post-relevant training courses. For reasons that can no longer be clarified, his case was unprocessed at the FOMCI for eleven months. This delayed both his training and his ability to apply for service as a career soldier by at least a year. By the end of the year under review the extended security clearance introduced in June 2023 had still not been completed.*

While the FOMCI was able to reduce the average **processing time** for security checks (without security-relevant findings) for individual types of checks, such as extended security checks with background investigations, for example, in the year under review the average processing times for particularly frequently required security checks, such as pre-employment screening for soldiers, are higher than the previous year.

- *This took three weeks longer than in 2024 with both the standard and the extended security clearance, with an average duration of nine and eleven weeks respectively.*

There is no doubt that security-relevant findings must be duly identified and analysed in accordance with security requirements, however the Bundeswehr cannot afford to lose motivated and operationally ready servicewomen and men because of overlong bureaucratic procedures.

One of the main reasons for the long procedure times is the personnel situation at the FOMCI, which has barely changed compared to 2024 and remains unsatisfactory with only 76 percent of the posts in the department responsible for security clearance being filled. The increase in established posts in the Federal Ministry of Defence's area of responsibility from 2026 will at least make it possible to fill further posts here. Nevertheless, recruiting employees for these positions remains challenging.

Delays are also caused by inadequate **communication** between the FOMCI and the public prosecutor's office and other authorities involved. Consequently, time and again enquiries from the FOMCI remain unanswered for long periods and files are not sent or cannot be found because of a file number change. The FOMCI is not responsible for this, however it should take delays as an opportunity to agree standards and more efficient cooperation procedures with the respective other authorities.

- *During a petitioner's security clearance, it only emerged after several months, following a request for criminal files from two different public prosecutor's offices, that two files had been wrongly kept there because of two people's coincidentally identical names. The files were only available more than six months after the request, while their evaluation resulted in a decision just three weeks later.*

The Federal Ministry of Defence has been aware of the problem of long procedure times for quite a while now. Various recommendations for action are currently being implemented based on the 2024 report by the office responsible for accelerating the security clearance procedure. The focus of the targeted acceleration is to firstly reduce any security clearance procedures that have been open for some time. Long file retention times mean certain personal data that must always be kept up to date, for example the extract from the Federal Central Criminal Register, must be repeatedly requested from other security authorities. Another objective is to regulate the introduction of new procedures, where the Bundeswehr would revise the set of criteria to classify posts with security-sensitive activities.

Contrary to the Ministry of Defence's original plans, the **digitalisation** of the security clearance procedure, which was also earmarked as a recommendation for action, was still a work in progress in the year under review, which is regrettable, as an appropriate IT architecture and IT capability could significantly contribute to reducing workloads and automating the entire process. Reducing manual data transfers or replacing outdated computers will of course also help here.

The *Gesetz zur Modernisierung des Sicherheitsüberprüfungsgesetzes und zur Änderung beamtenrechtlicher Vorschriften* (Act to Modernise the Law on Security Screening and to Amend Civil Service Regulations), which came into force in January 2026, makes an important contribution in this respect. It facilitates the legal possibility of efficient, electronic and media discontinuity-free security file management, among other things by removing the ban on automated personal data comparisons. Further key elements of the act include the introduction of a general duty of disclosure, for example for contacts with foreign intelligence services or for pending criminal proceedings, and the extension of Internet searches, including social networks, to all vetting levels and all persons affected or involved.

The *Artikelgesetz zur Stärkung der Militärischen Sicherheit in der Bundeswehr* (Article Law on Strengthening Military Security in the Bundeswehr) will replace the previous pre-employment screening for soldiers from July 2026 with a supported **loyalty to the constitution check** before the service status begins. The Military Counterintelligence Service will support the office entrusted with the recruitment process here, such as a careers centre, in checking loyalty to the constitution, without being bound by the processes of the Security Clearance Check Act. The Ministry hopes this will streamline the procedure, concentrate on proven test criteria and speed it up with largely automated processing. This adjustment provides optimism for the required acceleration to increase personnel numbers.

Despite the planned procedure adjustments, the FOMCI's work backlog for ongoing security checks remains high. Good communication channels with the servicewomen and men affected must therefore be established. If a security clearance is likely to take a long time or have a negative outcome, this should be informed transparently and as early as possible. On one hand this can prevent both frustration shortly after joining the Bundeswehr and a foreseeable additional burden in the initial training company. On the other hand it also provides customised advice on further assignment planning for servicewomen and men who are already serving.

Personnel

Personnel and its build-up remain the key challenges for the Bundeswehr to develop the required capabilities. With the introduction of the new military service in particular, the question of whether and how the armed forces' personnel requirements can be covered is also now far more in the public eye. The targeted increase in personnel to a total of 260,000 active servicewomen and men by the mid-2030s is imperative to achieve the clearly defined and legally established target ranges on the basis of the capabilities pledged to NATO and to successfully implement *Operationsplan Deutschland* (Operational Plan Germany). This is the only way to create credible deterrence, so the established interim targets must therefore be achieved even earlier.

Demographic trends, the competition for skilled workers on the labour market, the continuing high drop-out rates and structural deficits continue to be the greatest challenges here. Without a consistent and sustainable personnel strategy, there is a real risk of a discrepancy between political ambitions and military reality.

5. Voluntary military service

Since the suspension of compulsory military service in 2011, voluntary military service has played a key role in the recruitment of Bundeswehr personnel. During their period of service, temporary-career volunteers can have a look behind the scenes in the Bundeswehr and learn about the various career opportunities the Bundeswehr offers – both military and civilian. With adoption of the *Wehrdienst-Modernisierungsgesetz* (Act on the Modernisation

of Military Service), parliament adjusted the period of voluntary military service and set it at six to eleven months. The goal here is, as it was, to recruit temporary-career volunteers from among those doing voluntary military service. The good news is that this was achieved in 3,129 cases in the year under review (2024: 2,562 – 2023: 2,164).

At the end of 2025 a total of 12,169 women and men were doing voluntary service in the Bundeswehr (2024: 10,119 – 2023: 9,642). Of these, 11,905 began their service in the year under review (2024: 9,156 – 2023: 8,801), which is an increase of approximately 30 percent compared to the previous year and is very positive. Within the six-month probationary period, however, 2,252 servicewomen and men ended their service in the armed forces prematurely, 1,919 left at their own request, primarily for personal reasons, and 333 were dismissed by the Bundeswehr, mainly due to a lack of physical or character suitability. This is a drop-out rate of approximately 19 percent, which is at least lower than the previous year (2024: approximately 24 percent).

The absence of an option to **terminate** voluntary military service prematurely after the six-month probationary period, to begin some other training, is repeatedly criticised harshly:

- *Many petitioners said they had been told in the Bundeswehr's career centres, or even by superiors, that they could leave the Bundeswehr at any time, even after their probationary period was over.*

The statutory regulations do not provide for a reduction in the commitment period. Early discharge is only possible if remaining in the Bundeswehr would mean particular hardship due to personal, especially domestic, professional or economic reasons and the discharge has been requested. According to the Ministry of Defence, the prospect of a training or study place generally does not mean there will be any particular hardship. The Bundeswehr does, however, regularly discharge people performing voluntary military service prematurely at their request if they only have a maximum of three months of service remaining until the end of their specified period of service and have proof of a subsequent job or a training or study place. Such a flexible approach is very welcome. On one hand, the Bundeswehr fulfils its duty of care by giving those doing voluntary military service who do not wish to be taken on as temporary-career volunteers the opportunity to begin a civilian training programme or study place. On the other hand, there is sufficient lead time to fill the posts that become prematurely vacant.

The expectations for voluntary military service in **home defence**, including an increase in the reserve service, have not been met. Once again there were not enough interested people in the year under review. The figures illustrate the continuous downward trend with recruitment: While 634 volunteers began their service in 2024 (2023: 786), by the end of June 2025 the number had fallen to 255. The Bundeswehr therefore correctly ended this military service model as a standalone project in June 2025.

Voluntary military service

Voluntary military service as a special civic commitment is an important component of the concept of the “new military service”. It is crucial that it be specifically further strengthened and made as attractive as possible, as it is key for the targeted personnel increases for credible national defence.

6. Reserves

The Bundeswehr reserve service is a pillar of national and alliance defence and international crisis management that must be strengthened. In the year under review, a total of 21,291 (2024: 20,074 – 2023: 19,084) reservists, designated and not designated for assignment, supported the active troops, including with their civilian qualifications and experience, in 50,245 (2024: 47,264 – 2023: 45,194) posts, the duration of which ranged from one day up to twelve months. This included 1,881 women (2024: 1,682 – 2023: 1,436).

60,192 reservists were called up in the year under review (2024: 49,244 – 2023: 43,065). 5,314 of these were women (2024: 4,170 – 2023: 3,246). Compared to previous years, the number of reservists called up has therefore increased once again, partly due to introduction of the reserve assignment for retiring service personnel in October 2021. By the end of the year under review, the Bundeswehr had reserve assigned a total of 28,695 women and men, which is clearly too low given the Bundeswehr's capability targets of 200,000 reservists by 2035, among other factors, as pledged by the German government to NATO.

An increase in the number of reserve service personnel will on one hand be achieved with the new military service. On the other hand, the new **directive for reservist work**, which is expected to come into force in the first quarter of 2026 and defines priorities, goals, targets and responsibilities in reservist work, will develop the reserve assignment for retiring service personnel into a standard reserve assignment. Instead of the current six-year reserve

assignment for retiring service personnel, the new reserve assignment will then last until the end of service supervision (at the latest until the age of 65), which is likely to result in a further increase in the total number of people reserve assigned. This measure is extremely beneficial, as it allows the Bundeswehr to retain the qualifications and skills of reservists for much longer. A further goal is to ensure reserve assignments are only made for posts in the reinforcement reserve. These are add-on posts in the active forces, used for specific growth in the event of states of tension and defence.

According to the Bundeswehr's current capability profile, approximately 90,000 reservists are required to also ensure the required operational readiness. This includes 60,000 troops in the reinforcement reserve. Added to this are 30,000 troops in the reserve pool, where reservists deputise for active servicemen and women at what are known as "mirror duty stations" during absence and deployment periods. At the end of the year under review, however, only 23,655 women and men were assigned to the **reinforcement reserve**, compared to 36,356 in the reserve pool. 181 reserve assigned reservists were not assigned to either of these categories. The Bundeswehr therefore has not achieved the stated capability target. According to the Ministry of Defence, the process of building up corresponding structures in the reinforcement reserve is indeed ongoing, but a U-turn in the reserve assignment practice is not yet discernible. One reason for this, for example, is the reorganisation of the Bundeswehr, with the result that the corresponding structures in the target organisation have not yet been fully installed. The Ministry also believes it would make sense to only adjust the personnel structure for reservists once a new capability profile is available. Nevertheless, it should now emphatically create the conditions for reserve assignments in the reinforcement reserve.

Well-trained reservists are of fundamental importance for the Federal Republic of Germany's defence preparedness. Given the immense interest shown by citizens in contributing to this, the Bundeswehr must quickly reorganise its **range of training courses** for the target group, so reservists can better complete the training necessary for their career bracket:

- *Reservists criticised the fact that the current system puts them at a disadvantage compared to active service personnel and called for greater modularisation of the courses on offer. The Federal Ministry of Defence explained that all training courses are basically open for reservists with up to two places each. With the content and quantity, however, the programmes are primarily oriented on the required military needs, which are typically the highest for active personnel and are therefore the benchmark for the training on offer at the respective training facilities. Nevertheless, the Ministry has recognised that modularisation and flexibilisation of the training courses on offer are important building blocks in meeting the armed forces' need for qualified reservists.*

The Bundeswehr's centre of expertise for reservist affairs in the Armed Forces Office has therefore been tasked with redesigning the framework conditions for training reservists in all organisational components. It is therefore revising the corresponding general regulation to better take the limited availability of reservists due to private and professional matters into account. Finalisation is scheduled for Q1 2026. The goal, quite rightly, is to make the training courses more modular and technology-based for the medium and long term. This is essential, as a flexible range of training on offer increases the attractiveness of reservist service and thus the second career advertised by the Bundeswehr, along with the civilian profession.

Irrespective of this, in the future the Bundeswehr should offer its own training programme for the reservist service, which could be less extensive and therefore shorter than that for active troops. It is important that reservists receive a basic training structure to be able to build on this with reservist services.

It is equally important that problems that arise in the processing of personnel matters, such as lengthy procedure times or poor communication, be resolved quickly.

The amendments to the **Military Career Regulation**, which allow reserve officer cadets with the status of temporary-career volunteer to be promoted to senior ensign again after 30 months, are to be welcomed. The frustration of some reserve officer cadets outside of military service about the completion of 24 additional reserve duty training days linked with this is generally understandable. The new regulation, however, facilitates the equal treatment of reserve officer cadets and aspirants in the line service career bracket. The visibility of the reserves' potential leaders in the armed forces would also be increased and a professionalisation of the reserves would be enabled. The amended Military Career Regulation also offers the possibility of obliging reserve officer cadets with pre-service periods for a three-year training period in the service status of a temporary-career volunteer.

The Bundeswehr still does not see any need to amend the provisions of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act, according to which the **maximum age limit** is 65 for all status groups, without exception.

- *Once again in the year under review, many experienced and motivated reservists in good health approached the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, as they wanted to serve beyond the age of 65.*

With its reserve strategy, to be updated by April 2026, the Bundeswehr focuses on the reinforcement reserve, which requires a majority of younger people due to the requirements of home defence and the focus on national and alliance defence. However, every single person is needed, especially in view of the 200,000 reservists that the Bundeswehr has pledged to NATO. It is therefore high time for the legislators to make the outdated inflexible age limit of 65 more flexible. In Sweden, for example, compulsory military service applies until the age of 70.

Civilian employees working in the reserves also regularly contact the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces:

- *Civilian personnel in the Bundeswehr in particular criticised the fact that they were no longer being reserve assigned and that existing reserve assignments were being removed in places.*

According to statements by the Ministry of Defence, these were reserve assignments of people whose civilian duties would also demonstrably have to be performed in a state of tension or defence. In all other cases the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management refrained from cancelling reserve assignments. In this context, the Ministry has also decided that Bundeswehr civilian personnel can generally also be reserve assigned to the reserve pool, until the duties and assignments in a state of tension or defence have been conclusively determined. Short-term military service in a military assignment would continue to be permitted, whereas longer-term military service to temporarily improve personnel operational readiness would typically be excluded. Bundeswehr civilian employees may only be reserve assigned to the reinforcement reserve if the person concerned is demonstrably dispensable for the performance of civilian duties in a state of tension or defence. This is understandable, as civilian personnel are also essential for the Bundeswehr's operational readiness in a national and alliance defence scenario. The decisive factor here is that a person cannot serve their employer in two statuses at the same time. The same applies to civilian personnel of other authorities and organisations who also perform corresponding duties at state and federal level, in particular members of the emergency services.

Home defence forces

The home defence forces are a key component of Operational Plan Germany and are essential for national and alliance defence. They protect military facilities and infrastructure such as ports and railway systems with states of tension and defence or in the event of a crisis situation. They also secure staging and transfer points for troop transports of allied forces in Germany's role as a NATO operational base and hub. In peacetime, the home defence forces can be deployed as part of administrative assistance, in the event of serious accidents or natural disasters, for example. In spring 2025, the Bundeswehr pooled the home defence forces, six home defence regiments and approximately 60 home defence companies, into a separate division and placed it under the control of the Army to enable uniform command, training and deployment planning. This organisational measure is extremely welcome, as it serves to positively dovetail the reserve personnel and active service personnel.

The transfer of command also affected the **training of those without prior service**, which a total of 1,480 women and men have completed since its introduction in 2018. With a training offer of 500 places in the year under review (2024: 895 – 2023: 493) the Ministry of Defence retained its commitment to this training due to the media interest and the considerable advertising potential. Interested people and those without prior service should also have the opportunity to do military training in the Bundeswehr reserve at no great effort, so they can ideally be assigned in the protection and security forces and in the home defence forces. The target qualification (guard and security soldier), however, was not achieved in all cases due to inadequate training in some areas. The Ministry has therefore re-evaluated the training modules and has the training centrally controlled in the Armed Forces Office. At the same time, there are concerns that, of the many thousands of interested people, only a fraction submit an application. And of these not all are available for military service, meaning the training places on offer (1,000 planned in 2026) have never been fully utilised in the past.

The fact that the training of people without prior service will continue is also welcome. Many women and men would like to support the reserve close to home, thus the Bundeswehr should increase its efforts to encourage them to apply. It is essential, however, that those that complete this training are enabled to actually be assigned to the reserve in the future, otherwise the associated training expense for the Bundeswehr is a waste of already scarce human and material resources.

- *Some of those affected criticised the fact that after the age of 60 they are no longer admitted to training for people with no prior service.*

At the end of the year under review, the Ministry of Defence initially introduced a maximum age limit of 57 years for training this cohort. The individual regional territorial commands had made different approval decisions on this in the past. The decisive criterion in determining the uniform age limit was operational capability. Logically or realistically, for example, junior rank service personnel who have already reached the age of 60 cannot be called up where a situation has deteriorated. Furthermore, the still limited training capacities must also be utilised as efficiently as possible. The decision taken is therefore understandable.

Assurance of livelihood and other benefits

An amendment to the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act, which the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces had suggested several times in recent years, is of course extremely welcome. Since 2026, the legislators have provided for reservists who commute daily between their home and duty station to be reimbursed for **travel expenses** from the 30th kilometre onwards at a rate of EUR 0.20 per kilometre, limited to a maximum of EUR 20 per day of service.

Former career soldiers who continue in the reserve service after their active service in the Bundeswehr, see themselves at a disadvantage with the **limit on additional earnings** in accordance with the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act:

- *They criticised the fact that the limits on additional earnings in the Military Pensions Act, which were largely abolished by the Zeitenwende article law, had not been transferred to the granting of the minimum benefit in accordance with the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act to former career soldiers. Former career soldiers who work in the private sector after their time in the Bundeswehr do not suffer this disadvantage, as their earnings are not offset against their pensions and related benefits.*

According to the Bundeswehr, the considerations based on the *Zeitenwende* article law are not transferable to pension benefit recipients serving as reservists for systematic and legal policy reasons. In addition to their pension, reservists currently receive a rank-related bonus (approximately EUR 700 per month), supplements similar to those received by active service personnel and tax-free benefits for pension benefit recipients in accordance with the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act. Based on their pension, this puts them in the same position as if they were reactivated. Granting an additional unreduced pension that is not offset against the minimum benefit would not be compatible with the aim of the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act. The benefits provided by the Act will enable reservists to maintain a standard of living in line with their previous economic circumstances for the period of service they serve for without their previous income. At the end of the year under review, the legislators amended the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act with the Act on the Modernisation of Military Service so that, in future, the pensions of civil servants, a status group comparable to that of former career soldiers, will also be offset against benefits in accordance with the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act. Parliament therefore did not see any need for an amendment in the petitioners' favour here, but rather confirmed the legal situation by including a further group of people. Even if this does not take the aspect of increasing the attractiveness of reserve duty for pension benefit recipients into account, especially in understaffed assignments, the Bundeswehr's opinion is nevertheless generally understandable.

Reserves

The reserve service must be operationally aligned to meet national and alliance defence requirements. To achieve the targeted increase to 200,000 reservists in particular, the Bundeswehr must create incentives to stay involved with the forces after active service. The aim here above all is to recruit young people and ensure the necessary full material equipping of the reserve to active service personnel level announced by the Minister of Defence by 2035. Bureaucratic hurdles making it difficult to apply to become a reservist must be removed immediately.

7. Women in the armed forces

Despite all efforts to specifically recruit women, the proportion of servicewomen rose only minimally to 13.71 percent in the year under review (2024: 13.62 percent) and therefore, outside of the Medical Service, fell far short of the 20 percent required by the Act on Equal Opportunities for Female and Male Military Personnel of the Bundeswehr. The 50 percent target in the Medical Service has still not been reached either. The number of women who applied to serve in the armed forces remained stable at approximately 8,200, however in relation to the overall increase in applications for military service, the proportion of female applicants fell from 16 percent in 2024 to 15 percent in the year under review, which will not increase the percentage of women in the combat force. This is now ten percent (2024: 9.89 percent), while the figure with career soldiers outside of the Medical Service is only approximately seven percent (2024: approximately six percent). In the Bundeswehr as a whole, the percentage of women among career soldiers was 9.9 percent (2024: 9.35 percent).

The Ministry of Defence recognises that the Bundeswehr absolutely needs more servicewomen. Therefore, beyond considerations for compulsory military service for women, special efforts are required to recruit more interested women suitable for the Bundeswehr and to retain them in its ranks. It is thus important to make women in the Bundeswehr more visible, and to demonstrate that they do of course have career opportunities in it. The Ministry of Defence has made the promotion of women a priority task. It therefore emphasizes female **role models**, and not just in career coaching, even though servicewomen in the leadership ranks in particular are making positive headlines.

- *The naming of the first facility after a female soldier who fought in the Prussian army, the “Unteroffizier-Friederike-Krüger-Kaserne” barracks in Munster, also had a signalling effect.*

This is not token politics, but rather it shows that women have earned their place in the Bundeswehr, including the combat units – as they have in all other modern armed forces.

Efforts to increase the number of women in combat units will, however, only be successful in the long term if the Bundeswehr resolutely opposes any form of gender-based **discrimination**, because servicewomen in particular are still complaining about sexist behaviour and discriminatory remarks in everyday service life. The “Discrimination and violence in the Bundeswehr” point of contact in the Ministry of Defence is available to servicewomen and men for such cases. The command authorities in all organisational areas must ensure that discriminatory and misogynistic incidents are not tolerated in the units, and taking decisive action against them, including beyond disciplinary action, must be an integral part of the leadership culture. This in particular applies in training facilities, where respectful behaviour and a tone based on the principles of leadership development and civic education are a prerequisite for the camaraderie and the trust in one’s comrades required in an emergency. Sexist and derogatory statements have no place in a Bundeswehr that has had women in the ranks of its combat units for 25 years. It is therefore welcome and logical that the planned follow-up study to the “*Bunt in der Bundeswehr?!?*” (Colourful in the Bundeswehr?!) study, first published six years ago, will also take a closer look at the discrimination experienced by servicewomen and at measures to counter stereotypes.

Plus, the **framework conditions** must also be right for women to choose the Bundeswehr over the many other possible alternatives. Infrastructure issues such as the number of toilets or the design of shower rooms can also include aspects relevant to gender equality. Where the structures are oriented towards men, unequal treatment or a lack of precautions, functioning locks on accommodation doors or separate toilets close enough to a servicewoman’s room, for example, are not always immediately apparent, but can be the reason why women do not feel comfortable.

The appropriate outfitting and equipment for servicewomen is an ongoing issue – even in small dimensions or with an individually adjustable fit. The clothing for pregnant servicewomen remains unsatisfactory:

- *A survey in 1 Armoured Division revealed that, at 8 out of 14 locations, it still took an average of 21 days or longer for maternity clothing to be issued and tried on. The ordering process is also time-consuming and error-prone, as the maternity clothing sizes differ from the usual Bundeswehr sizes, with pregnant servicewomen having to resort, time and again, to civilian clothing. To speed up the process, a military equal opportunity officer therefore recommended having sample sets available to try on at all issuing points and with the different size charts on display.*

There must also be flexible options to make family, private life and work more compatible with attractive working models. A 2025 public opinion poll conducted by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences

clearly shows that women in the relevant age group of 16 to 29 rate both equality and compatibility of family and service in the Bundeswehr much more negatively than men of the same age. At the same time, following years of stagnation, the study shows an increased interest among young women in the Bundeswehr as an employer, although so far it tends to be as a civilian employee. This should be an incentive for all involved to continue working on these issues. Employer attractiveness also includes personnel management with military couples that focuses on the advancement of both partners, considers the difficulties of single parents, and bears career development prospects for later in life in mind. The recognition of training courses and the continuation of childcare facilities for school children during school holidays at Bundeswehr locations also fall into this category. Finally, it must not be ignored that, in everyday service life, setbacks with the compatibility of family and duty, presumedly with reference to national and alliance defence, impact on women in particular, as in social reality they are still regularly expected to do family and care work.

The appointment of the highest-ranking servicewoman in the Bundeswehr as its first Deputy Chief of Defence sent a visible signal on the continuing issue of advancing and promoting women in **leadership positions**. Nevertheless, the Bundeswehr must continue to prove that it is serious about equal opportunities at the top, outside of the Medical Service. Even in the Medical Service, the goal of adequate participation in leadership positions has not yet been achieved. Women must therefore be promoted early and specifically, so they are available at all levels and can move up where necessary.

Neither the Federal Ministry of Defence nor the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management saw any cause for concern in the year under review. In the third Radar report on the advancement of female officers in the armed forces, they did not find any anomalies that would indicate systematic discrimination of female officers compared to male officers. Contrary to that assumed in the first report, disadvantages could not (no longer) be seen with the personnel development projections. Due, however, to the still relatively small number of servicewomen in operational service who are eligible for consideration for top positions as part of assignment planning, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces believes this does not provide enough information and requires further monitoring. It is therefore understandable that the **Radar report** calls for a future examination of whether systemic barriers exist, as women in the Bundeswehr are not equally represented in all careers and fields of competence. The third Radar report concludes, however, that servicewomen are still significantly under-represented with participation in high-level training programmes, such as the National General/Admiral Staff Officer course, and with high-ranking command positions. The proportion of women in deputy branch head posts in the Ministry of Defence has stagnated at four percent.

There appears to be another bottleneck in the selection procedures for **commander posts**. From 2024 to 2027, there were only 3 servicewomen among the 243 candidates selected for this position. According to the current Radar report, only five servicewomen have ever been appointed as commanders. The Ministry of Defence is therefore paying particular attention to the preparatory work for selecting commanders from 2028 onwards. In this context, directly addressing women and men suitable for leadership and top-rank assignments in order to proactively recruit them as career officers is to be welcomed. The planned consideration of the findings of the Radar reports with the development of the new military equal opportunities plan to remove existing hurdles appears to make sense, because:

- *Time and again, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces receives petitions from highly qualified servicewomen who feel disadvantaged on their way to the top, or do not receive enough support from their superiors. Even in the Medical Service, where statistically almost every second leadership position must be held by a servicewoman, only a few are promoted to Medical Corps colonel or Medical Corps brigadier general.*

It is rarely possible, of course, to prove direct discrimination in individual cases, with performance evaluations or staffing procedures, for example; the margins of appreciation are too great, the selection decisions too difficult to review and the arguments for decisions made are too varied.

In the year under review, there were still some uncertainties on action with regard to the rights in accordance with the revised Act on Equal Opportunities for Female and Male Military Personnel of the Bundeswehr, particularly in terms of the responsibilities, scope and timing of the involvement of the military **equal opportunity officers**. This might be, among other things, because it was still not possible to publish the implementation provisions in the year under review, which is why the military equal opportunity officers' networking is still of key importance.

The law already makes it clear that the equal opportunity officers have a right of participation with measures by the respective sub-office, which affect their very wide-ranging task area. This must not be undermined by the sub-office management with internal guidelines or practices.

- *Military equal opportunity officers, for example, increasingly reported that superiors had denied requests for telework and instead resorted to mobile working without the involvement of the equal opportunity officer.*

According to the Ministry of Defence, the equal opportunity officers should also be involved with construction and infrastructure projects, in order to be able to point out equality-relevant aspects early on, because, according to reports by equal opportunity officers, some of those responsible have not yet classified these matters as being “obliged to cooperate”. Furthermore, access to necessary documents and information is also extremely important, which is why sub-office managers should support their equal opportunity officers in quickly obtaining security clearances or renewing them in good time.

Women in the armed forces

Even 25 years on, after the Bundeswehr opened up all areas to women, their full potential in the Bundeswehr has not been tapped. Servicewomen must be promoted early and specifically so that they are available at all levels and can also move up into leadership positions. Gender stereotypes must be dismantled. The attractiveness of the service must be increased with suitable working time models. And sexism, of course, has no place in the Bundeswehr.

8. Materiel

Clothing and personal equipment

Providing personal clothing for servicewomen and men has certainly improved in recent years thanks to the political will as well as the efforts of the industry and the Bundeswehr areas involved in this process. Where service personnel once complained about a lack of equipment, today they are concerned about the lack of storage options for the flood of new personal equipment. One measure to solve this problem is the procurement of lockable under-bed drawers. Support is also provided here by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Infrastructure, Environmental Protection and Services, which is pushing the Institute for Federal Real Estate to provide suitable storage space in urgent cases.

As planned, the armed forces largely managed to provide our servicewomen and men all items of the advanced **full resourcing** (Armed Forces combat clothing kit, MOBAST protection and carrying system, Armed Forces combat helmet and 110-litre rucksack system) by the end of 2025. All items are available or ready for collection in almost all cases and are well received by the troops.

- *Unfortunately problems still persist with the Sea Battalion, where the last shipments will be delivered in 2026.*

The planned Bundeswehr personnel increase poses a new challenge for the procurement and provision of the necessary personal equipment, which, along with clothing, must be available when every servicewoman or man joins the Bundeswehr. The armed forces should therefore already be procuring items with relatively long production times more quickly, i.e. as a matter of priority.

It is important that the issuing of clothing and footwear run smoothly, especially to avoid any understandable dissatisfaction with recruits:

- *The clothing process with pretraining, for example, also had its issues here and there, because the number of recruits originally planned for the location by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management had increased significantly at short notice.*

The rigid **induction dates** on the first of each month and the resultant unfavourable planning in individual cases, can also produce frustration:

- *In the year under review, recruits started their service on Wednesday 1 October, and were sent home the very next day, the day before German Unity Day, without having received any uniform items.*

It is of course understandable that it is not always possible to complete the entire clothing process in such a short time, but it would be helpful and would avoid annoyance with recruits full of expectation if this fact were clearly pointed out early on in the correspondence provided beforehand where possible.

The **digitalisation** of the clothing system can make a significant contribution to ensuring improvement here, which is why the Bundeswehr logically began this process in 2024. In the year under review, *Bw Bekleidungsmanagement GmbH* identified various market-available technologies for digital outfitting with clothing and footwear, and trialled these in daytime operations for widespread use. The company is currently developing and testing an algorithm for the automated sizing of clothing items together with the Bundeswehr Research Institute for Materials, Fuels and Lubricants. The data required here is collected by six body scanners in the Bundeswehr. In future, the Bundeswehr plans to combine this algorithm with a mobile measuring solution and a corresponding app for recruits.

The employees at the service points for issuing and trying clothing on will also benefit from the planned digitalisation. New software tested in the year under review will make the service more efficient and more attractive and, among other things, include the assignment of recruits to clothing and trying on points. A first version is already in use, and work is also underway on an online platform, which in the future recruits will be able to use to order and book the respective services. The platform went live at the end of the year under review with its first functions – access to individual clothing and equipment records and item replacement. In view of the planned Bundeswehr personnel increase in particular, this would appear to be the only available solution. How quickly and successfully the individual planned measures will be implemented remains to be seen.

If clothing and personal equipment are worn out, servicewomen and men are obliged to return the items to the responsible *Bw Bekleidungsmanagement GmbH* service point for **repair** or replacement. This can cause problems with customised clothing and equipment items:

- *A 2.04 metre-tall serviceman had to hand in his custom-made waterproof protection gear without having any spare clothing. As the waiting times for a customised replacement can be quite long at times, he was severely impaired in the performance of his duties.*

The Ministry of Defence used the case as an opportunity to ensure that in future custom-made clothing items will only be handed over if an adequate replacement item is also available. This exception makes a lot of sense and ensures that those affected are provided the right equipment at all times.

In a similar context, a specific suggestion for improvement was submitted to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces:

- *According to one serviceman, MOBAST use in everyday life results in rapid wear of individual parts, such as Velcro fasteners and cords. Instead of having to send MOBAST to the responsible service point's repair service, he suggested adding these wear and tear parts to the personally available MOBAST repair kit.*

The Federal Ministry of Defence sees no need for this, as there were no complaints from the troops about excessive wear and tear. The repair kit for MOBAST 2.0 is also being adapted, and will include more individual parts in future, but whether or not this will actually produce a remedy remains to be seen.

Clear **communication** is also decisive in preventing misunderstandings with the availabilities of clothing and equipment. The following example highlights the need for improvement here:

- *During a visit to the troops with 281 Communication and Information Systems Support Battalion, recruits complained about their lack of NBC individual protection. The Federal Ministry of Defence clarified that these items are generally available in sufficient quantities in the NBC Material Centre, and that contracts have already been concluded to supply further masks until 2027. The training centres must apply for this equipment for recruits, which apparently had not been done.*

Irrespective of the communication deficit, however, the fact that this important protective equipment is available in sufficient quantities is of course encouraging.

The insufficient breathability of the mechanics coveralls for aircraft engineering personnel has been the subject of petitions for many years. It is therefore good to hear that the Bundeswehr will now finally be procuring modernised **mechanics clothing** for the approximately 13,000 servicewomen and men affected. Delivery of the first items is planned for the end of 2026.

Service personnel receive training-specific personal **protective equipment** for certain training courses. It is of course unfortunate when it is not available in good time:

- *Before a training course for working with chainsaws, apart from cut-proof boots, the rest of the necessary protective equipment was missing. Participation in the course was only possible because the training centre happened to provide the required items itself, although most of them didn't fit properly.*

To solve this recurring problem, the Federal Ministry of Defence plans to procure and stock all personal protective equipment items at a central location. Three out of four partial packages of this equipment will be delivered by the end of 2026.

Drones

The procurement and use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), or drones, and defence against them were important topics for the Bundeswehr in the year under review. Numerous drone sightings over critical infrastructure and Bundeswehr sites are a real danger, which has intensified the debate on the responsibility for defence against drones. The question as to whether the Bundeswehr could respond appropriately to the threat posed by drones also came up.

- *During visits to the troops, servicewomen and men reported drone flights over and near Bundeswehr locations. Although they regularly emphasised the good cooperation with the police, they criticised the different responsibilities concerning defence against drones.*

The fact that the Bundestag debated the draft of a second law to amend the **Aviation Security Act** at the end of the year under review and subsequently referred it to the committees for further consultation, is therefore to be welcomed. The law will strengthen the capabilities for defence against hybrid attacks by drones on critical infrastructure facilities and airports. It is crucial that responsibilities are clearly defined and that this produces security of action. With the opening of the *Gemeinsamen Drohnenabwehrzentrum* (Joint Drone Defence Centre) in Berlin in December 2025, the federal and state governments have reached an important milestone in better integrating the federal security authorities, state police forces and the Bundeswehr with one another.

It is also important and correct that the *Artikelgesetz zur Stärkung der Militärischen Sicherheit in der Bundeswehr* (Article Law on Strengthening Military Security in the Bundeswehr), which was passed in the year under review, has strengthened the military police's powers of identification. This change was necessary, as the previous legal situation allowed the military police to use direct force to defend against drones over military properties, but not to investigate the people controlling them outside of military areas. They are now also allowed to do so under certain conditions in the immediate vicinity of military security areas and outside military areas. To establish their identity, military police officers may stop the person concerned and ask for their personal details. If their identity cannot be established in some other way, they can also detain the person and take them to the nearest Bundeswehr office or to the police. Finally, they are also authorised to search the person being checked for weapons, explosives and other dangerous objects for their own protection, if this is necessary under the given circumstances. Although regrettable that the powers of the **military police** are still not bundled in a military police duties act, the adopted extensions of the legal powers can be a first step towards effectively securing military areas from spying attacks – but only if the technical means for drone neutralization are significantly improved and members of the Bundeswehr are trained accordingly.

The armed forces have systems with various sensors and effectors for drone reconnaissance. A mixture of low-cost mobile defence systems and expensive, higher-quality individual systems provides the necessary efficiency for **drone neutralization**. The Bundeswehr is procuring air defence systems to protect against larger drones and missiles, such as the Skyranger 30 and the Arrow 3 missile defence system, for example. These efforts are still not sufficient, however, and additional systems will be required to be truly defence-capable.

- *The first visit to the troops after taking office in July 2025 took the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to Holzdorf/Schönnewalde air base, where the Arrow 3 weapon system is stationed with its radar site.*

Worryingly, however, the system was spied on by foreign drones just two days before it went into operation at the beginning of December of the year under review, and the Bundeswehr was unable to provide effective drone neutralisation.

The Bundeswehr uses jammers, interceptor drones, lasers and microwave weapons to neutralise small drones, but they are not yet extensively available across the armed forces, which is of course unfortunate. Defence against cheap drones can be very **costly** for the Bundeswehr, so it should not combat commercially available, mass-produced drones with expensive equipment. The fact that the Bundeswehr is working intensively on this topic, driving training in the air defence area forward and having sites develop their own solutions for protection against drones, is therefore very welcome.

At the same time, the Bundeswehr itself is also drawing on the use of drones, but the armed forces are lagging too far behind in equipping sites with modern unmanned systems:

- *During a visit to the troops, some of them criticised the fact that the KZO and LUNA drones were already outdated when they were introduced.*

Indeed, the Bundeswehr does of course have stocks of drones in various sizes for various purposes. In the year under review, the Ministry of Defence additionally began procuring numerous drones, such as the Heron TP and further developed ALADIN systems. With the assistance of start-up companies and the defence industry, the Bundeswehr also continued to expand its widespread equipping with state-of-the-art drones. These must now quickly go into series production, be produced in high numbers and supplied to the armed forces. And the Bundeswehr should also support the innovative ideas of servicewomen and men in this area as a lesson learnt from the war in Ukraine.

The procurement and testing of **loitering munitions** was another important topic in the year under review. Commonly known as kamikaze drones, these systems are of course similar to drones, but they are designed for one use only and are fired like other munition types. With their classification as ammunition, they can be produced and deployed more cheaply, quickly and under less stringent conditions than drones.

In this context, it is of course correct that the Bundeswehr plans to order combat drones, as wars are increasingly being determined by them in massive numbers, along with automated and networked weapons systems and artificial intelligence (AI). **Armed drones** and AI-supported and autonomously guided systems are therefore necessary to be able to act in modern conflicts and to effectively protect our own forces, as they make low demands on materials, and above all on personnel. The standoff capability issue, i.e. engaging long-range targets with precision weapons, must be prioritised in future debates. This requires clear political, legal and ethical guidelines and specifications.

Digitalisation of Land-based Operations (D-LBO)

The difficulties and delays with the “Digitalisation of Land-based Operations” (DLBO) project, reported in the media in the year under review, are worrying. They hinder the urgently required modernisation of the Bundeswehr’s command and control assets and means of communication, as well as its interoperability with NATO partners, and thus the Bundeswehr’s mission performance. No details are disclosed here so that conclusions about the Bundeswehr’s capabilities cannot be drawn, and the safety of our servicewomen and men is not endangered. All parties involved are, however, asked to quickly find a viable solution for the armed forces. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces will continue to follow the issue closely.

Materiel

A rapidly deployable, fully equipped and sustainable Bundeswehr is of the utmost importance. Gilt-edge solutions are a thing of the past, and in the spirit of the *Zeitenwende* (turning point), innovation, material and equipment availability, sovereignty in procurement, sufficient ammunition, functioning logistics and personal equipment, are just as crucial as major defence equipment. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have put the required capabilities and importance of drones in war on full display.

9. Bureaucracy and efficiency

Combining military decision-making with the necessary legal conformity is a permanent task for the Bundeswehr. Administrative procedures in the armed forces and the Bundeswehr administration generally ensure transparency and plannable processes here. Excessive bureaucracy, on the other hand, slows processes down, which, in petitions and during his visits to the troops, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces repeatedly recognises

is the rule rather than the exception. Although ensuring that the armed forces act efficiently is important, the Bundeswehr's operational readiness and responsiveness is reduced by too much bureaucracy, and efficiency can only take effect if clear procedures are specified and thus create added value. This requires clear prioritisation, which the newly constituted federal government recognised in the year under review. The "Bureaucracy reduction" section in the coalition agreement also covers the Ministry of Defence's area of responsibility. In addition to a planned personnel reduction in ministerial administration by at least eight percent by 2029, each federal ministry will carry out several practical checks per year to reduce bureaucracy. In its May 2025 "*Handlungsbedarf bei der Bundeswehr*" (Need for action in the Bundeswehr) special report, the German Supreme Audit Institution believes bureaucracy in the Bundeswehr could be reduced if, for example, reporting and notification requirements were reduced to a necessary level.

- *The Federal Audit Office believes the Ministry's general task appraisal must be further developed.*

There are no grounds to question this assessment. Asked for its opinion, the Federal Ministry of Defence explained that the legal framework would certainly allow for the corresponding scope for action in order to act flexibly and pragmatically. It is, however, the duty of all authorising superiors to regularly question the necessity of reporting and notification requirements in their own area of responsibility.

As apparently this is not always successful, the long-called for **change in mentality** is urgently required in the Ministry of Defence's area of responsibility. Achieving this, however, is a long and difficult process, as, in the Ministry's opinion, the security and control mentality of many members of the Bundeswehr is still too pronounced and those responsible are not always willing to change.

- *During discussions, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces regularly notes that the "just do it!" mentality, is very strong with many members of the Bundeswehr. Servicewomen and men insist they want to think and therefore also act with less bureaucracy. Unfortunately, however, all too often there is an override by higher offices, right up to the Ministry itself, which prevents more unbureaucratic action at the unit or battalion level.*

The Ministry's decision to train superiors in particular in reducing bureaucracy is therefore logical and correct. Accordingly, it has adjusted the syllabus at subordinate academies, schools and other educational facilities, and as part of management training. In future, the Bundeswehr will increasingly teach topics such as leading by example and trust, delegating and allocating responsibility, creating and utilising room for manoeuvre, and accepting and dealing with mistakes, with the goal of freeing up resources for the core mission.

The fact that the necessary reduction in bureaucracy is now a top priority is also very welcome. At the Bundeswehr conference in November 2025, the Minister of Defence also tasked their state secretaries and the Chief of Defence in particular with reducing bureaucracy in the armed forces. The Minister therefore emphasised that superiors in the Bundeswehr must lead – and not just manage. Introduced regulations would ensure this remit is performed correctly. The "**Debureaucratisation and Modernisation Agenda 2.0**" will therefore be put together by Easter 2026. To meet the justified expectations of servicewomen and men, the new agenda's content must not be as laborious as its name currently suggests, and it is crucial that it be filled with specific, pragmatic and easily implementable content. Ultimately, what counts is not what is written in an agenda – but rather the resultant swift action.

In 2023, the Ministry of Defence set up the **bureaucracy reduction point of contact** to record and examine bureaucratic obstacles reported by the troops via a central reporting system on the Bundeswehr intranet and, in the best case, to resolve them directly. While this is well thought out, it is apparently not yet perfectly implemented. Quite a few of those who are aware of the point of contact, clearly criticise its procedures:

- *An NCO who submitted a proposal in summer 2024 complained in his November 2025 petition that he had not yet received a result. The Ministry of Defence emphasised that it was pursuing the matter with the required urgency. However, reports of bureaucratic obstacles in the personnel processing area, such as the petitioner's, are frequent, which is why his petition is one of many very complex reports that must be processed. In his case, legal requirements made it even more difficult to resolve the issue.*

The fact that reports about bureaucratic obstacles take too long, because of the bureaucracy itself, tells us much. It is therefore all the more important to deliver specific results to increase acceptance of the point of contact in the armed forces. The fact that bureaucracy was able to be successfully reduced in 62 percent of all processed reports is a step in the right direction.

Procurement

Bureaucracy reduction within the Bundeswehr is a major point of interaction with the national and European procurement system. This is extremely complex, as an enormously high density of regulations and many factors, including technical requirements, quality, security, safety and economic aspects, contribute to lengthy processes. This means the required material does not reach the troops quickly enough, which in turn increases the displeasure of the offices concerned. There is therefore an urgent need for action and a backlog in military procurement, due in particular to the need to adapt the regulatory situation. In the year under review, the Ministry of Defence rightly initiated various reforms which will ensure considerable improvements here.

The Act on Accelerated Planning and Procurement for the Bundeswehr includes the reorganisation and significant expansion of the Bundeswehr Planning and Procurement Acceleration Act introduced in 2022. This includes comprehensive **simplifications under public procurement law**, which the Ministry of Defence has developed in joint leadership with the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The act will initially apply temporarily until 2035 to all public contracts to cover the needs of the Bundeswehr – including any requirements that do not apply directly to armaments, such as civilian requirements for medical supplies and construction services, for example. With various regulatory exemptions, particularly under public procurement law, the legislators aim to simplify and accelerate overall procurement. There are significantly higher threshold values in particular, above which tenders and award procedures are mandatory. Projects that affect the essential security interests of Germany, the EU or NATO can be more easily exempted from public procurement law. Companies can also be commissioned directly if they are the sole suppliers of certain products for the Bundeswehr. Whether the law will bring the hoped-for improvements in the near future remains to be seen.

In this context, the value limit of the **EUR 25-million proposals** must be scrutinised. In addition to the budget estimate and approval, in consultation with the Defence Committee, the Bundestag's Budget Committee must separately approve all Bundeswehr procurement projects with an investment volume of EUR 25 million or more before the contract is concluded. This practice, which has since been enshrined in law, is based on a historic policy decision made by the Budget Committee in 1981. Back then, the committee set the value limit for the duty to refer the matter for parliamentary supervision at DM 50 million. When the euro was introduced in January 2002, it was formally converted to the current EUR 25 million value limit, which has now remained unchanged for 44 years.

- *During visits to the troops, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces repeatedly hears that, given the inflation situation, consistently rising prices and the general cost of military equipment, this is no longer up-to-date, and is no longer regarded as such.*

The current coalition agreement also specifies speeding up the process for parliamentary participation in procurement matters, and at the same time recommends increasing the threshold value for procurement proposals. Ultimately, parliament itself must initiate an adjustment.

The Ministry of Defence rejected the proposal to introduce **local procurement** of commercially available low-value materials:

- *A petitioner working in logistics, for example, complained that even individual screws and presentation slides were supplied centrally by post to remote offices in Germany and abroad, whereby the transport costs required here were disproportionate to the value of the goods.*

The Ministry explained that such extreme cases are the exception when the SAP digital stock management system is properly maintained. Supplying from the logistics base in Germany is intended to allow the troops on site to concentrate on their core mission. Regular local procurements by the armed forces were neither fit for combat duty nor feasible with today's military personnel. In the national and alliance defence scenario, it is more important to provide the equipment on time to accomplish the mission than to save on transport costs. For the above reasons, there are currently no grounds to change the established processes.

Process management

The depth of regulation and the subjectively perceived redundancy of many Bundeswehr regulations are recurring points of criticism reported to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

The flood of forms and paperwork in the **reserve** is a particularly good example of this excessive bureaucracy. To be able to complete reserve service, before and after such an exercise, reservists must deal with a pile of the

same forms each time, numerous applications and legal requirements for leave of absence, wage replacement claims, social security notifications, exemption applications, billing adjustments and declarations of consent. The relevant legal bases can be found in the Benefit Payment and Dependents Maintenance Act, the Job Reservation Act and the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act, as well as in Social Codes III, IV, V and VI and in the Income Tax Act. Ultimately, numerous different offices must also work together smoothly and without delay for reserve assignment to be successful. This, however, is often not the case:

- *In the year under review, petitions once again demonstrated the failure of bureaucracy, which, due to its sheer volume, literally resulted in the failure of the application or assignment processes. Assignment procedures sometimes took up to 22 months and were extremely error-prone due to the involvement of several agencies or offices. And nor was there any information about the application status, so petitioners withdrew their applications because they were frustrated with the process.*

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces also reports that many of those affected believe bureaucracy is not decreasing, but rather continues to increase. The responsible centre of expertise for reservist affairs is examining whether databases could be used in the future to reduce the bureaucratic burden. It also refers to the “My Reserve” app, which has been available for download since October 2025. As laudable as such measures to reduce bureaucratic obstacles are, they do not appear to have produced a significant reduction in bureaucracy.

Another example of the considerable administrative burden in operational service are the approval loops required for approving military convoys on civilian roads in Germany, for example when they are deployed on exercises or abroad, because the units require their “**march credits**” for this. In day-to-day operations, their approval procedures are often case-specific and therefore are lengthy, complex and require the involvement of numerous military and civilian authorities. According to the Ministry, the standard processing time for approval is generally 15 working days, whereby this is reduced to a maximum of five working days if the nationwide Internet-based procedural management system is used. As they are aware of these complex application and approval procedures, the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Ministry of Transport have already made joint efforts to speed up the procedures in both operational service and in the event of a developing crisis:

- *The Bundeswehr has concluded administrative agreements with the state governments of eight federal states, according to which one general permit now replaces the individual permits previously required. Consultations are ongoing with six other states, and the Ministry has also reached a similar agreement with the federal motorway company, Autobahn GmbH.*

Furthermore, the amendment to the Highway Code in autumn 2024 extended the special rights for the Bundeswehr with additional exceptions. In addition to emergencies and disasters, there are now regulations that apply as soon as a crisis begins to develop, and not only in the event of states of tension and defence, making the lengthy approval process unnecessary. Although this does not significantly alleviate the bureaucratic burden in operational service, a precaution has at least been taken. In view of the changed security situation in Europe, however, it is foreseeable that, even in peacetime, more military convoys will have to travel on German roads in the years ahead. It is therefore imperative that legislators work towards further simplifying operational service in order to also increase efficiency here.

Members of the Bundeswehr on a special foreign assignment receive additional payments on pension points in the statutory pensions insurance scheme if they meet the necessary requirements.

- *In response to criticism from a Navy serviceman that his participation in numerous operations in the Mediterranean had not been credited accordingly, the Ministry of Defence pointed out that there was no standardised procedure for this.*

While the land forces regularly use the deployment times, the Navy still painstakingly records the exact daily deployment times after the fact using a printed form. This procedure is no longer up to date and should be changed as soon as possible.

The **relocation allowance** process is still too bureaucratic. The local rental value is determined on a case-by-case basis to compensate for a double rent burden.

- *Service personnel repeatedly criticise the time this process takes and the scope of the documents and certificates to be submitted. However, the legal transfer of the relevant real estate matters to the Institute for Federal Real Estate means the expertise required to determine rental values is also pooled here. Integrating*

the Institute for Federal Real Estate into the process is therefore obligatory. There are no alternatives within the Bundeswehr.

The Ministry of Defence makes it understandably clear that it cannot have a lasting influence on the sometimes very lengthy processing time for rent valuations caused in the Institute's area of responsibility. Attempts to address the issue with the Institute and the Federal Ministry of Finance were unsuccessful, which is regrettable, as bureaucracy reduction is an inter-ministerial and national process. The Ministry of Defence now at least pays a prompt advance on the expected rent compensation when applied for in order to effectively limit the financial burden on those entitled to it.

It is therefore not always within the Bundeswehr's exclusive area of influence to reduce existing bureaucratic obstacles. Another example here is the free **rail travel in uniform** scheme, which is actually a quite successful model, but it does not apply to all servicewomen and men without restriction:

- *A military service volunteer criticised the fact that he had to pay a fine for his train journey home from Germersheim to Mannheim. Investigations revealed that the authorisation document presented was invalid, because the route only ran through the Rhine-Neckar integrated transport system.*

If the departure and arrival stations of the journey home to family for military service volunteers are in the same transport system, they must apply for reimbursement of the travel costs on the basis of a travel allowance. If, on the other hand, the total length of the round trip exceeds the limits of an integrated transport system, they receive an authorisation document for this route from their unit or station. This differentiation in line with the limits of the transport systems is far too complicated and impractical. A significantly simplified procedure is also required here.

In this context, it is also incomprehensible that the following eight **transport systems** have still not signed up to the framework agreement that enables free rail travel in uniform: Augsburgener Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund (AVV), Tarifverbund Freudenstadt (VGF), Verkehrsgemeinschaft Bäderkreis Calw (VGC), Verkehrsverbund Hegau-Bodensee (VHB), Verkehrsverbund Oberlausitz-Niederschlesien (ZVON), Verkehrsverbund Pforzheim-Enzkreis (VPE), Verkehrsverbund Süd-Niedersachsen (VSN), Verkehrsverbund Vogtland (VVV). Free rail travel in uniform is not possible at all within their coverage area. The situation is different if the departure or arrival station is in one of these transport networks, as service personnel will then at least be able to use free rail travel in uniform, even if it involves an inconvenient extra effort:

- *They must then do the booking via a special Deutsche Bahn booking portal.*

This bureaucratic obstacle is not the Ministry of Defence's responsibility, and as the regional integrated transport systems are in fact responsible, they should swiftly comply with the Ministry's efforts to get them to join – especially as a sign of appreciation for the troops.

Bureaucracy and efficiency

Bureaucracy in the Bundeswehr must be examined to determine where it is truly necessary. In addition to the successful digitalisation of standard processes, this in particular also means streamlining and simplifying responsibilities, and command and information channels must be clear and understandable. It must be possible to also make decisions within the unit.

The current Bundeswehr and Ministry of Defence structures are too top-heavy, too complicated and, in many areas, ineffective. Efficiency increases in the armed forces cannot be achieved under these conditions. All processes, regulations and the organisational structure must be thoroughly checked for redundancies, which must be removed or at least adjusted as necessary.

10. Infrastructure

According to the latest infrastructure report the Ministry of Defence presented to parliament in June 2025, the total investment requirement for military infrastructure will run to over EUR 67 billion into the 2040s. Together with the 8,000 pending construction projects, this sum illustrates the enormous challenge facing the Bundeswehr, with the time required for implementation presenting a significant burden for the armed forces, as the removal of infrastructural problems can entail considerable delays in usage, as two examples illustrate:

- *A goods lift for transporting mobile X-ray equipment finally went into operation at the Blücher barracks in Berlin in the year under review – 22 years after 1 Medical Regiment first reported the need for it.*
- *Some rooms at the Naval Support Command in Wilhelmshaven have been closed off since 2019 because of mould infestation. Current estimates say relocations to newly constructed buildings will not be possible until 2029.*

The **Oberpfalz barracks** in Pfreimd, home to 104 Tank Battalion, is a sad example of the state of the Bundeswehr's infrastructure.

- *Most of the barracks buildings date back to the 1970s and almost all of them require refurbishment. Six construction projects are now underway. Despite all the planning and financing, there is dissatisfaction on site, as there are delays in almost all new build and conversion projects. The new number 5 accommodation building, for example, originally planned for 2020, will not be available until 2029 at the earliest. As the locally responsible military officials reported, one of the main reasons for this is the regular postponement of the completion of construction projects by the responsible civilian state building authority.*

The **Gäuboden barracks** in Feldkirchen, where the "Niederbayern" medical training regiment is based, also faces major infrastructural challenges.

- *Built in 1936, the barracks includes numerous buildings listed as historic landmarks or part of a historic district. 38 construction projects amounting to EUR 240 million and 87 projects in the property maintenance area totalling EUR 5.5 million are planned up to 2033 here. The fact that all of the construction work is to be completed during ongoing service operations is a particular challenge.*

Those affected in both Pfreimd and Feldkirchen hope the projects will be accelerated. The Free State of **Bavaria** already paved the way for this in 2024 with the *Gesetz zur Förderung der Bundeswehr in Bayern* (Act on the Promotion of the Bundeswehr in Bavaria). The state government's goal, among others, is to apply building regulations in line with the armed forces' specific needs. Even before the act came into force, the medical training regiment in Feldkirchen had already had very good experiences with the accelerating power of innovative approaches to building in Bavaria.

- *The construction of an accommodation building with 52 individual rooms was completed here in just one and a half years.*

The Bundeswehr University in Neubiberg near Munich has also had similar success:

- *In a pilot project, the Bundeswehr constructed a building with 180 accommodation units in less than two years after planning was completed, because the project applied a modular construction method.*

Based on these positive experiences and with the act's implementation, the progress of the construction projects in Pfreimd and Feldkirchen over the next few years may well be used as an example of the success of measures to ensure faster construction for the Bundeswehr in the Free State of Bavaria. The Bavarian model therefore has blueprint potential for other federal states as well, as it provides appropriate instructions for action, which must also be examined for the whole of Germany.

What already works in Bavaria is being applied in **North Rhine-Westphalia** as well, where there is also massive requirement for it. The Army Maintenance School in Aachen and the Generalmajor-Freiherr-von-Gersdorff barracks in Euskirchen are examples here:

- *Among other things, the Aachen school must build training halls to continue to achieve its educational mission as mandated. This is, however, complicated by a large number of construction projects at the site, some of which are higher priority, which is why the project will only begin in October 2030. This timeline must not be the last word, especially because the necessary requirements planning has already been done. Even more importantly, all parties involved must be called upon to act even more quickly.*
- *No light in the cellar, dirty hot water and far too few usable toilets were reported by a serviceman from the Generalmajor-Freiherr-von-Gersdorff barracks – conditions which were confirmed by the Federal Ministry of Defence. The explanation that it is no longer possible to adequately upgrade the U5 headquarters building here, which is almost 90 years old, is not much help to the servicewomen and men now serving here. It is currently estimated that the required completion of a replacement infrastructure will not be complete before*

2035. The only ray of hope here are two new accommodation buildings completed in July 2025, which have been in use since January 2026.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, the task force for defence and security-relevant federal construction set up in October 2024 is expected to increase the potential for acceleration by enabling quick decisions on issues concerning the organisation and planning of projects. Those with particularly high priority, or “focus projects”, will be considered separately to thus also identify acceleration possibilities. North Rhine-Westphalia also created 22 additional positions for federal construction in 2024, and a further 66 were added in the year under review, and the state is setting up competence centres for Bundeswehr projects in its building authority. The same group of experts therefore plans and implements construction projects. Serial construction will significantly shorten the time to completion for accommodation buildings, for example, especially as approval procedures are faster if the planning is always the same.

The Free State of **Thuringia** also intends to speed up the completion of Bundeswehr construction projects, whereby the Ministry of Construction will have its own department for federal construction programmes. At the same time, the state building authority responsible for construction projects will be relieved of some of its tasks so that it can concentrate more on investments in barracks. This is to be welcomed, as there is also a need for action in this federal state:

- *According to those responsible, the 393 Tank Battalion in Bad Frankenhausen has far too little accommodation capacity to stay abreast of the increase in personnel. The result of the bottleneck is that all servicewomen and men who no longer require accommodation, will have to give up the rooms they have been allocated in favour of those who are entitled to them.*

This can cause resentment and higher costs for those affected when renting a second residence, and is not very appealing for anyone interested.

The **Rhineland-Palatinate** Ministry of the Interior plans to make investments of just under EUR 2 billion for construction projects in the Bundeswehr’s infrastructure from 2025 to 2029. This is worth noting, as, according to its own figures, the state had only invested just under EUR 600 million in such activities over the previous five years. The situation in the 40 or so Bundeswehr properties here, however, does not differ so much from the rest of the country. It is hoped that, with the significant increase in the investment amount, funds will also flow into 281 IT Battalion in Gerolstein.

- *While urgently needed lean-to-roofs were indeed finally completed here in the year under review, a lack of funding means the roads to the site have yet to be upgraded, meaning the battalion cannot drive its vehicles under the protective roofs until the situation is rectified.*

Both the individual states and the **Federal Government** are exploring new ways to speed up the infrastructure process in federal military construction projects. This includes an appropriate federal-state project group and, in particular, the Act on Accelerated Planning and Procurement for the Bundeswehr. The Ministry of Defence also presented the “Bundeswehr accommodation construction programme” pilot project in the year under review, which is a collaboration between the Institute for Federal Real Estate as the owner and lessor of the Bundeswehr properties, and the Bundeswehr as their user. The plan is to build 76 new accommodation buildings at 31 locations across Germany. The construction project will create some 7,150 modern individual accommodation units with their own sanitary area for the servicewomen and men. Standardised specifications as well as serial and modular construction mean the project will be completed in noticeably shorter construction and planning times. The current planning assumes these projects will begin in 2026 and be completed five years later in 2031. The key success factor for future Bundeswehr construction is therefore acceleration with serial and modular building, by reducing bureaucracy and by prioritising.

All of these initiatives are a step in the right direction and have the potential to drive all Bundeswehr construction projects forward. The Bundeswehr itself, however, must also work to improve its processes:

- *In Jagel, at 51 Tactical Air Wing’s “Immelmann” base, a large number of minor snag jobs prevented the occupation of a new building constructed in 2023 until late April of the year under review. The reason for this was the apparent delay in bringing in the Schleswig-Holstein state building authorities responsible to correct the deficiencies.*

The responsible Federal Office of Bundeswehr Infrastructure, Environmental Protection and Services competence centre took this case as an opportunity to introduce an initiative to prevent such delays in the future. Along with

a more detailed integration of the federal state building authorities, these authorities will actually ensure the operating company for building site safety is also involved early on in the planning process. The goal here is to minimise or completely rule out bad planning or poor workmanship with regard to on-site preparations for the physical security technology.

The approach of relieving the federal state building authorities of **small contracts** by having the Bundeswehr and the Institute for Federal Real Estate increasingly carry out such work themselves as building contractors, which was already outlined in the 2024 infrastructure report, also has a similar effect. This no doubt will be approved and well received in many places:

- *During a visit to the troops at the Idar-Oberstein Artillery School, servicewomen and men showed their willingness to immediately do simple building or painting work to make the common areas and social spaces more presentable.*

The clarification by the Ministry of Defence with its announcement in December 2024 that service personnel may do technically simple cosmetic work on their own initiative is to be welcomed, and also applies to other construction tasks if they serve official purposes, such as training, sustainment training or morale, welfare and recreation for the troops. For safety reasons, this does not include work that must be carried out by certain specialists, such as electricians.

Nevertheless, there is still an enormous backlog, despite better organisational, financial, legal and personnel conditions for accelerating construction and all other efforts to improve the infrastructural situation. The introduction of the new military service, the increase in reservist numbers and, last but not least, the expected increased accommodation for NATO partners in Germany, also exert additional pressure. Renovations, any new buildings in existing properties and the densification of accommodation will not meet demand in the short term.

The Federal Ministry of Defence therefore decided in October 2025 with the **moratorium** on the conversion of properties to readjust the armed forces' property requirements and to reverse the decision to refrain from using properties in 2011 under a different security policy situation, where it still appears possible and logical today. Plans to convert and use the properties for other, civilian purposes have been stopped or cancelled for the time being. Affected communities that were hoping for a civilian use or were already planning for it, are now directly experiencing what the turning point means in specific terms. The Bundeswehr's defence mission to be accomplished has priority here,

and logically so, as the Bundeswehr requires high numbers of additional accommodation units just to meet the needs of the new military service alone.

- *The German Armed Forces – Contractor Augmentation Programme (G-CAP) project already addresses this challenge. The infrastructure requirements for accommodation capacities for the new military service (54,000 beds are planned) will be covered from mid-2027, with several state building authorities also involved in the project organisation. Framework contracts with construction companies and standardised building methods are also planned.*

The envisaged move away from the **single room concept** is also helpful here:

- *Servicewomen and men repeatedly criticise the single rooms system during visits to the troops. This in particular applies to service personnel who are not obliged to live in official accommodation, who are no longer obliged to live in the barracks once they reach the age of 25, and therefore must often vacate their rooms for those who are obliged to live in official accommodation. Given the distressed housing market situation in many parts of Germany, they would like to stay in the barracks.*

It also makes sense for two or more people to share a room in order to maintain and strengthen camaraderie. New recruits thus quickly find connections and support for many service-related challenges, which can then be a motivational aid in the first few months of service, and should not be underestimated. The fact that the Federal Ministry of Defence intends to increase the multiple occupancy of rooms is therefore very welcome. The goal here is also to provide temporary accommodation for servicewomen and men who are not obliged to live in official accommodation, which would be the more logical accommodation alternative, not least of all in view of the expected expansion of the armed forces. The fact that the current design of the single rooms also allows them to be converted into two-bed rooms in an emergency is proactive and forward-looking.

With the Navy, sea-going crews in their home port were no longer permitted to stay on board after finishing duty because of the Working Hours Ordinance introduced in 2016. In 3 Minesweeper Squadron in Kiel at least, operational service once again includes **living on board**.

- *The feedback from service personnel who cannot afford or do not want their own accommodation in a precarious and tourist-oriented housing market against the backdrop of 180 days at sea a year is very good. The identification with their vessel and the promotion of camaraderie connected with this in particular are well received.*

It is therefore encouraging and logical that Flotilla 1 has already extended the model to its other seagoing units. With Flotilla 2, on the other hand, there is still a problem with the required approval by the *Kommission Bewachung und Absicherung* (Security and Safety Committee). As part of a six-month pilot project that began in January 2026, at least, it is now possible to live on board under certain conditions. The goal here should be to quickly find a permanent solution.

In addition to swiftly upgrading the training infrastructure after decades without doing so, especially the firing ranges, the number of **munition storage facilities** must also be increased.

- *The fact that the necessary conversion of a munition storage facility will only be completed by around 2038 is certainly not in line with currently urgent security policy requirements.*

Logically, the Ministry of Defence should consider reactivating decommissioned munition facilities in order to use them temporarily as compensation storage areas for ammunition during pending construction work. The space thus freed up could then result in more freedom to build and lead to acceleration.

Infrastructure

The security policy situation requires a robust and resilient Bundeswehr infrastructure, with an urgent need to accelerate the renovation of many dilapidated barracks. This both supports the armed forces' operational readiness and makes service in them more attractive for our servicewomen and men.

The federal states must make even greater use of special regulations for military infrastructure projects, which can also be achieved by reducing planning and procurement bureaucracy. Civilian-military cooperation must be expanded across the board, so that federal states and local authorities are integrated into processes in good time and there is greater acceptance of crisis prevention.

It is quite clear that acts of sabotage on Bundeswehr properties will increase in the future. Ultimately, all armed forces' sites must be sabotage-proof without exception – hybrid threats included.

11. Leadership development and civic education

Leadership development and civic education provide the foundation for value-based conduct in the Bundeswehr. Their task is to protect the fundamental rights of service personnel as citizens in uniform. They therefore establish guidelines for military leadership and interaction with one another in crisis situations, during deployment and in day-to-day service. They are the basis for camaraderie, solidarity and trust in military leadership.

With the planned Bundeswehr personnel increase and the introduction of the new military service, leadership development and civic education will no doubt face new challenges in the future. Above all it is the instructors' task here to introduce recruits to the military profession through modern leadership methods while also teaching the armed forces' core values. In this respect, leadership development and civic education play a key role in fostering an understanding of the purpose of military service, promoting acceptance of necessary military discipline and harmonising the military assignment with individual self-perception. It is crucial that leadership development and civic education is not merely taught – above all it must be “lived”, with new content, inspiration and stimuli.

Superiors in particular are obliged to observe the principles of leadership development and civic education. They must both exemplify it and instil it in the troops. They also assume responsibility for the welfare of their subordinates, whereby it is important to continuously further develop leadership behaviour. Modern leadership is characterised by open communication, the establishment of a **culture of learning from mistakes** and the integration of subordinates. The feedback on this in the form of petitions from all units shows how the vast

majority of military superiors seek dialogue and perform their duty of care and role model function. Nevertheless, it is clear that the implementation of leadership development and civic education in practice depends significantly on the personality and attitude of individual superiors.

It is also the responsibility of the military leadership to provide tradition-building activities and identity-forming rituals, which the troops can look to for personal development. The 2018 Directive on Tradition already sets out which symbols, insignia and ceremonial elements enjoy particular significance in how the Bundeswehr fosters traditions. The question of the **repertoire of songs** that may be performed, however, remains unanswered. In 2017 the Ministry of Defence decided to suspend distribution of the Bundeswehr songbook that had been in use until then and to develop a contemporary selection of musical pieces instead. Although the Ministry verified at the time that singing in the armed forces is a military tradition that contributes to cohesion within the military community and to the development of camaraderie, the revision is still incomplete.

Camaraderie

Camaraderie is at the heart of leadership development and civic education. It is the basis for both loyalty to one another and a binding ethos. The Legal Status of Military Personnel Act obliges all servicewomen and men to respect the dignity, honour and rights of their fellow soldiers and to stand by them when in difficulty and danger. Camaraderie is therefore essential for the operational readiness and functioning of the armed forces – it is the basis of military cohesion. Serving together and enduring danger and hardship create a special bond and unity.

Camaraderie must not, however, be made conditional as a military duty. **Initiation rituals** are therefore an expression of a fundamentally mistaken understanding. Under their guise, affected servicewomen and men are regularly humiliated or physically harmed. But they do not only endanger the physical and mental health of those affected – they are also likely to cause considerable damage to the public perception of the Bundeswehr, as such rituals are often based on the mistaken assumption that something must be proven to be accepted into the military community. Service personnel are, however, expected to find modern ways of integrating new fellow soldiers, all the more so given that initiation rituals can result in exclusion for those who, for health or religious reasons, for example, do not wish to or are unable to take part.

It is therefore all the more important to establish reliable rules and basic camaraderie principles within the unit, to strengthen the development of personal comradeship bonds, as well as trust and reliability. Positive lived camaraderie experiences should also be shared across units so they can serve as inspiration and examples.

Initial training

Initial training and basic training are service personnel's first real contact point with the Bundeswehr. They have a lasting impact on the perception of military service and lay the foundation for camaraderie, discipline and trust in military leadership, and at the same time they are completed at a particularly sensitive time. During their training young recruits are subjected to considerable physical and mental strain, while also having to adapt to life in the military community in an unfamiliar environment.

Learning military discipline is an essential part of military training, but this is not an end in itself and must not, with any form of training, exceed the prescribed level as **undue hardship**:

- *During a training exercise, a reserve officer ordered a soldier under his command to lie in a puddle ten centimetres deep for an hour and a half, at a temperature of 7 °C.*

The Bundeswehr rightly takes firm disciplinary action against such unacceptable incidents.

Incidents such as the following not only endanger the physical and mental health of the victims, but are also incompatible with leadership development and civic education, and cast a shadow over the Bundeswehr's reputation:

- *Some recruits seriously abused other recruits in a basic training company. For example, they forced a fellow soldier's head into a toilet bowl and flushed it. Recruits beat another recruit in his bed and dragged him into the corridor, where they poured several buckets of water over him. Under threat of violence several recruits were forced to learn their military ranks – if they didn't know them they were beaten. Other recruits were forced to strip to their underwear and walk a gauntlet of fellow recruits, who beat them on the back or buttocks as they passed. A recruit had the word "rat" written on his forehead in felt-tip pen on suspicion of treason,*

because allegedly he had spoken to soldiers from another platoon about the incidents. The Bundeswehr subsequently dismissed eleven of those accused. In twelve cases the matter was referred to the public prosecutor's office. 20 disciplinary fines and 17 severe reprimands were also imposed, and the battalion introduced a duty NCO in the accommodation buildings to ensure constant command supervision.

This kind of abuse has nothing to do with discipline, training or developing the necessary military toughness. The (re)introduction of duty NCOs and duty privates, along with increased **command supervision** by superiors, is a proven measure to also maintain order and ensure a safe environment after finishing duty. Even if this is an additional burden on the troops, duty NCOs and duty privates should once again become the norm in initial training units. Based on a culture of trust, recruits must also be encouraged to report incidents early on without fear of reprisal.

Violation of the free democratic basic order

Members of the Bundeswehr swear or pledge to defend the Federal Republic of Germany and its values. This instils a special duty of political loyalty, which is also a basic military duty, requiring both full recognition of the free democratic basic order and fundamental rights as the essence of the rule of law, and a commitment with our entire conduct to preserving and realising them.

A breach of the duty of political loyalty is one of the most serious breaches of military duties. If members of the Bundeswehr have knowledge of such breaches, they must report them to their superiors immediately. Such a reporting requirement applies to all incidents that may be of significance because of their impact on the situation concerning the attitudes of the local population and the social situation, or on the Bundeswehr's operational readiness or its reputation among the general public. The Ministry of Defence forwards these reports to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces as **reportable events**, which they follow up ex officio at their own discretion. The Commissioner thus recorded a total of 304 reportable events relating to extremism in 2025. Of these, 275 cases were classified under the "Extremist behaviour, hate speech and violation of the free democratic basic order" reporting category. In 14 of these cases, however, it was not service personnel, but rather civilian members of the Bundeswehr who were suspected of such misconduct. The offenders could not be identified in a further 16 cases. In the previous year there were a total of 252 cases in the aforementioned reporting category, and in the 2019 to 2023 years under review the figures were 178, 211, 226, 185 and 177 respectively. There were also a further 29 reportable events (2020 to 2024: 18, 26, 18, 27 and 23), which the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces believes were linked to extremism, but which were reported by the troops under categories such as "discrimination" or "crime against peace, treason, high treason, national security".

The Bundeswehr for the most part recorded incidents relating to **right-wing extremism**, ranging from far-right and anti-constitutional statements, as well as related posts in chat groups and on social media, to participation in events or gatherings with a far-right background, the wearing of associated clothing or tattoos, and the playing of far-right music:

- *During a conversation with others in his unit, a pilot told them he listened to songs from the far-right scene. When asked if he considered himself a right-wing extremist he replied in the affirmative. Questioning the accused revealed that he had also made far-right comments to his friends. The Bundeswehr discharged the man.*
- *An incident at the Army Non-Commissioned Officer School attracted particular attention in the year under review, in which a civilian, an external DJ, played the first verse of the "Deutschlandlied" during an official Christmas party. Although this is not a criminal or prohibited act, playing or singing the first verse in particular is viewed by public opinion as an expression of nationalist sentiment and is clearly frowned upon. Some petitioners criticised the now retired commander's conduct for apparently failing to intervene immediately. Another petitioner actually expressed his incomprehension of the incident's official classification and the investigations now underway. The outcome remains to be seen.*

Although the vast majority of reported incidents fall within the right-wing extremism area, isolated incidents of other forms of extremism were also reported. Among others these include left-wing extremism, Islamism and foreign-related extremism – such as links to the Russian "Night Wolves" or the Kurdish PKK.

The Bundeswehr **universities** train future officers at their campuses in Hamburg and Munich, and with them the Bundeswehr's next generation of leaders. In their later leadership roles they are obliged to set a good example by

upholding the values and principles of the free democratic basic order and to actively instil these in the troops. It is therefore especially important that, even while they are still studying, students should advocate these core principles of our constitution, without fail and without exception. It is thus all the more worrying when far-right extremist behaviour becomes visible here:

- *One student repeatedly made far-right, xenophobic, racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic comments. Among other things he gave the Nazi salute, shouted “Sieg Heil”, referred to another soldier as a “curry-muncher” and to homosexuals as “faggots” or “AIDS spreaders” and questioned the Wehrmacht’s war crimes. The Bundeswehr banned the man from performing his duties and wearing his uniform and initiated judicial disciplinary proceedings.*
- *During a university course a staff sergeant connected his work laptop to a projector, with the laptop’s wallpaper image then being visible for all the trainees. It showed Wehrmacht soldiers on the eastern front during the Second World War. The Bundeswehr also initiated judicial disciplinary proceedings here.*

Several petitions by students criticised alleged remarks by a disciplinary superior, which cast doubt on his loyalty to the constitution and are unacceptable:

- *At a reception he is said to have remarked about a student from the university: “That’s a proper Aryan, the women love that.” The Bundeswehr initiated judicial disciplinary proceedings, which were still ongoing at the end of the year under review.*

Some students did not trust the university management to take decisive action against extremist behaviour, and therefore did not inform them immediately about such incidents. Although service personnel were thus breaching their reporting obligations, the Bundeswehr should take this as an opportunity to review its command and control structures and the selection process for instructors, and to regain the students’ lost trust by striving to improve command supervision.

The Army dedicates a day in May every year to focus on conveying values and personal development. Individual units used this “*Tag im Zeichen unserer Werte*” (day dedicated to our values) to address issues such as extremist incidents and thus raise awareness among our servicewomen and men. And we must not let up in our efforts here to ensure we reach every single member of the Bundeswehr.

The Federal Office for Military Counter-Intelligence (**FOMCI**) plays a crucial role in investigating extremist behaviour in the Bundeswehr. Its primary remit is the intelligence-based collection and analysis of information on activities within the Bundeswehr that are directed against the free democratic basic order. The growing threat to German security interests is also reflected in new challenges for the Military Counterintelligence Service, particularly in the counter-espionage, counter-extremism and security clearance areas.

It is therefore welcome news that the *Artikelgesetz zur Stärkung der Militärischen Sicherheit in der Bundeswehr* (Article Law on Strengthening Military Security in the Bundeswehr) has also revised the Military Counterintelligence Service Act. It takes account of the constitutional requirements of the ruling and enhances transparency regarding the FOMCI’s future intelligence powers, as these are now essentially set out in a separate law rather than being derived from references to other legal bases. The article law in particular amends the powers of the FOMCI with regard to activities carried out on the territory of members of the Alliance, in particular to better protect the soldiers of the Lithuania Brigade and their families. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces expressly welcomes this.

If the investigations confirm that servicewomen and men have engaged in extremist behaviour, discharge from the services may be justified. The applicable legal basis for such discharges is **§ 55(5) of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act**, according to which temporary-career volunteers may be dismissed without notice during their first four years of service if they have culpably breached their duties and their continued service would seriously endanger the military order or the Bundeswehr’s reputation. During the period under review the Bundeswehr dismissed a total of 64 service personnel without notice for this offence (2024: 68), of which 61 dismissals became final during the year under review (2024: 56).

If the examination of the facts reveals particularly serious anti-constitutional conduct, this can result in dismissal even after the first four years of service, in accordance with **§ 46(2a) of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act**. While the Bundeswehr dismissed 4 people for this offence in 2024, the year after the provision introduced into the law in December 2023 entered into force, the total number in 2025 was 13. Of these, six dismissals were final, for example in the following cases, where there were several serious breaches of official duty:

- *A lance corporal is alleged to have verbally and physically assaulted a person at a public festival while off duty because of their skin colour, made the Nazi salute, and claimed to be a member of the “Skinheads Sächsische Schweiz” group. He had also posted photos of himself online, in which, among other things, tattooed SS-runes could be seen on his back, shoulder and upper arm. And, while on Bundeswehr property, he was then found in possession of items with images of anticonstitutional symbols, and a mobile phone with far-right music files.*
- *A lance corporal repeatedly questioned historically documented facts about the Second World War and the Holocaust, and claimed, among other things, that German history was being taught inaccurately. She also claimed that, with its war of aggression on Ukraine, Russia had merely defended and liberated the people of the Donbas region, this being comparable to the German invasion of Poland during the Second World War, as it too was supposed to have been to protect German minorities from oppression.*

At the same time, application practice during the period under review made it clear that the criteria for dismissal under § 46(2a) of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act are very strict. As a result, the following facts could not justify dismissal for this offence:

- *On 20 April a corporal greeted other servicewomen and men and civilians with, “Happy Easter, happy birthday, Heil Hitler and Sieg Heil”. Following the review the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management decided against dismissing the man under §§ 46(2a) and 55(1) of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act as he had not seriously pursued activities directed against the free democratic basic order. The Bundeswehr did, however, begin judicial disciplinary proceedings, which had not been concluded by the end of the year under review.*

Strictly speaking, § 46(2a) of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act only applies to career soldiers, but it also applies to temporary-career volunteers and reservists via the corresponding referral provisions. Unlike the dismissal of active service personnel, which is centrally reviewed and carried out by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management, the dismissal of reservists was the responsibility of the respective units until the end of 2025. During the period under review there was some uncertainty on the application of the law here. With dismissals in particular, the most severe form of disciplinary action, however, **consistent application of the law** is essential to ensure legal certainty for both those affected and the Bundeswehr. It is therefore appropriate and logical that, due to a change in the law, the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management now decides on the dismissal of reservists.

Finally the Bundeswehr can now draw on the results of the representative **“Army in Democracy” study**, commissioned several years ago and focusing on right-wing extremism, published during the year under review by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences, as part of its efforts to combat anti-constitutional conduct. The study anonymously analysed responses from a total of approximately 4,300 military and civilian members of the Bundeswehr, and, for comparison purposes, approximately 4,600 members of the general public. Prior to this there had never been a comparable empirical study of the extent, causes and effects of political extremism in the Bundeswehr. The results show that members of the Bundeswehr overwhelmingly support the free democratic basic order and have hardly any far-right views.

- *Only 0.2 percent of the servicewomen and men polled consistently displayed attitudes hostile to the free democratic basic order, and only 0.4 percent consistently held far-right extremist views. Among the general population the corresponding figures were 0.5 percent and 5.4 percent respectively. 96.4 percent of the servicewomen and men polled also agreed that extremists have no place in the Bundeswehr.*

The results of this representative study show that the Bundeswehr’s zero-tolerance policy towards extremist behaviour, supported by disciplinary and statutory measures as well as political education programmes, is indeed effective.

What is striking, however, is that only 37.1 percent of the servicewomen and men polled believe the Bundeswehr was already doing enough to combat political extremism. This may be due in part to the fact that the Bundeswehr does not routinely disclose details of disciplinary actions actually taken against extremist behaviour to third parties, for data protection and protection of personal privacy reasons, and in accordance with disciplinary regulations. This result can however be seen as a call to action to further step up efforts to combat extremist behaviour in the armed forces and, where possible, to provide information about it. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces supports continuing this as a series of studies so that changes in the political

views of servicewomen and men can be identified early on with a comparative consideration, and so that any undesirable trends can be addressed in good time.

On the whole it should be noted that extremist behaviour in the Bundeswehr is clearly the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, every single incident is a reminder of the need to take consistent and resolute action against extremism. It should also be pointed out that, although the absolute number of recorded extremist incidents is still low, it has risen slightly compared with previous years.

Offences against sexual self-determination

Two years after entry into force of the general regulation on dealing with sexuality and sexual misconduct in the Bundeswehr, and following the increased training and awareness-raising measures performed last year, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces has noted that, across the board, superiors are now more confident in handling such matters. During the year under review the Ministry of Defence recorded a total of 430 initial reports about breaches of sexual self-determination involving servicewomen and men as either accused or victims (2024: 395 – 2023: 385). The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces also received 46 petitions (2024: 48 – 2023: 49 – 2022: 34 – 2021: 23). Alcohol continues to play a role in many cases. The reports received show that the legal situation is clear. How **zero tolerance** for sexual misconduct is put into practice, however, still has a great deal to do with the atmosphere in the individual units and therefore with leadership culture as well.

- *If, for example, several members of the Bundeswehr play pornographic videos on a bus in front of other servicewomen and men, this should be addressed immediately and in a similarly visible manner. This happened with a redeployment movement from a military training area. It was no longer possible to definitively identify who had played the videos, but the entire company received further training on the issue of “dealing with sexuality and sexual misconduct”.*

This example illustrates how, in addition to punishing proven sexual misconduct with administrative or judicial disciplinary measures, there are also ways to specifically set clear red lines below the disciplinary threshold – with awareness-raising sessions for individuals or training for entire units, for example. The following case, among others, shows how a consistent approach to sexual misconduct is not always measured by the severity of the disciplinary action:

- *A medical specialist had reported inappropriate behaviour and unwanted touching by an NCO. It was no longer possible to establish the exact circumstances. However, statements by witnesses and the accused showed the respective superiors that the man’s general tendency to be verbally and physically inappropriate, particularly to newly assigned servicewomen. The disciplinary superior imposed a moderate disciplinary fine to make it clear to the NCO, “given his apparent tendency to test the personal boundaries of female personnel”, that inappropriate behaviour of any kind would not be tolerated, thus sending a clear signal early on that any further incidents would have serious consequences.*

The Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts also imposed lighter penalties for sexual misconduct because of **excessively long proceedings** during the year under review. The excess time is not, however, always taken into account in the defendant’s favour:

- *The Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts did not grant any mitigation despite the excessively long duration of the proceedings in the case of a former serviceman found guilty, among other things, of raping a young female recruit, including forced anal intercourse, while he was an active reservist. The Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts acknowledged the serious impact of the offence on the victim and the perpetrator’s motives, whereby he had acted purely out of sexual urges. The court therefore upheld the decision to withdraw his pension and thus imposed the maximum penalty, as the aggravating circumstances had outweighed the mitigating factors with the required balancing of interests.*

During the year under review, court coverage of incidents involving the Guard Battalion and a report about a former servicewoman who had been raped, were a stark reminder of the serious and life-changing consequences that sexual misconduct can have for those affected. The Bundeswehr does not always have the power to make amends for the injustices suffered, but the general regulation on dealing with sexuality and sexual misconduct does set out a range of resources and measures to support those affected. However, particularly in the case of

reassignments or temporary additional duty, this presupposes that superiors have the required evidence that a person needs special support.

Under every and all circumstances, it is also essential to avoid re-traumatising victims or possible victims when they report an incident or are interviewed by failing to take them seriously due to preconceived opinions or even by blaming them for what they have reported. This requires **subtle tact and sensitivity** when conducting interviews, as well as an understanding of how offences against sexual self-determination can affect the perception and communication behaviour of those affected. The role of the Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney should not be overlooked here. It is therefore encouraging that the Ministry of Defence is considering the suggestion to include further training in victim psychology and trauma in the standard curriculum for initial and further training. The insights gained here should be incorporated into the training of all those who conduct investigations themselves or are asked to provide support, such as the military police, for example.

Despite the clear legal situation and increased awareness among superiors, there are still high expectations with the **unreported cases investigation** commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and conducted by the Bundeswehr Centre for Military History and Social Sciences, as well as the study by the SALIENT international research network at the Bundeswehr University in Munich, which is supported by the Ministry, but has yet to begin. That is because, even during the year under review, it was clear to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces that, even now, not all incidents are being reported. In other cases servicewomen and men hesitated for some time before deciding to confide in their superiors or people they could trust. Military equal opportunity officers also report that some stations or units simply fail to report incidents that must be reported, and they say young, lower-rank servicewomen in particular are at risk from sexual misconduct. Their reports were often not taken seriously, and in a significant number of petitions members of the Bundeswehr and equal opportunity officers criticised the fact that the military did not respond to their reports or responded inadequately. From the point of view of those affected, this impression is often understandable, however, legitimate data protection and privacy law restrictions frequently apply, which prevent those affected or those who have reported the matter from being informed about the progress and outcome of disciplinary proceedings against the accused. In appropriate cases, imposing a simple disciplinary measure, particularly in its stricter form, and announcing it to the unit provides disciplinary superiors the opportunity to make the imposed penalty visible for the unit. A sensitive approach by superiors can also be required here.

Sexist remarks, comments and verbal sexual harassment frequently cannot be substantiated afterwards during the investigation of facts if they happen in one-to-one or small-group conversations, and therefore apply as “unconfirmed”. Disciplinary superiors must not, however, take the easy way out when assessing conflicting statements. Ultimately, in accordance with the Military Disciplinary Code, they decide independently on whether a disciplinary offence has been committed and on how to punish it. However, it is concerning if a decision to waive disciplinary action is issued without determining a disciplinary offence and without further justification or explanation, even though the servicewoman or man admits in part to the incident or witnesses confirm it.

As the general regulation on dealing with sexuality and sexual misconduct in the Bundeswehr provides, where possible, for **physical separation** between the accused and potential victims, the person that is transferred or reassigned is often important here. Sometimes the person making the report can no longer see themselves continuing in the unit, or they are advised to at least temporarily transfer to another unit. The latter, however, must be discouraged, otherwise it could deter those affected from reporting an incident if they have a well-founded fear that they themselves might be reassigned or transferred as a result. And nor should the signal effect of how the accused is treated be underestimated, particularly if the investigations have already been concluded and misconduct has been established. In such circumstances any human resources measure must not be taken at the victim's expense, nor should there ever be the impression that the perpetrator-victim situation has been reversed. Care for and camaraderie with victims must take precedence over protecting the perpetrator.

Finally, it is encouraging to see that the Ministry of Defence has found a way to ensure the anonymised billing of costs for **confidential evidence gathering** in cases of sexual assault, coercion and rape, among others, as part of the free military medical care for service personnel. Approved service providers can invoice the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management directly.

It should not go unmentioned that members of the Bundeswehr courageously intervene on their own initiative to stop sexual misconduct, in some cases putting themselves at risk, as the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces also learned during the year under review:

- *Two NCOs saw several men offensively harassing two young women while off duty. They intervened to help the women, the men attacked the servicemen, and fled the scene. One of them was seriously injured in the attack.*

Paratroopers

The extensive investigations at 26 Parachute Regiment, particularly in Zweibrücken, took a considerable amount of time and effort during the year under review. As early as October 2024, during a visit to the troops with 260 Airborne Reconnaissance Company in Lebach, servicewomen had privately drawn the attention of the then Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to what they believed was a misogynistic atmosphere and to possible sexual misconduct in one of the regiment's companies in Zweibrücken. The incidents, which were at first reported anonymously, were the decisive factor behind the Commissioner's call for an investigation into unreported cases, which the Federal Minister subsequently commissioned. Intermediate results are expected in mid-2026.

Reports submitted by two servicewomen via the female equal opportunity officer to the unit command, which were also taken up ex officio by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces from February 2025 onwards led to the Bundeswehr investigating, among other things, allegations of discriminatory remarks, as well as right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism and drug abuse in **26 Paratroop Regiment**. This was followed in June 2025 by further connected petitions lodged by two servicewomen with the Federal Minister of Defence and the Commissioner, which ultimately led to extensive investigations by 1 Airborne Brigade and the Rapid Response Forces Division, as well as increased command supervision, resulting in widespread media attention, coupled with a change in the regiment's leadership and further personnel measures. The investigations, supplemented by new petitions and reports, were still ongoing at the end of the year under review.

- *On an unannounced troop visit to 26 Paratroop Regiment in October 2025, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces assessed the situation on the ground and briefed the Defence Committee several times on his observations.*

It is important to wait until the investigation is finished in order to also avoid making prejudgements. It is of course clear that extremism, sexism and drug abuse have no place in the Bundeswehr, and thorough information is a top priority. Any misconduct must be dealt with consistently and firmly, as only then can we protect our servicewomen and men, and maintain discipline and the armed forces' defence capability. Consistent command supervision is required at all levels to prevent future scandals.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces will continue to closely monitor the investigations and implementation of the announced structural measures. This also applies to the **airborne troops action plan** to strengthen leadership culture and command supervision, presented by the Army Chief of Staff in January 2026. The package of measures here includes four areas of action: Strengthening command supervision, improving fightability with structural adjustments, implementing preventive and resilience measures, and broadening assignment experience with changes to military career paths. It is still clear here that a values-based military ethos and a commitment to democracy are key elements of an operational and combat-capable airborne infantry.

Secondary employment in the Medical Service

Following several letters received by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and the Federal Ministry of Defence in 2024 and 2025, the responsible Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney began preliminary disciplinary investigations at various Bundeswehr hospital sites during the year under review. Among other things, allegations were made of unauthorised secondary employment by medical staff, as well as the time and financial overreach of approvals that were actually granted. There were also complaints alleging that staff were called on to treat private outpatients in this context, without the necessary approval or appropriate remuneration. The result of the ongoing extensive investigations remains to be seen,

however the Ministry has already responded to the allegations, some of which are serious. The uncertainties surrounding the application of legislation on the approval of secondary employment that came to light with the investigations prompted the publication of a new working aid on this subject. All secondary employment at **Bundeswehr hospitals** also underwent a disciplinary review.

It is hoped that the measures taken will afford those responsible greater security of action to apply for and obtain approval for secondary employment. This will also ensure that the treatment of service personnel by full-time medical staff is taken into account in the best way possible. The German Supreme Audit Institution had already highlighted significant deficiencies with private invoices at Bundeswehr hospitals in 2016. During a further audit conducted during the year under review, the Institution once again saw such significant deficiencies and in particular criticised the fact that the Federal Ministry of Defence had failed to perform its duty of ministerial policy-making in this area.

Military participation

The participation rights of Bundeswehr servicewomen and men are governed by the Military Personnel Representation Act. Elected spokespeople, committees of spokespeople and staff representatives represent servicewomen and men here. In line with the guiding principle of the citizen in uniform, the Bundeswehr therefore incorporates democratic processes into everyday military life to promote responsible cooperation between superiors and subordinates, comradely cohesion in the unit and a service environment based on trust.

Spokespeople elected for four years, for example, must be consulted on decisions regarding personnel matters, service operations or punishing disciplinary offences, unless those affected expressly object. To ensure the effective participation of **spokespeople**, the Military Personnel Representation Act stipulates that, when a spokesperson is elected, at least two deputy spokespeople must also be elected at the same time. During the period under review it became apparent, however, that the existing regulations cannot always ensure the effective participation of servicewomen and men:

- *A deputy spokeswoman explained that the post of primary spokesperson in her unit was currently vacant, while the first deputy spokesperson had already left the services and the third had resigned from her post. As the second deputy, the petitioner therefore had to perform her duties alone over a longer period. She criticised the fact that, if she were unable to attend, participation by military personnel could no longer be guaranteed.*

According to the current legal situation, there is no provision for by-elections to appoint additional deputy spokespeople in such cases. Further representatives will then only be elected if there are no deputy spokespeople left at all because the spokesperson's post has been suspended or prematurely terminated. However, the longer the remaining term of office of the spokesperson is when such situations arise, the greater the probability is that, sooner or later, their deputies will also be unable to attend due to annual leave, training courses, overtime or illness. If, as in the above case, there is only one remaining representative, clearly this entails a significantly higher workload.

The Ministry of Defence informs that, while no amendment of the regulation is planned, the matter is currently under review. Given that the legislators correctly believe military participation is a core element of leadership development and civic education, a swift remedy here would be very welcome.

Lifesaving acts and acts to help others

The servicewomen and men of the Bundeswehr are citizens in uniform. Even when off duty they save lives or provide assistance with accidents or any other kind of emergency, thus demonstrating that their service goes far beyond their military duties and that they actively participate in society.

During the year under review the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces was informed of 304 such cases as reportable events. Time and again members of the Bundeswehr provide immediate first aid at traffic accidents, call the emergency services and coordinate the situation until they arrive. Service and civilian personnel also come to the rescue in other everyday emergencies, including, for example, countless cases of resuscitation and first aid on public transport, with neighbours, at major events or festivities. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces also hears of the many instances of courageous intervention with robbery and shoplifting, where perpetrators are apprehended and handed over to the police. People are also frequently saved from drowning:

- *A petty officer rescued a 15-year-old boy from the Baltic Sea thanks with his calm intervention. He pulled the teenager, who had already been underwater for several minutes, to the surface from a depth of over four*

metres, took him to the shore some 100 metres away, and successfully resuscitated him until the emergency services arrived.

A **commendation** by the Bundeswehr is therefore a fitting signal of appreciation. This can range from a formal recognition, verbally during the unit's morning roll call or via a group order, for example, sometimes accompanied by special leave, to awarding the gold or silver cross of honour with a red border for rescue actions and first aid provided in Germany. Altogether the Bundeswehr awarded the special cross of honour 38 times in the year under review.

The moral courage shown by members of the Bundeswehr often entails personal risk:

- *On his way to work a sergeant saw a house in the neighbourhood on fire and helped three people escape from the burning building. He himself, however, sadly died rescuing them.*

This tragic case shows how many servicewomen and men are ready to act decisively and come to the aid of others, even at the risk of their own lives, and not just while on duty. We owe them all our deepest gratitude and highest praise.

Accidents

A serious air accident involving the Bundeswehr happened on 29 July 2025 near Grimma (Saxony):

- *During a low-altitude training flight, a helicopter from 64 Helicopter Squadron based in Holzdorf/Schönnewalde crashed into the River Mulde. Initial findings suggest it flew into a cable spanning the river. It was not a Bundeswehr aircraft, but rather a civilian helicopter rented for training purposes. All three crew members lost their lives in the accident.*

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces had visited the squadron four weeks earlier as part of his first troop visit since taking office. He has been briefed on the accident and will also examine its final report, to be published in 2026 by the Office of the Director of Bundeswehr Flight Safety.

Leadership development and civic education

As the foundation of the Bundeswehr's values, leadership development and civic education forms the basis for camaraderie and trust in military leadership, and is therefore a prerequisite for the armed forces' operational capability. It is essential that the principles of leadership development and civic education are both respected and practised. The task of command supervision is to consistently punish breaches of official duty. This in particular applies to breaches of the free democratic basic order and violations of sexual self-determination. Anyone who does not recognise the principles of leadership development and civic education, has no place in the Bundeswehr. The military leadership is also responsible for ensuring tradition-fostering measures are implemented. The Ministry should swiftly complete its revision of the Bundeswehr songbook, pending since 2017, and issue a new version.

12. Administration of justice and legal offences

Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts and Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney

The Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts and Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney are responsible for ensuring breaches of official duty are dealt with consistently and in good time. Unfortunately, however, it is once again evident that proceedings in accordance with the Military Disciplinary Code frequently take far too long. In the year under review proceedings before the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts averaged 35 months (2024: 29 months), and with decisions made via disciplinary court orders it was 16 months (2024: 18 months).

This **excessively long duration of proceedings** weakens the learning impact of disciplinary law and also places the burden on the accused. As disciplinary proceedings, which may among other things involve legal action, can result in a ban on financial assistance for those affected, many find the uncertainty regarding their career prospects particularly unacceptable.

- *In April 2025 a woman wrote to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces criticising the length of the preliminary disciplinary investigation ongoing against her since September 2023. As a result of the proceedings she cannot be transferred to the post intended for her or scheduled for the Basic Staff Officer Course. Acting in its supervisory capacity, the Disciplinary Attorney General for the Bundeswehr at the Federal Administrative Court criticised the length of the preliminary investigations, and stated that the Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney must prioritise the case. This office subsequently concluded the proceedings by issuing a waiver order, with a finding that a disciplinary offence had been committed.*

This case example once again underscores the need for an effective acceleration of procedures. The fact that the legislators have introduced provisions for this with the **reform** of the Military Disciplinary Code, which came into force in April 2025, is therefore very welcome. Judicial disciplinary measures, with the exception of dismissal from the services, forfeiture of all retired pay and forfeiture of rank, may only be imposed if formal judicial disciplinary proceedings began within six months of notification that preliminary investigations had begun. Existing regulations have also been amended to ensure a visible acceleration of judicial disciplinary proceedings by extending the scope of application of disciplinary court orders, for example.

Practice shows, however, that the intended relief has not yet appeared everywhere. During the year under review the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts once again cited the **heavy caseload** in their chambers as the reason for delayed scheduling:

- *In a relatively simple case, the competent Armed Forces' Disciplinary Attorney's office submitted the bill of accusation to the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints court as early as November 2020. By the end of the year under review a main hearing date still had not been set due to the chamber's high workload.*

It is understandable that, following the reform, it will take some time for the backlogs in the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts to be cleared and for proceedings to be accelerated. Given the intended disciplinary effect of judicial disciplinary measures in particular, however, such long processing times are simply unacceptable.

Processing Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters

The system of petitions by service personnel, which is established in the Basic Law and stipulated in the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, was subject to restrictions in a few individual cases during the year under review due to excessively long processing times in the Bundeswehr. In view in particular of the procedural principle set out in the "Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters" general regulation, namely that the Bundeswehr must process petitions as a matter of priority, it is essential that investigations be concluded swiftly. While not denying the considerable workload and staff shortages in the Ministry of Defence's departments entrusted with handling petitions, the constitutional rank of the petitions system must not be overlooked.

De facto military service

The period between the date on which prospective service personnel begin service and the date on which they are issued their letter of appointment establishing their service status is referred to as de facto military service. This does not establish any military rights or duties, so strictly speaking, disciplinary offences cannot be committed during this period, therefore the imposition of disciplinary measures during de facto military service is ruled out. Units did not always take this into account, but instead imposed disciplinary fines on de facto service personnel during the year under review.

Even with serious misconduct during de facto military service, dismissal from service cannot be considered prior to issuing the letter of appointment, as no such service status has yet been established. More importantly, in such cases the Bundeswehr must refrain from issuing the letter of appointment and must order the de facto service personnel to return home. It was shown here that in some cases the notices of non-appointment had either incorrect information or no information at all regarding appeals. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management is the office with which an appeal must be lodged. Clearly there is some uncertainty here regarding the treatment of de facto service personnel, therefore the goal should be to standardise the respective legal practice, with application notes and sample orders with correct information about appeals, for example.

Moral harassment

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces received 61 petitions on moral harassment during the year under review. Added to this were 31 reportable events that were dealt with (2024: 45 petitions, 32 reportable events). There is, however, still a significant overlap with petitions submitted for poor leadership behaviour which, depending on the situation, does not constitute moral harassment in the legal sense. For those affected, what they have experienced may sometimes seem very similar, but from a legal point of view there are significant differences. In case law moral harassment is defined as persistent behaviour directed at specific people, which accumulates or overlaps and creates hostility, harassment or discrimination. There must also be intentions that are not covered by the legal system and which, in their entirety, violate the general right of personality. The conduct must be intended to injure a person's dignity and to create an environment characterised by intimidation, hostility, humiliation or insults.

- *In proceedings brought for sexual harassment, the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints court noted in an aside that the accused senior NCO's conduct also constituted moral harassment. During a training course he had frequently gone to a fellow soldier's room, and refused to leave even when asked to do so. The court ruled that it had been proven that he had exposed himself to his fellow soldier on at least ten occasions, either in the soldier's room or in the communal shower, had shown him his penis, and on several occasions had inserted objects into his urethra or anus in front of him. The judges were convinced he had deliberately behaved in an exhibitionist manner towards the soldier, and had also systematically harassed him to assert dominance. In view of the excessive length of the proceedings, the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints court deemed a reduction of one rank to be appropriate, instead of the two-rank downgrade that would normally have been imposed. The man was transferred to another post because he had lost his security clearance following his conviction.*

In other cases, however, there was no evidence in the year under review that met the strict legal criteria to indicate moral harassment. But as in previous years, the comments frequently highlighted communication deficits, escalated **interpersonal conflicts** or internal tensions, weak leadership or other inappropriate leadership behaviour. This shows that active observation and, where necessary, early intervention via command supervision are required to ensure units remain functional and operationally ready.

Any leader who turns a blind eye and tolerates communication deficits among servicewomen and men in positions of responsibility, or who accepts unhealthy structures in subunits for longer periods, in the worst-case scenario risks the entire structure becoming dysfunctional and breaking down. And if it perhaps doesn't get this far, it can often be extremely difficult to rectify the situation. It can be helpful here to bring in the **Psychosocial Network** early on and seek advice from the "Discrimination and violence in the Bundeswehr" point of contact in the Ministry of Defence, which helps leaders and those affected to start talking and resolve the situation with everyone's interests in mind, whereby nobody loses face.

Alcohol

Once again in the year under review there numerous serious breaches of official duty while under the influence of alcohol. In approximately 28 percent of the cases reported in the "Offences against the duties of subordinates", "Offences against the duties of superiors" and "Offences against life, physical integrity or personal liberty" categories, the offence was directly attributable to alcohol consumption (101 out of a total of 355 cases; 2024: 124 out of 384). The number of alcohol-related breaches of duty, some serious, both while on duty and off, therefore remains at a similar level. A frequently careless attitude towards alcohol and the continuing tendency to consider excessive drinking harmless, prevent a noticeable decline in such incidents.

Decisive action by superiors is essential to effectively address this situation. Along with consistent command supervision, abuses must be prevented with clear rules and regulations by raising awareness among service personnel and with a consistent culture of responsibility. There must be framework conditions with no place for excessive alcohol consumption, with **professional integrity** maintained at all times. Behaviour such as the following in particular endangers the respective hierarchical relationships:

- *Having consumed a good deal of alcohol at a service Christmas party, a lance corporal said to a first lieutenant: "If I didn't know you were once a lance corporal, I would stab you."*

The Bundeswehr rightly imposed a substantial four-figure disciplinary fine here. With the following case the Bundeswehr initiated disciplinary proceedings and referred the matter to the public prosecutor's office:

- *After drinking alcohol, at 1 a.m. in the morning a sergeant ordered his subordinates to form a circle of chairs and slap the soldier to their left. As they only half-heartedly obeyed him, he took hold of a private and slapped him across the face. The defendant replied to the charges that such "slapping games" hadn't bothered him when he was a private.*

The battalion command also rightly took this incident as an opportunity to raise awareness among all troop commanders and to adopt a zero-tolerance policy with similar cases.

Ammunition and weapons losses

Missing stock of weapons and ammunition frequently is not due to actual losses, but rather to poorly performed or delayed stocktaking, inadequate documentation systems or errors in the supply chain. However, a systematic, regular and reliable inventory system is essential for security and tracking. Missing stock, whether it has actually gone missing or there has been a calculational error, is unacceptable and can impair public confidence in the responsible handling of weapons and ammunition:

- *During an exercise a serviceman became ill and handed his G36 rifle and personal equipment to his squad leader. Each day he then reported the presence of the weapon in the daily roll call. It was only when the ammunition and weapons were handed in to the materiel management NCO, four days after the soldier had reported sick, that it was clear the weapon was missing. Even after extensive and repeated searches it was not found, and the responsible squad leader was handed a severe disciplinary fine.*

This case illustrates the importance of full documentation without any gaps of the issuing and safekeeping of weapons, whereby the rifle's absence would have been detected immediately. One option to prevent such incidents would be modern IT systems to **real-time track** weapons and ammunition, which automatically record when they are transported, issued and returned, thus also reducing the number of error-prone manual reporting channels.

The loss of weapons and ammunition has a direct impact on the armed force's operational readiness. Cases where servicemen and women take such items with the intention of keeping them must therefore be strictly penalised, as in the following instance:

- *A serviceman stole fifteen ammunition magazines, nine magazine pouches and a pair of light intensifier goggles. The man was discharged from service following disciplinary proceedings. In its ruling against him, the Bundeswehr disciplinary and complaints courts took into account the fact that the stolen items were especially important for the armed forces' mission performance. Confidence in his integrity and reliability has therefore been destroyed, so he is now objectively unsuitable for service in the Bundeswehr.*

The fact that the revision of the general regulations on "Bundeswehr participation in the discovery of ammunition" during the year under review has produced greater legal certainty for the Bundeswehr's handling of recovered ammunition is to be welcomed. While the regulatory authorities are generally responsible for any ammunition discoveries, the Bundeswehr is responsible for discoveries on its properties, where it is the actual source of the ammunition. With third-party ammunition it must report this to the relevant regulatory authorities or, if the ammunition can be clearly attributed to other armed forces, it must consult with them.

Crimes against the Bundeswehr

During the year under review 112 crimes against the Bundeswehr were reported, including 6 arson attacks (2024: three) and 10 acts of sabotage (2024: four). The increase in the number of these attacks illustrates how the actual threat situation has worsened. Even if the investigations do not always reveal the perpetrators or motives, these attacks must be considered in the context of the growing threat to German security interests, as there can be no doubt the Bundeswehr is increasingly becoming the focus of foreign powers. At the same time there is also a growing risk of politically motivated attacks against the Bundeswehr, both domestically and from abroad.

Administration of justice and legal offences

Protracted procedures weaken the educational effect of disciplinary law and can undermine confidence in military leadership. The goal must therefore be to speed up such proceedings without adversely affecting existing constitutional standards. The legislators have created the conditions for this with the reform of the Military Disciplinary Code. We must now ensure the planned acceleration of procedures also actually materialises in practical application. At the very least, transparent communication on the state of proceedings or even completed proceedings can significantly reduce the frustration of those affected here.

13. Compatibility of family and duty

Nationwide reassignments, training courses arranged at short notice or changes to annual overview planning, an increasing number of manoeuvres, and a persistent shortage of personnel – military families and couples with care-giving duties or caring responsibilities continue to face particular challenges in balancing their official duties with their private responsibilities. At the same time servicewomen and men have reported in petitions and equal opportunity officers have noted in discussions that in many places the tone is becoming increasingly harsher and there is less willingness to adopt family-friendlier models.

Against the backdrop of recruiting and retaining personnel, it is important to maintain the flexibility in routine operations achieved in recent years for such life phases and to modernise it for the requirements of the turning point. According to the 2025 **public opinion poll** conducted by the Bundeswehr Centre for Military History and Social Sciences, the better the compatibility of family and duty is, the more the interest in a career in the armed forces and the attractiveness of the military as an employer grow among both women and men. Precisely to achieve the goal of a defence-capable army with operationally ready servicewomen and men, the Bundeswehr must therefore make further improvements in ensuring the compatibility of family and duty in routine operations.

Commuter issues

The Ministry of Defence has recognised that it is particularly appealing to younger servicewomen and men and those interested in joining the Bundeswehr to serve or to do further training in their respective home region. This may provide an opportunity to review assignment patterns and career paths to identify unnecessary reassignments so that service personnel are not separated from their families so often.

The results of **Mobility Study 2.0**, in which the Armed Forces Office polled members of the Bundeswehr on career mobility, also indicate this. According to the survey all respondents, 35 percent of whom had care-giving duties or caring responsibilities, believe it is important to be reassigned away from their location as little as possible. At the same time one in ten of those polled said they had been reassigned against their wishes between 2019 and 2023. The Ministry's intention to further reduce such relocations and reassignments is very welcome, as it can help ease the burden of commuting, because the study shows that, on average, servicewomen and men commute twice the daily distance of civilian employees:

- *With temporary-career volunteers, at 72.4 kilometres one way, it was more than four times the German average (16.9 kilometres). With 74 nights spent away from home each year, they were also well ahead of the average for military and civilian employees in the Bundeswehr (57.5 and 26 nights respectively). With separation allowance recipients who commute less frequently, the average distance between their main ordinary residence and their commuter accommodation was 352.2 kilometres for career soldiers.*

The study also shows that, before starting their service, those polled feel they were only partially informed about the extent of mobility required in the Bundeswehr, and that even if they had sufficient information, only some of them would choose to join the Bundeswehr again. This mixed result strongly suggests we should consider alternatives to the current assignment structures. The study's conclusion that further relief measures for temporary-career volunteers should be considered is correct.

Family-friendly assignment planning

A key focus of the petitions in the compatibility of family and duty area continues to be applications to be transferred to a location closer to home for family reasons, or to have training courses or reassignments planned

in a way that takes greater account of family needs. On the whole it is still clear that, although the interests of the armed forces take precedence, the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management endeavour to find an individual solution in cases where there are serious personal or other compelling reasons, even if this does not always prove to be the ideal solution. Petitions often result in applications that have already been rejected being reviewed again, and a compromise is eventually reached, even if only temporarily.

Fortunately, on a recommendation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence has advised the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management that in future it should provide more detailed information in notices of rejection to service personnel with care-giving tasks about the reasons for the decision and the further care considerations taken into account by personnel management. This should result in a better understanding among those affected and may reduce the number of complaints or petitions.

Flexible working time models and conditions

Servicewomen and men repeatedly complain that their superiors are generally or specifically critical of telework or part-time work. This is also confirmed by the observations of many military equal opportunity officers, who point out that, while there are numerous flexibility possibilities, many superiors believe **telework** in particular should be avoided whenever possible. “Combat readiness” is increasingly abstractly prioritised, which makes the clarification by the Ministry of Defence’s top management that there is still scope for alternative working models all the more important. The Ministry reaffirmed that there is expressly no legal basis for general restrictions on telework or for bypassing restrictions. More importantly, an assessment is still required in each individual case, which is appropriate and right. Although telework is no substitute for childcare and in individual cases remote working can involve high or even limitless expectations, flexible working hours are often a key prerequisite so that service personnel with family responsibilities, but especially military couples and single parents, can perform their duties. As the Ministry itself acknowledges, for care and support reasons, the respective offices must make appropriate arrangements from the outset to be able to respond to unexpected private and family matters.

It is also encouraging here that the Ministry of Defence is considering further flexibility in **career and service time models** to aid recruiting and retaining personnel. The fact that further expanding flexible working time models is being considered is also good news, especially for servicewomen and men who commute. This is illustrated, for example, by the amendment to the Military Personnel Working Hours Ordinance, which allows for the regular weekly working hours to be allocated individually. Another example is the expansion of Mobile Working II, a working method that is not bound up with either the workplace or the place of residence.

Childcare

One prerequisite for ensuring that servicewomen and men can concentrate fully on their duties is good, accessible childcare tailored to the needs of the armed forces. The Bundeswehr is aware that this is essential for personal commitment, so it is constantly developing its existing structures, most recently at training facilities and training course locations.

In the year under review it had 1,130 childcare places, including 587 rights to places, 95 places in normal and large day care centres, and 448 places in day care centres close to Bundeswehr sites. 65 places at 13 locations are reserved for course participants’ children, as well as 169 places at five locations abroad. The figures have declined slightly, which is also due to the fact that some members of the Bundeswehr may be provided municipal childcare places near their place of residence. Despite the considerable efforts of the Bundeswehr’s Family and Career/Service Officer, parents continued to report deficits with childcare arrangements in petitions and during visits to the troops. This is because it is precisely there where local services fail to meet the needs of members of the Bundeswehr, at posts at airfields or in ports operating 24 hours a day, for example, or at big sites where there have been long-standing issues with local authorities, that service personnel cannot be expected to rely indefinitely on their own personal arrangements or on the part-time work option.

- *At the Füssen site the Ministry of Defence estimated at least 25 children were provided childcare during the year under review. The local authority, by contrast, provided only ten places, reserved exclusively for children living in Füssen, to be available by September 2026.*

- *For childcare in Stetten am kalten Markt the Ministry announced that a new childcare facility with 45 places would still not open before August 2031.*
- *Equal opportunity officers at Navy locations identified an ongoing need for flexible childcare opening hours. The offering here is insufficient, especially for emergency operations and with short-notice alerts. On a positive note, however, there are specific plans to increase the number of childcare places at the Wilhelmshaven site from 76 to 143.*

Unfortunately the permanent **school holiday childcare** for school-age children during the summer holidays planned for the year under review, which military equal opportunity officers believe is particularly important, had to be postponed until 2026. The fact that military equal opportunity officers will in future be more closely involved in the requirements planning by community commanders, as reported by the Ministry, should help to ensure pragmatic and timely planning and improve the information exchange on site.

The **Bundeswehr Welfare Association** provides excellent support here, offering well-organised, varied and affordable holiday camps, tailored in particular to the needs of Bundeswehr families. The excellent care provided here, often by volunteers, provides tangible relief.

The fact that school attendance for course participants' children is now finally regulated nationwide is also encouraging. Following a decision by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, service personnel may now claim at the **course location** in 14 federal states if the Bundeswehr certifies that this is where the child's usual place of residence is. The situation is still somewhat different with childcare. Many have complained about the lack of training course locations. According to equal opportunity officers, the need for care is often not even reported, as people simply do not register for the training course if childcare is not available.

Family support

The family support organisation in the Bundeswehr, in existence since 1993, now boasts 32 family support centres and 16 family support points. 143 service personnel, 102 full-time civilian staff and 224 volunteers care for the families of the approximately 184,000 servicewomen and men currently serving.

The removal of the previous rigid rule, which stipulated that full-time and voluntary staff were only permitted to look after the dependants of service personnel on deployments abroad lasting at least **30 days** is welcome news. It had of course caused annoyance in the past and was outdated in light of the focus shift onto national and alliance defence. Their families' well-being is the top priority for servicewomen and men stationed abroad. This applies to both members of the Bundeswehr on deployment, regardless of its duration, and to personnel stationed abroad for the defence of the Alliance. The expansion of the family support centres' remit, which is linked to the amendment of the support regulations, should also include a corresponding increase in staff numbers, as many centres are already complaining about staff shortages.

- *By establishing the Family Support Centre in Lithuania, of which the family support organisation forms part, the Bundeswehr recently demonstrated that it can also adapt quickly to changing circumstances in family support.*

Well-functioning care in particular relies on up-to-date and complete data. Every family support centre must know who is eligible for care so that it can contact relatives in the first place. The addresses of the servicewomen and men in question and their contact people must be provided. Unfortunately the necessary data is often incomplete or out of date. Until now family support centres have received this information via the **"Mission Tool"**, in which the responsible senior personnel NCO enters the data. Regrettably this process is prone to errors, especially with changes in family circumstances, such as divorces, relocations or the death of named relatives. This understandably produces difficulties for the work of the support centres, which can also be a burden for the servicewomen and men deployed abroad. This requires a standardised data change management system that ensures this information is continuously updated and provided in good time.

The role of the **central family support agency** must therefore be defined more clearly and adapted to the changes. It should also be linked more closely to the German Joint Force Command to ensure its swift reaction capability. All of these efforts to aid family support are required, not least of all to address the hardships endured by the families of soldiers stationed abroad.

Preparing for national and alliance defence

In the past two years the Bundeswehr and the Ministry of Defence have taken specific steps to boost the personal commitment of its service personnel, which includes the **cold start file**, published in August 2024 as a personal planning folder. The Ministry of Defence, social services and military equal opportunity officers encouragingly report that this has been well received by many servicewomen and men. Almost all departments had held initial briefings and advisory sessions on the cold start file by the end of the year under review. Further training sessions will follow at regular intervals. This is good news, as it is important that service personnel do not feel left to deal with these complex issues on their own.

In many military families, preparing for an emergency is already an increasingly important issue:

- *Petitions from military couples with children requiring care often refer to the extent of their duties in the event of national or alliance defence. This above all reflects a concern about how their children's care can be ensured. The Ministry of Defence regularly emphasises that members of the Bundeswehr must perform their official duties in states of tension and defence. It points out that Bundeswehr support services can only be secondary to the precautionary measures taken by parents and the care services provided by the federal states and local authorities. However valid this point may be, it will probably do little to reassure servicewomen and men with family responsibilities.*

Members of the Bundeswehr are also looking for very specific answers for emergency situations. The Ministry of Defence takes this fully into account within the scope of its capabilities, by endeavouring to avoid any unreasonable impairments caused to personal and family commitments. Following the signing in December 2024 of the “Joint declaration of intent to support members of the Bundeswehr with childcare with regard to national and alliance defence”, representatives from the Ministry, the municipal umbrella organisations and the German Joint Force Command are now developing a concept for action. On one hand this will include options for providing specific support to members of the Bundeswehr who are especially affected, such as military couples, single parents, or partners working in critical infrastructure areas or the emergency services. On the other hand measures for local civilian-military cooperation will be taken, for example, if childcare facilities on Bundeswehr premises must be evacuated.

The Ministry of Defence will also continue to explore the idea of **sponsor families** with a pilot project. With an alert, or in the event of states of *casus foederis*, tension or defence, sponsor families will voluntarily take on the duty of care for the children of members of the Bundeswehr. Together with, for example, family support centres, community commanders, support offices, social services, designated spokespeople and youth welfare offices, the Ministry is now assessing the basic willingness of those based at the site and their families, friends and people they know to participate in such a self-help network. The outcome remains to be seen.

Compatibility of family and duty

Maintaining the flexibility of working time models in routine operations achieved in recent years and modernising them for the requirements of the turning point are important for the attractiveness of serving in the armed forces. After all, compatibility of family and duty is a prerequisite for personal commitment. It is recommended all members of the Bundeswehr take an in-depth look at the cold start file.

14. Diversity

Though it has already been six years since the publication of the “*Bunt in der Bundeswehr?!?*” (Colourful in the Bundeswehr?!) study, interest groups close to the Bundeswehr report that progress in opening up the armed forces to people from diverse backgrounds has been rather slow, even though the benefits of greater diversity for the military have long been scientifically proven. The fact that the Ministry of Defence recognises diversity and equality of opportunities as key factors in recruitment and personnel retention, and sees the inclusion of different talents and perspectives as a contribution to increasing the armed forces' performance, which it actively promotes, is indeed good news.

The central point of contact for transgender matters, the military equal opportunity officers, interest groups and the Ministry report from hands-on experience that there is considerable need for advice with superiors and affected members of the Bundeswehr in matters relating to gender identity or sexual orientation. A number of petitions

and reportable events in this area were also submitted to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. Support is provided here with the **toolkit** for implementing the German Self-Determination Act in the Ministry of Defence's area of responsibility, available, among other places, on the Bundeswehr's internal portal, YNSIDE, which will provide superiors, those affected, personnel management and interest groups an understanding of the scope for action and entitlements in everyday service life on the basis of specific case studies. Such a targeted addition to the advanced module of the web-based diversity training for managers developed during the year under review is certainly a sensible move. Although the number of members of the Bundeswehr whose gender is recorded as "diverse" has so far been relatively small, this collection of information can help ensure clarity of action and thus also help to prevent conflicts and experiences of discrimination. The toolkit can also provide a useful basis for discussion with conflict cases or for discussions with members of the Bundeswehr who have other concerns or diverse backgrounds and features.

During the year under review the role of the transgender affairs officer for the Central Medical Service was transferred to the newly established central point of contact for **transgender matters** at the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre. The decision to extend the responsibilities of the Central Medical Service's officers to cover the Ministry's entire area of responsibility is very welcome. It is however important that this office be permanently provided with the required human resources, so it can continue to perform its advisory role.

With the commissioning of the German Joint Force Command, the Bundeswehr has now created the **Gender Advisor** (GENAD) post for the first time. These specialists, long established with NATO, advise military leaders and staff on how to take gender-specific aspects into account in crisis or wartime situations. This includes, for example, dealing with the impact of sexual violence during an operation, or the needs and specific risks faced by particularly vulnerable groups, such as boys and girls. This area of expertise is a practical building block for increasing operational readiness, which should be expanded in the armed forces

Servicewomen and men have been waiting for the new legal basis for their external **appearance**, the "Hair and Beard Decree" which the Federal Administrative Court has also called for, since January 2019. As the required ordinance has still not been adopted and the general regulations to be revised are not ready yet either, members of the Bundeswehr have had to comply with outdated regulations for almost seven years now. This in turn results in growing resentment and is simply unacceptable. It is hoped the ordinance and the revised service regulations will justify the waiting time and provide for a practical, understandable and flexible regulatory situation that increases the Bundeswehr's attractiveness as an employer.

Diversity

The Ministry of Defence must deliver the "Hair and Beard Decree", which is configured to be modern, up to date and takes the interests of all Bundeswehr members into account, as quickly as possible, and especially in view of the new military service.

15. Health

Medical treatment

The year under review saw a significant restructuring in the Bundeswehr's Medical Service. Since April 2025 it has been the responsibility of the Bundeswehr Support Command, and therefore is no longer an independent organisational component. Contrary to the fears of some civilian healthcare associations and organisations, from the public's point of view the reorganisation proceeded rather smoothly. Nevertheless, the situation in the Bundeswehr's Medical Service remains quite challenging.

Under the free health care system servicewomen and men are entitled to free military medical care for service personnel. They cannot choose their doctor, however, as they must see the military doctor assigned to them in the event of illness. If they are ill or have an accident outside their duty station or outside normal duty hours, there can be issues with sick leave and exemption from duty:

- *One servicewoman reported that, on the first day of her illness, she was unable to reach anyone at the medical centre for her duty station by telephone from her home. On the second day she was able to be present here, but was only given an appointment for the following day. Ultimately she was signed off sick backdated for*

the second day, but had to take annual leave for the first day. There are no grounds for complaint, as a sick note was not actually submitted on the first day. She could also have contacted a local medical centre or the unit physician on-call service. However, her disciplinary superior could also have granted her leave from duty for the first day, instead of her having to take annual leave.

Servicewomen and men and their superiors must be sufficiently aware of the relevant information on sick leave with the proper instructions, briefings and leaflets. However, this information, along with comparable petitions from recent years, shows that security of action is not always guaranteed here.

The analogue processes for military healthcare provision have yet to be digitalised, so **health records** kept in paper form may be lost or incomplete. The resulting, essentially avoidable discontent, is understandable:

- *Petitioners regularly report that their files have not been forwarded to their new unit after a reassignment or that they have had to request various medical reports again. In one particularly serious case, the “health records” consisted of a loose pile of papers in an ordinary envelope.*

Handling sensitive documents like this is also unacceptable when it comes to data protection. The Ministry of Defence now intends to have the initial capability of a digital health record in place by the end of 2027. It is hoped that the proposed schedule can now finally be adhered to. It would be appropriate to adopt an interim solution from early 2026, allowing patients to get copies of their health records again, until the relevant general regulation has been revised.

One petition was also about the slow progress of digitalisation in making **medical appointments**:

- *According to a Bundeswehr doctor, patients are increasingly able to make appointments with civilian doctors and therapists online via digital platforms. An attempt by the specialist testing unit at a Bundeswehr hospital to set up a website was consistently well received, but ultimately failed because of data protection compliance concerns.*

The Bundeswehr Support Command took this case as an opportunity to carry out a final data protection assessment in consultation with the German Military Security Accreditation Authority, however the results are still pending. The Bundeswehr should provide clarity here as soon as possible. It would be particularly welcome if a pragmatic solution could be found so that appointments can be made digitally.

The long **waiting times** for appointments are a recurring issue with petitions about medical care:

- *Both this and the medical care provided at the Holzminden Medical Centre were criticised by servicewomen and men from the 21 Armoured Brigade in Augustdorf during a visit to the troops. The review revealed that the reason for this is a staff vacancy, due to be filled in April 2026, which should relieve the situation somewhat.*

Irrespective of individual cases, the Bundeswehr Support Command made it clear in its statement that, given the planned Bundeswehr increases and the introduction of the new military service, the focus is on improving the structural provision of medical care across the board. The benchmarks here are the changing patient numbers, the requirements of service users and the short, medium and long-term availability of the medical infrastructure. This method is extremely welcome, as medical care for our servicewomen and men contributes significantly to their operational readiness.

The Federal Ministry of Defence says the Bundeswehr’s own specialist medical expertise in the **specialist medical centres** and Bundeswehr hospitals is also limited. These limited capacities mean it is difficult to give appointments for specialist medical facilities, especially at short notice. Appointments will of course be promptly arranged for urgent cases. Longer waiting times will have to be expected for medically necessary but non-urgent treatment, however, unless a referral to the civilian healthcare system is an option. According to the Ministry, the review of the future structure of specialist medical centres should therefore also consider the possibility of expanding these resources regionally in order to meet existing demand where necessary.

Paramedical personnel skills preservation

The reorganisation of the theoretical and practical skills preservation of Bundeswehr emergency specialist medical personnel produced a number of petitions during the year under review:

- *Those affected complained that the practical training period in the civilian rescue service had been shortened to introduce an additional internship in the emergency room of a regional or interregional trauma centre. Changes to theoretical skills preservation were also criticised. Until now this was a one-week training course at a training and simulation centre as part of the annual compulsory further training. Instead skills are now preserved by accumulating further training points, for example by listening to the “Tactical Emergency Medical Support” podcast or by attending certified further training events. From the petitioners’ point of view these changes make it difficult for them to continue working in the civilian rescue service after leaving the Bundeswehr.*

The Ministry of Defence subsequently explained that the adjustment was necessary due to the focus on national and alliance defence. It cited lessons learnt from the war in Ukraine and evaluations by the NATO Centre of Excellence for Military Medicine, among other things, as the basis for the decision. In an emergency patients are therefore likely to remain in the care of the specialist medical personnel providing initial treatment for a longer retention period. The training course’s practical components are thus now scheduled to be held at a regional or interregional trauma centre, as there are enough cases here to ensure course participants remain sufficiently skilled. The changes to theoretical skills preservation are intended to increase the range of further training options. The units themselves could contribute to this by having their own training courses certified for it. At the same time the Ministry believes some of the petitioners’ concerns are understandable, so an evaluation of the reorganisation is also planned. And there are plans to introduce further training modules and make their structure more flexible, which is of course very welcome. To facilitate the transition of temporary-career volunteers into civilian working life after they leave active service, considering extending the duration of practical training to longer periods would in particular be beneficial.

Disablement pension

The new Soldier’s Compensation Act came into force at the beginning of the year under review. This now applies to all service personnel, regardless of their status, and applies equally to damage to health connected with service at home or abroad. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Personnel Management did everything in its power to provide those affected with comprehensive information about the proposed changes.

The fact that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces received very few petitions on the new act is also good news.

- *There was some frustration in particular with the transfer of medical and orthopaedic care to the German Social Accident Insurance Institution of the Federal Government and for the Railway Services after the end of military service. Those affected criticised the fact that the experiences of the above Institution in the area of care for work-related accidents could only be applied to a limited extent with servicewomen and men who had suffered a physical illness not resulting from an accident, or a mental health condition while on duty.*

This criticism was directed at the **Accident Insurance Consultant procedure**, which includes an obligation for those affected to talk to such a consultant about the consequences of injuries that have already been recognised. According to the Ministry of Defence, however, this obligation only applies where it is based on injuries resulting from accident surgery. In all other cases treatment can be provided directly by a competent specialist or by the patient’s general practitioner.

It must be stressed here that the new Military Soldier’s Act includes a **case management** system, which provides active and coordinating support for affected servicewomen and men and their surviving dependants, particularly during administrative procedures and beyond. Specially trained case managers provide detailed information and advice on potential benefits, including those that are not covered by the Soldier’s Compensation Act. Advice is also provided with, for example, unfitness for service procedures connected with service-related disability, or when medical care is transferred to the German Social Accident Insurance Institution of the Federal Government and for the Railway Services, which is expressly welcome in terms of the approach to care and welfare.

During the year under review the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces again received a number of petitions in which those affected criticised what they believe is the unduly long duration of **service-related disability procedures**. The Bundeswehr, however, often understandably explained why the average time of one to one-and-a-half years could not always be adhered to because of various circumstances – such as difficult examinations of the facts or claims of further damages to one’s health being raised during the procedure.

Procedures lasting two years or more are nevertheless very hard on those affected. This in particular applies to cases where recognition of a service-related disability also depends on whether the person can also be re-employed in a special form of military service in accordance with the Act on the Continued Employment of Personnel Injured on Operations. It is of course important here to drive forward digitalisation to accelerate work processes and thus help shorten procedures. Where longer processing times cannot be avoided in individual cases, the competent authorities should communicate this transparently with regular interim messages in the interests of those affected.

Mission-related injury

With the 2007 Act on the Continued Employment of Personnel Injured on Operations, the legislators have established special support for service personnel and civilian employees who have suffered damage to their health as a result of their deployment abroad. The Act enables medical and vocational rehabilitation within the supportive environment of the service, with the goal of vocational reintegration in a reasonable timeframe.

The Federal Ministry of Defence has comprehensively evaluated the Act to assess whether the legislative objectives are actually being achieved in practical application with the available legal instruments. The report, eagerly awaited for some time, was finally presented in September 2025, and informed that the **Act on the Continued Employment of Personnel Injured on Operations** has essentially proven itself in practice. At the same time there is also an optimisation requirement with the design and implementation of the rehabilitation process. The introduction of professional rehabilitation management could be beneficial here, as it would ensure that all those involved in the rehabilitation process work together on the basis of an individual rehabilitation plan, which may be adjusted as necessary during the process, and it would also include the participation of the affected servicewoman or man. The Ministry also recommends setting a fixed timeframe for the rehabilitation process.

In addition to long-term continued military use, the Act on the Continued Employment of Personnel Injured on Operations also provides for the possibility of civilian employment. The Ministry of Defence believes this should be focused on and strengthened in order to provide those affected with comprehensive, realistic and non-judgemental advice early on with regard to their continued use options.

The Federal Ministry of Defence's recommendations are comprehensible and welcome, as the legislative goal of the Act on the Continued Employment of Personnel Injured on Operations is to reintegrate those who have suffered mission-related injuries into working life. The "special type of military service" is not intended as any form of long-term support. If the proposed measures are suitable for reintegrating a larger number of those with mission-related injuries back into working life in a shorter time on average, this would of course be very welcome. Nevertheless, even a rehabilitation process optimised accordingly does not guarantee the goal of reintegration into working life will be achieved in every individual case. It is essential here to provide those affected with timely and detailed information about the available pension benefits. This in particular applies to the new Soldiers' Compensation Act, which offers rehabilitation options outside the Bundeswehr and provides a good safety net with financial benefits, where continued use is not an option.

The servicewomen and men affected received invaluable support from all those organisations that once again during the year under review worked with their heart and soul for their welfare and recognition. These include, for example, the Foundation for Hardship Cases and the Psychosocial Network, and many more, whom we owe our deepest gratitude.

During the year under review servicewomen and men who had suffered mission-related injuries and their families once again benefited from taking part in the "Support and welfare under one roof" **specialised counselling seminar**, which was designed to provide assistance and once again was held four times. Until now the Bundeswehr's Regional Medical Service Support Command has been responsible for organising and running these seminars, but in future the Armed Forces Office will be responsible. Unfortunately the first seminar planned for 2026 already had to be cancelled because of the transfer of responsibility. Hopefully this will not happen again and this valuable service for those with service-related disabilities and their families can resume as normal.

Suicide

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces records every suicide and every attempted suicide, as well as all threats of suicide made by servicewomen and men which come to their attention via the Ministry of

Defence's daily reports on reportable events. The focus of the subsequent review is on whether service-related stress was a possible cause, and what measures the employer took to provide help and support following the suicide. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces recorded 17 suicides in 2025 (2024: 18 – 2023: 15 – 2022: 18 – 2021: 20 – 2020: 11) and 57 attempted suicides (2024: 44 – 2023: 57 – 2022: 64 – 2021: 58 – 2020: 61).

In most of the cases that came to light the causes appear to be in the respective servicewoman or man's personal lives, due to family problems or addiction, for example. Nevertheless, post-traumatic stress disorders and service-related disabilities continue to be causes of suicide in the Bundeswehr. Personal and service-related stresses can, however, overlap or even be interdependent, so it is not always easy to identify the additional pressures experienced while on duty that may have contributed to a servicewoman or man's suicidal tendencies – a difficulty which makes it a continuous responsibility of all fellow soldiers to treat one another with care in their daily lives. Superiors must lead their subordinates responsibly and observe closely.

During the year under review it was clear that command personnel dealt with suicides, suicide attempts and threats of suicide prudently and sensitively. In such exceptional situations, the caring support provided by the Psychosocial Network, consisting of the military chaplaincy, the Medical Service, psychological service and social services, offered help and support to those affected and their families.

Health

On the whole digitalisation must be urgently driven forward. The absence of digital medical records in particular results in personnel processing errors, and considerable frustration among our servicewomen and men.

16. Welfare

Veterans Day

In April 2024, the German Bundestag declared 15 June as National Veterans Day by a large majority, to honour the dedication and service of serving and former servicewomen and men throughout Germany. In addition to recognising the contributions veterans make to peace, freedom and democracy, the day also serves to strengthen the bond between the Bundeswehr and society.

Germany celebrated its first National Veterans Day on 15 June 2025. States, local authorities, veterans associations and other stakeholders organised a diverse and varied programme, with the main ceremony being held around the Reichstag building in Berlin. Both the stage programme and the "Veterans Village" focused on bringing people together. The President of the Bundestag, MPs from various parliamentary groups, the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces attended the ceremony in person and spoke with the gathered veterans. In small groups, many talked about the mental and physical wounds and injuries they had suffered while on deployment or in service, but also of the pride they feel at having served our country.

During a live link-up with the Lithuania Brigade, the Commissioner emphasised the significance of National Veterans Day on the ceremony's main stage and took the opportunity to express his deep gratitude to the servicewomen and men stationed in Lithuania. The serving servicewomen and men emphasised that the purpose of Veterans Day is to show public appreciation, in particular to our veterans, and that the day is dedicated to paying special tribute to their commitment and service.

During the main event the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces ran an information stand in conjunction with the Secretariat of the German Bundestag's Defence Committee. Many visitors took the opportunity to speak in person with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and his staff.

Military chaplaincy

The military chaplains' work in the armed forces is vitally important. Servicewomen and men can contact the dedicated and professional chaplains of the Catholic, Protestant or Jewish military chaplaincy at any time for any problems or issues arising both during and outside of service. Particularly in times of growing security challenges, which affect service personnel, and often their personal lives as well, the availability of neutral and professional

pastoral support is a valuable asset. It is clear here that the duty of confidentiality and easy access are key factors for people to use this service.

Military chaplaincy plays a special role in deployments abroad or comparable assignments, such as with the Lithuania Brigade, for example:

- *Members of the military chaplaincy here are regularly exposed to the same dangers and risks as the troops. Added to this is the heavy psychological strain, as they act as a “suggestion box” for servicewomen and men, especially in this situation.*

The fact that military chaplains are fully protected during this period by the provisions of the civil service pension law is of course good news. At the same time it is also important that, in addition to good preparation, they are able to access psychosocial support and preparation for deployments if required.

Following a lengthy consultation process, the Federal Ministry of Defence is now preparing to award a contract on an individual basis for the introduction of a **Muslim** military chaplaincy. This is very welcome, as ultimately the existing gap must finally be closed so that the service can begin in 2026.

In the year under review the Ministry of Defence did not, however, identify any need for further pastoral care services from external institutions:

- *During this year a petitioner called for the introduction of humanist pastoral care in the Bundeswehr. He criticised the fact that the current services provided by the military chaplaincy focus exclusively on religious needs. In his view, however, servicewomen and men who do not belong to any religious denomination are entitled to support by humanist chaplains.*

The Ministry of Defence rightly believes there is no violation of fundamental rights here. It must be emphasised that pastoral care provided to individual service personnel is not connected with any particular denomination. Trust in military chaplaincy is also based less on its denominational character than on its institutional independence and personal integrity. Key features of military chaplaincy include the duty of confidentiality and structural independence from the military command system.

The Protestant Association for the Welfare of Military Personnel and the Catholic Association for the Welfare of Military Personnel are the support organisations of the Christian military chaplaincy. They frequently make up for deficits in the Bundeswehr's **childcare facilities**, with the numerous “Oases”, for example, with the holiday childcare programme or with the wide range of leisure activities on offer. Together the Protestant and the Catholic Associations for the Welfare of Military Personnel under the auspices of the Federal Association for the Welfare of Military Personnel demonstrate the high value of their support work within the armed forces.

Financial

Just as civil servants are, servicewomen and men are also entitled to remuneration appropriate to their rank. This must take the development of the general standard of living into account. On this basis, and in particular with regard to the minimum margin between military pay and the basic income support level, as well as the level of pay for families with three or more children, the Federal Constitutional Court had already called on legislators in 2020 to implement measures to ensure that civil service pay **complies with the Constitution**. Although implemented in many federal states, this directive from the highest court has still not been implemented at federal level. In recent years servicewomen and men have repeatedly complained here that the cost of living in metropolitan areas is now considerably higher than in many rural regions, so it is encouraging that a specific improvement appears to be on the way, as the Federal Government intends to introduce legislation on a salary commensurate with the respective rank or position at federal level in the near future.

During the year under review several petitions also pointed out that the pay gaps within the **pay structure** were too small:

- *Several members of the forces, particularly those in the enlisted personnel career bracket, complained that after more than nine or ten years of service, they were earning just slightly more than newly recruited fellow soldiers in the same career bracket.*

There may indeed be situations where the pay gap between service personnel of different ranks is very small or non-existent. This is particularly the case if, when they enlist in the Bundeswehr, the person already has prior

civilian work experience, which results in the recognition of a higher level of experience from when they begin service. In exceptional cases it is even possible that a servicewoman or man of lower rank receives higher pay than a colleague who has served in the Bundeswehr for longer. The frustration felt by those adversely affected is of course understandable, however it is also important to recognise that service personnel may already have acquired valuable skills in their civilian life before joining the Bundeswehr.

Temporary-career volunteers who leave the Bundeswehr after at least four years of service receive **transition allowances**, which will cover their living expenses as they transition into civilian working life. The benefit generosity is based on the length of service, ranges from 12 to 60 months, and is generally 75 percent of the final gross salary. This entitlement may increase to 100 percent with a subsidised training programme.

- *A serviceman complained that his transition allowance had been reduced after he left the Bundeswehr. Beginning work in the private sector meant the income he earned here was taken into account when calculating his benefits. This would not have happened if he had taken a job in the civil service instead.*

It was later shown that the cause was due to an oversight in the legislative process of the *Zeitenwende* article law which has applied in this area since January 2025. With the adopted restructuring, the legislators had intended to end the reduction in transition allowances that had previously been provided for under certain circumstances, however it had mistakenly limited this to civilian employment relationships. When it realised the oversight, the Federal Ministry of Defence issued a directive instructing that the transition allowances must be paid to those affected, retroactively from 1 January 2025 without any reduction. At the same time it also began to correct the legal situation produced by the entry into force of the Act on the Modernisation of Military Service.

During the year under review many retired career soldiers complained about the Federal Office of Administration's lengthy processing times with their **applications for support**. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, which had been asked by the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag to provide a statement, assured that it was making considerable efforts to avoid causing undue hardship to applicants – by increasing staff levels at the aid offices and overtime, among other things. An amendment to the Act on Federal Civil Servants also came into force in January 2026, which will significantly shorten the respective procedures. From now on a presumption of reimbursement applies to claimed expenses if the aid office has not decided on the application for support within four weeks of receiving it. The Ministry of the Interior also informs that it will do everything in its power to ensure that the processing time is significantly less than four weeks.

To mitigate the financial consequences of a human resources measure, such as a reassignment, the employer pays for the move to the new place of duty or a **separation allowance** in order to enable the employee to commute to their previous home. According to the “Three-Plus-Five” rule, those affected by reassignments can choose between reimbursement of relocation costs and a separation allowance. If they opt for the reimbursement, this will only take effect three years after they have agreed to it, so those affected can postpone the move during this period, and instead are entitled to a separation allowance. After these three years they can either claim the reimbursement of relocation costs or waive it and instead apply for a separation allowance for a further five years. In this context a single or unmarried serviceman complained about a rule he felt was unfair:

- *When he joined the Bundeswehr, it decided his home could not be taken into account for separation allowance claims because it was more than 100 kilometres from his place of duty. Claims in accordance with the Three-Plus-Five rule therefore did not apply to him, however he was approved the reimbursement of relocation costs.*

The option to choose the **Three-Plus-Five** rule is only available to married servicewomen and men, those in a registered civil union, and those with children living in the same household, as well as to those living apart from their spouse, provided they are still married. The distance between their home and their place of duty is irrelevant for this group of people, unlike single service personnel without these personal ties. This rule does not, however, reflect the reality of servicewomen and men's lives in many respects, as close ties to their home town often exist, irrespective of their civil status. It is therefore understandable that many of them wish to maintain their ties to where the focus of their life was before they joined the Bundeswehr. Renting a second home near one's place of duty without receiving a separation allowance is in particular very expensive for those who are no longer obliged to live in official accommodation or for single people. This significantly reduces the appeal of serving with the Bundeswehr. Adjusting the underlying regulations would therefore be a step towards greater fairness.

MWR food service

Unfortunately the Bundeswehr's MWR facilities must often do what they can with outdated, dilapidated buildings. As in other areas of the Bundeswehr's real estate portfolio, new building and renovation projects depend heavily on the capacities of the responsible state building authorities. The length of projects that drag on for many years is unsatisfactory for those affected locally, and makes the construction work significantly more expensive:

- *Following several postponements, construction of a new "Trio" building at the Lützow Barracks in Aachen will now begin in 2028, instead of being ready since 2025, as originally planned in 2018. According to the plans, the costs have now risen to over EUR one billion, up from the original EUR 650 million, due to interest, inflation and risk premiums. The construction costs for the kitchens at the Dr Leo Löwenstein Barracks, the Donnerberg Barracks and the Theodor Körner Barracks, where the schedules have all been delayed by around three years, have also risen to a similar degree. The entire Aachen site is suffering because of these postponements, but especially the training course participants at the training facilities.*

Interim solutions can provide a remedy during the renovation or new building projects of MWR facilities, but it is important that these be provided promptly:

- *The Blücher Barracks in Berlin has needed a new mess hall since 2008. Much to the frustration of the servicewomen and men stationed here, catering services were run here in an increasingly ailing infrastructure, and only with special authorisation. Following a construction time of just one year, an interim facility for 300 people finally opened in September of the year under review. The final construction date is set for 2030 at the latest.*

Ideally managed MWR facilities offer a wide range of food and drink served by reliable, attentive staff, with dependable and flexible opening hours, as well as good value for money in a friendly atmosphere. Such optimal conditions do indeed exist. Generally speaking there is a very good relationship between the tenant and the service personnel stationed here, which helps foster the social life within the barracks area.

- *During a visit to 281 Communication and Information Systems Support Battalion at the Eifel Barracks in Gerolstein, the Trio building housing the "Gemeinsamen Heimgesellschaft" (joint club association) club room was particularly impressive, with those based at the site giving extremely positive feedback.*

Exemplary MWR operations such as these can be found regardless of the organisational form, whether in the "Kasino" pilot project, with all ranks clubs or with club associations.

Ultimately success often depends on the efforts of individuals. Civilian tenants, and in particular the servicewomen and men involved in the club associations, sometimes act with admirable flexibility and creativity, even though they must frequently overcome bureaucratic hurdles. They regularly provide customized solutions and step in when an MWR facility must suspend operations, due to infrastructure deficits or a tenant's departure, for example:

- *The officers' club association based in Neustadt in Holstein thus took over the support for all rank categories after the junior ranks' club had to close for hygiene reasons at the end of 2024.*

The bases do not always support such dedicated operators to the best of their ability:

- *The cooperation between the well-used Hardthöhe officers' club association and the local Bundeswehr Service Centre is sometimes less than constructive. Those affected say minor requests, for touch-ups to the wall paint, for example, are not responded to.*

It would be very welcome if the Bundeswehr administration were to act as a constructive partner in emergencies, and provide pragmatic support in the interests of its servicewomen and men. This is essential, not only because of the current staff shortages in the gastronomy sector, but also to show appreciation for the work performed.

Meals together are extremely important to foster a strong sense of **camaraderie**, as they are a good opportunity to share personal and professional experiences with one another. The all ranks clubs, as well as the NCO and officers' club associations, provide an important place to get away to and help prevent isolation, seclusion or the need to find alternatives outside the barracks. It is therefore important to integrate the representatives of all MWR facilities into site-specific planning and to utilise the existing potential of this social component:

- *At the Stetten am kalten Markt site the main utility building, which housed the mess hall, a side bar of the junior ranks' club and the NCO and officers' club associations, has been unusable since November 2023 due to serious roof and water damage. Since then, with approximately 3,100 military and civilian posts, for the foreseeable future the Alb Barracks will only have the junior ranks' club, while NCOs and officers no longer have the option of meeting and socialising together in a similar setting. At the same time those responsible failed to involve the NCO club association chairpersons in future MWR plans. Given the number of servicewomen and men to be catered for here, the fact that the Ministry of Defence is reconsidering the initially rejected idea of an interim solution for the MWR food service for NCOs and officers is therefore welcome.*

It is always better to maintain an attractive and functioning MWR food service than to have to rebuild it once it has been lost – along with the trust that is also often lost here.

Sport

Sport is an integral part of welfare, rehabilitation and performance promotion within the Bundeswehr. A particular highlight at the beginning of the year under review was the visit to the **Invictus Games** in Vancouver, Canada. The event impressively illustrated the vital importance of sport for wounded and disabled servicewomen and men. The numerous discussions with the German team, the coaching staff and the athletes' families demonstrated the value of sports therapy for physical and mental recovery, as well as for motivation and confidence. Sport therefore makes an important contribution to the further development and strengthening of the veteran culture in Germany. The consistently outstanding work of the Bundeswehr Sports School in Warendorf merits special mention in this context.

During the deliberations on the 2026 defence budget the German Bundestag resolved to allocate EUR 200,000 to the **Invictus Germany Sports Festival 2026** in Düsseldorf. This is very welcome, as the programme also contributes to the rehabilitation of wounded, injured and ill servicewomen and men. It is also a visible sign of appreciation and respect for these service personnel in their own country.

And the Bundeswehr makes an indispensable and successful contribution to the promotion of top-level sport in Germany and is exemplary in combining military careers, elite athletic performance and personal development, which also deserves special praise. Athletes enjoy excellent support conditions in the **sports promotion sections**, as well as at the Bundeswehr Sports School and the Centre for Sports Medicine in Warendorf. The close specialist support, professional training structures and reliable social support help them achieve success at a national and international level, while remaining an integral part of the Bundeswehr.

- *Numerous military athletes were part of Team Germany at the 2026 Winter Olympics. Together with their civilian teammates they were perfectly prepared to promote the Olympic spirit of respect, fair play, friendship and the pursuit of excellence.*

The role of these military athletes should be further highlighted in the public eye. Their successes serve as an important model for the Bundeswehr and help promote a positive image of the armed forces in society. Greater visibility would both promote recognition of their achievements and deepen the understanding of the Bundeswehr's diverse tasks and potential as a whole.

Welfare

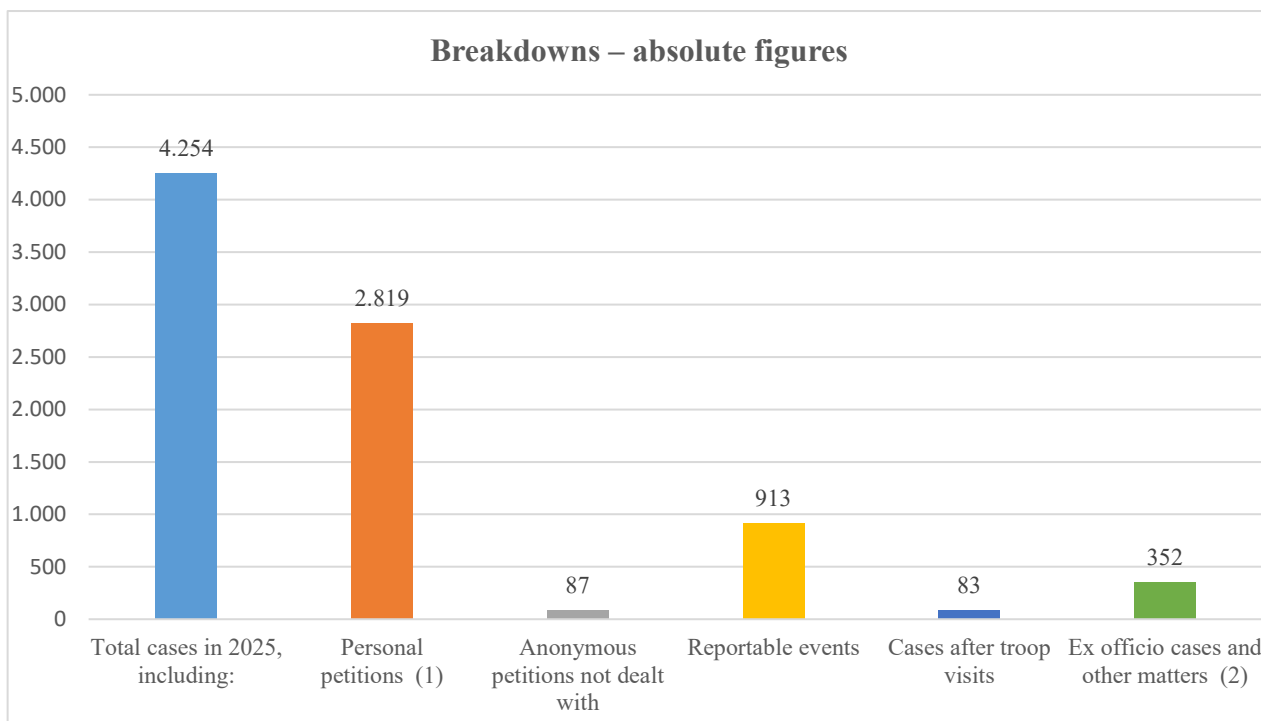
The measures required by the Federal Constitutional Court for constitution-compliant service personnel salaries should also be implemented as quickly as possible.

Henning Otte

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

17. Cases and petitions: Statistical overviews

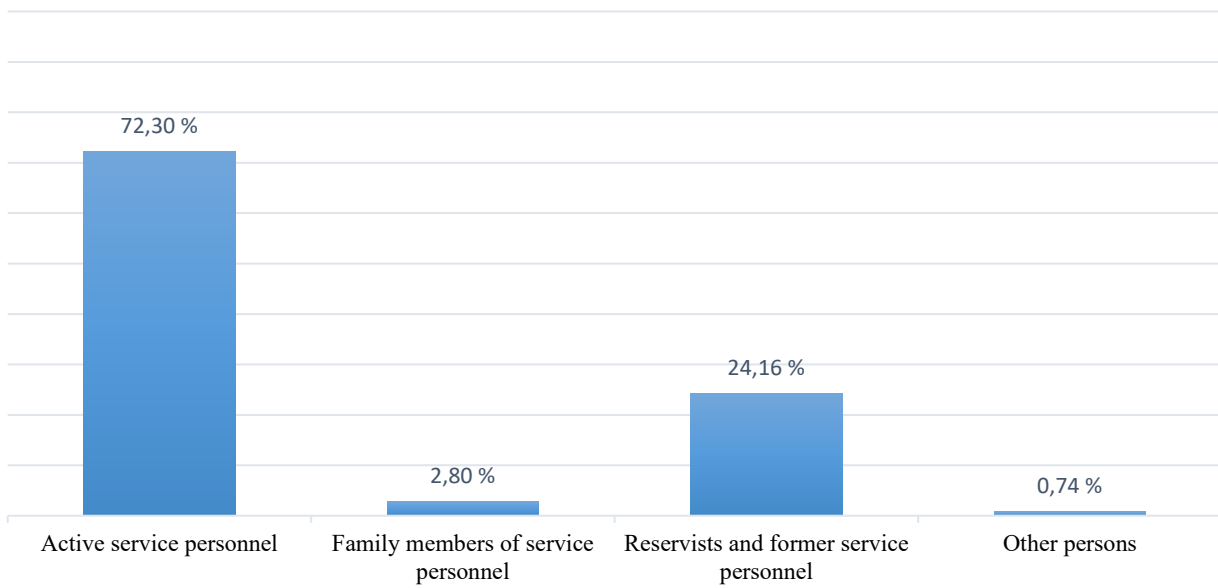
A total of 4,254 cases were recorded in the period under review. Cases are all processing items provided with a file number. In addition to the petitions of servicewomen and men, their family members and similar other people, this includes the reportable events in the Bundeswehr reviewed by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, cases that are taken up after a visit to the troops, and cases that the Commissioner deals with ex officio. The latter include findings that the Commissioner receives from press reports or meetings and discussions, for example. Furthermore, letters from civilian employees submitted to the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag and general enquiries from private individuals are recorded under “Other”.



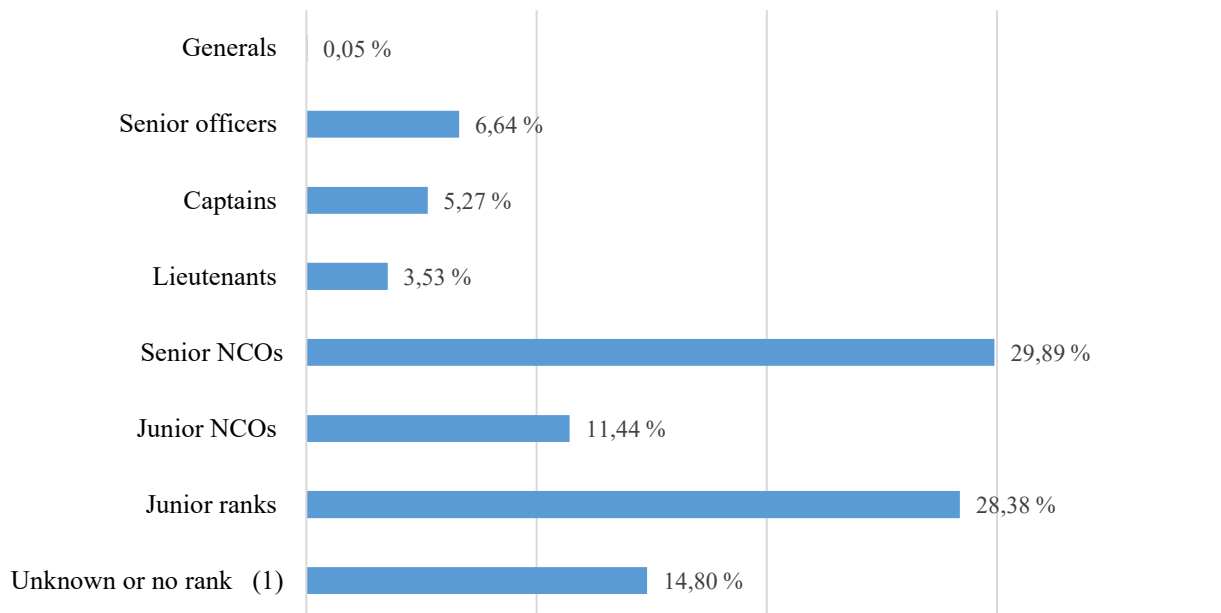
(1) Petitions from service personnel and their family members

(2) Information from press reports and discussions, letters from civilian employees, general enquiries from private persons.

Breakdown of the 2,819 personal petitions by petitioners in percent



Breakdown by rank categories in percent



(1) Including family members

Breakdown of the 4,254 cases according to issues (6,960)

(Up to three incidents can be recorded in one case, therefore the amount of incidents is higher than the amount of cases)

Category	Amount
Personnel matters of active service personnel	2,924
<u>Including:</u>	
Assignment planning, performance evaluation, promotion	607
Reasons and termination of service	607
Reservist affairs, military pay and ancillary promotion and pay areas	530
Personnel processing and personnel management	508
Military pay and ancillary promotion and pay areas	427
Personnel structure	52
Disciplinary law, legal offences	872
<u>Including:</u>	
Offences against sexual self-determination	370
Violation of the free democratic basic order	304
Leadership, camaraderie	745
<u>Including:</u>	
Leadership behaviour and leadership style issues	236
Discriminatory behaviour, moral harassment	93
Pension, social affairs	637
<u>Including:</u>	
Military pay	140
Entitlement to travel expenses, relocation costs and separation allowance	74
Health, medical services, medical care insurance	253
Compatibility of family and duty	204
<u>Including:</u>	
Commuter issues	74
Training, equipment for training	149
Infrastructure, accommodation	137
Deployments abroad, equipment in use	127
Safety issues, accidents	110
Suicide, attempted suicide, notice of a suicide and unexplained deaths	109
Catering, clothing, support	106
Diversity	86
<u>Including:</u>	
Women in the armed forces (equal opportunity issues)	56
Sexual diversity	25
Service personnel with a migration background	5
Working hours	55
Behaviour and appearance of service personnel on and off duty	45
Bureaucracy	12
Other ^{*)}	389

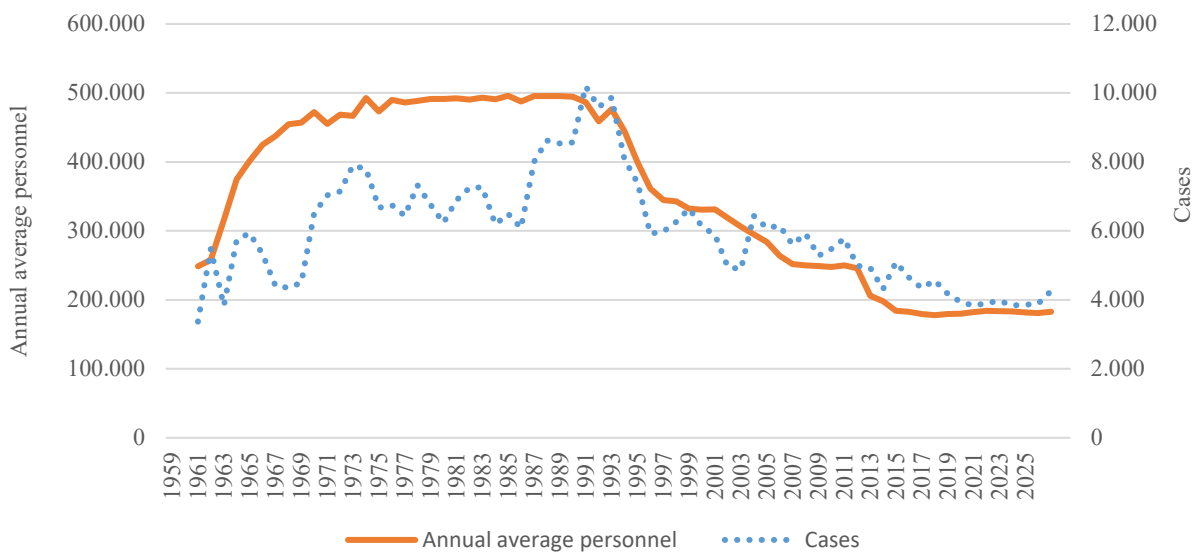
*) Among others, lack of competence, submission to the Petitions Committee, requests for access to files, responses to the annual report

Development of the number of cases from 1959 to 2025

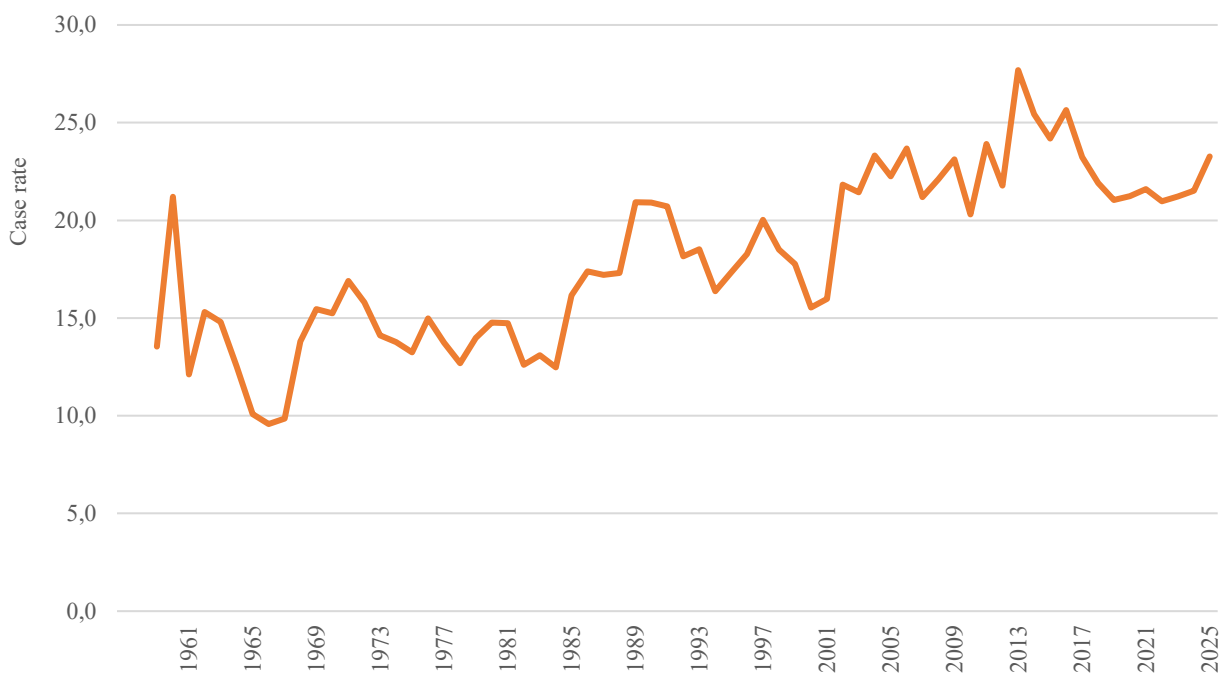
Year under review	Total number of recorded cases	Annual average Bundeswehr personnel (active service personnel)	Case rate per thousand active service personnel
1959	3,368	248,800	13.5
1960	5,471	258,080	21.2
1961	3,829	316,090	12.1
1962	5,736	374,766	15.3
1963	5,938	401,337	14.8
1964	5,322	424,869	12.5
1965	4,408	437,236	10.1
1966	4,353	454,569	9.6
1967	4,503	456,764	9.9
1968	6,517	472,070	13.8
1969	7,033	455,114	15.5
1970	7,142	468,484	15.2
1971	7,891	466,889	16.9
1972	7,789	492,828	15.8
1973	6,673	472,943	14.1
1974	6,748	490,053	13.8
1975	6,439	486,206	13.2
1976	7,319	488,616	15.0
1977	6,753	491,424	13.7
1978	6,234	491,481	12.7
1979	6,884	492,344	14.0
1980	7,244	490,243	14.8
1981	7,265	493,089	14.7
1982	6,184	490,729	12.6
1983	6,493	495,875	13.1
1984	6,086	487,669	12.5
1985	8,002	495,361	16.2
1986	8,619	495,639	17.4
1987	8,531	495,649	17.2
1988	8,563	494,592	17.3
1989	10,190	486,825	20.9
1990	9,590	458,752	20.9
1991	9,864	476,288	20.7
1992	8,084	445,019	18.2
1993	7,391	399,216	18.5
1994	5,916	361,177	16.4
1995	5,979	344,690	17.3

Year under review	Total number of recorded cases	Annual average Bundeswehr personnel (active service personnel)	Case rate per thousand active service personnel
1996	6,264	342,870	18.3
1997	6,647	332,013	20.0
1998	6,122	330,914	18.5
1999	5,885	331,148	17.8
2000	4,952	318,713	15.5
2001	4,891	306,087	16.0
2002	6,436	294,800	21.8
2003	6,082	283,723	21.4
2004	6,154	263,990	23.3
2005	5,601	251,722	22.3
2006	5,918	249,964	23.7
2007	5,276	248,995	21.2
2008	5,474	247,619	22.1
2009	5,779	249,900	23.1
2010	4,993	245,823	20.3
2011	4,926	206,091	23.9
2012	4,309	197,880	21.8
2013	5,095	184,012	27.7
2014	4,645	182,703	25.4
2015	4,344	179,633	24.2
2016	4,560	177,800	25.6
2017	4,173	178,881	23.3
2018	3,939	179,791	21.9
2019	3,835	182,219	21.0
2020	3,907	183,969	21.2
2021	3,967	183,725	21.6
2022	3,839	183,049	21.0
2023	3,859	181,807	21.2
2024	3,891	180,876	21.5
2025	4,254	182,798	23.3

Comparison of the development of cases with the annual average personnel since 1959



Case rate per thousand active service personnel since 1959

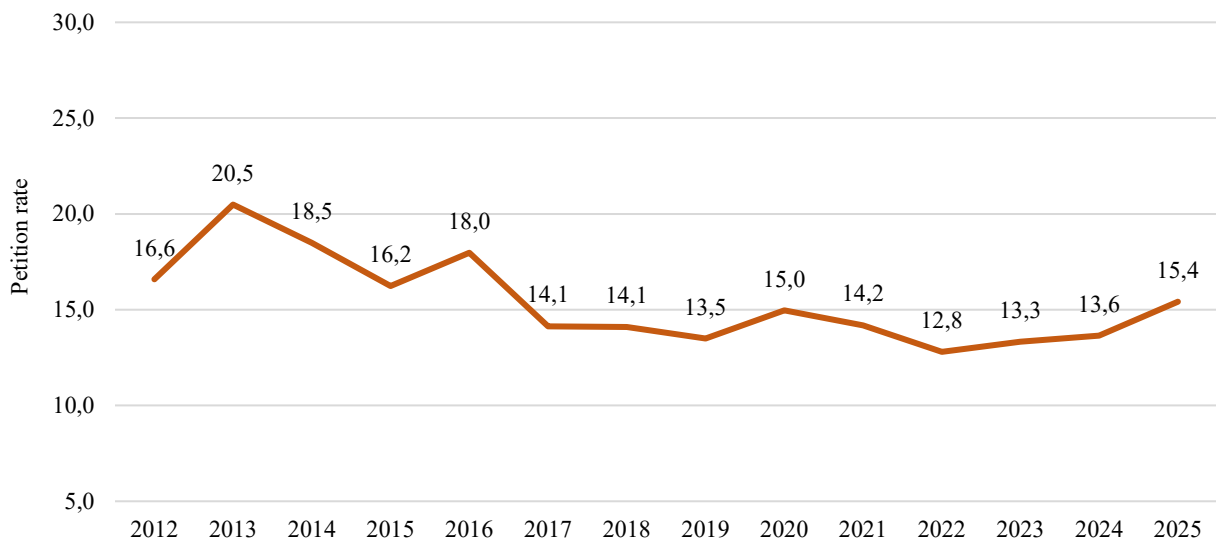


Development of the number of personal petitions in relation to the annual average since 2012

(Statistical recording of personal petitions has only been possible since the introduction of a new data recording system in the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces in 2012)

Year under review	Annual average Bundeswehr personnel (active service personnel)	Total number of personal petitions	Rate of personal petitions per thousand active service personnel
2012	197,880	3,281	16.6
2013	184,012	3,770	20.5
2014	182,703	3,379	18.5
2015	179,633	2,917	16.2
2016	177,800	3,197	18.0
2017	178,881	2,528	14.1
2018	179,791	2,534	14.1
2019	182,219	2,459	13.5
2020	183,969	2,753	15.0
2021	183,725	2,606	14.2
2022	183,049	2.34	12.8
2023	181,807	2,423	13.3
2024	180,976	2,467	13.6
2025	182,798	2,819	15.4

Petition rate per thousand active service personnel since 2012



18. Visits, meetings and talks by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

During the year under review, the former Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Dr Eva Högl, and following his swearing-in in June 2025, the current Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, Henning Otte, visited numerous units and stations across all branches of the armed forces and military organisational components both at home and abroad, including in Lithuania and Kosovo.

During their respective terms of office they accepted invitations to attend the Invictus Games in Canada, the 17th International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF) in South Africa, and the general officers', first sergeants' and commandants' conferences. They also held numerous meetings to exchange information, with officials from the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Chancellery, the intelligence services, military ombudsmen, the General Spokespersons' Committee, the German Armed Forces Association, the Reservists' Association, Members of the Bundestag, security-related institutions and organisations, military chaplains, foundations, business representatives and journalists, among others.

In the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, the Commissioner or one of their staff received and attended to 51 visitor groups. Eight of these were international service personnel groups from the partnership seminars organised by the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre and various international military seminars run by NATO, as well as from Mongolia, the Netherlands, the USA, Kosovo, Vietnam, Colombia and Latvia. Of the groups, 41 came from the armed forces and organisational components of the Bundeswehr.

19. Legal basis of the office, duties and tasks of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and servicewomen and servicemen's right of petition

Excerpt from the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949 (Federal Law Gazette – BGBl. I, page 1), last amended by Article 1 of the Law of 22 March 2025 (BGBl. 2025 I, No. 94)

Article 17

Every person shall have the right to address requests or complaints in writing to the responsible authorities and the national parliament, either individually or jointly with others.

Article 17a

(1) Laws on military service and alternative service may stipulate that, for members of the armed forces and alternative service during the period of military service or alternative service, the fundamental right to freely express and disseminate one's opinion in speech, writing and images (Article 5 paragraph 1, sentence 1, first half-sentence), the fundamental right of freedom of assembly (Article 8) and the right of petition (Article 17), insofar as it grants the right to make requests or complaints in community with others, shall be restricted.

(2) Laws for the purpose of defence, including the protection of the civilian population, may stipulate that the fundamental rights of freedom of movement (Article 11) and the inviolability of the home (Article 13) shall be restricted.

Article 45b

A Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be appointed to protect the fundamental rights and to assist the Bundestag in exercising parliamentary control. The details shall be regulated by a federal law.

Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (Act on Article 45b of the Basic Law – Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces) in the version published on 16 June 1982 (BGBl. I, page 677), last amended by Article 17 of the Act of 22 December 2023 (BGBl. 2023 I, No. 414)

§ 1 Status under constitutional law, duties

(1) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall perform their duties as an auxiliary organ of the Bundestag in exercising parliamentary oversight.

(2) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall act on the instructions of the Bundestag or the Defence Committee to examine specific cases. An instruction can only be issued if the Defence Committee does not make the case the subject of its own advisory work. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces may request an instruction from the Defence Committee to examine certain cases.

(3) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall act at their own discretion on the basis of their own decision if, in exercising their right under § 3 No. 4, through notification by members of the Bundestag, through petitions under § 7 or in any other way, they become aware of circumstances that indicate a violation of the fundamental rights of service personnel or of the principles of leadership development and civic education. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall not take action pursuant to sentence 1 if the Defence Committee has made the matter the subject of its own advisory work.

§ 2 Reporting obligations

(1) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall submit a written general report (annual report) to the Bundestag for the calendar year.

(2) They may submit individual reports to the Bundestag or the Defence Committee at any time.

(3) If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces acts on instructions, they shall submit an individual report on the results of their examination upon request.

§ 3 Official powers

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall have the following powers in performing the duties assigned to them:

1. They may request information and access to files from the Federal Minister of Defence and all offices and persons subordinate to them. These rights may only be denied to them if there are compelling reasons for confidentiality. The decision on such a denial shall be made by the Federal Minister of Defence or their permanent deputy in office. They must represent the decision before the Defence Committee. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be authorised to hear the petitioner as well as witnesses and experts on the basis of an instruction pursuant to § 1 (2) and with a petition based on a complaint by the petitioner. These shall be compensated in accordance with the Law on the Compensation of Witnesses and Experts in the version published on 1 October 1969 (BGBl. I, p. 1756), last amended by Article 11 of the Law of 26 November 1979 (BGBl. I, p. 1953).
2. They may give the responsible agencies or offices the opportunity to settle a matter.
3. They may forward a case to the agency or office responsible for initiating criminal or disciplinary proceedings.
4. They may visit all Bundeswehr units, headquarters, departments and authorities and their facilities at any time, even without prior notification. This right shall be the exclusive personal right of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. Sentences 2 and 3 of No. 1 shall apply accordingly.
5. They may request summary reports on the exercising of disciplinary powers in the armed forces from the Federal Minister of Defence and statistics reports on the exercising of criminal justice from the responsible federal and state authorities, provided this affects the armed forces or their service personnel.
6. They may attend court hearings in criminal proceedings and disciplinary proceedings, even if the public is excluded. They shall have the right to inspect files to the same extent as the prosecuting counsel and the counsel of the instituting authority. They shall also be entitled to the authority in sentence 1 in application and complaints procedures in accordance with the Military Disciplinary Code and the Military Complaints Regulations before the military disciplinary and complaints courts and in proceedings before the courts of administrative jurisdiction relating to their area of responsibility. In these proceedings they shall have the right to inspect files as a party to the proceedings.

§ 4 Administrative assistance

Federal, state and local courts and administrative authorities shall be obliged to provide the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces with administrative assistance in carrying out the necessary surveys.

§ 5 General guidelines, exemption from direction

(1) The Bundestag and the Defence Committee may issue general guidelines for the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

(2) Notwithstanding § 1 (2), the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be exempt from direction.

§ 6 Compulsory attendance

The Bundestag and the Defence Committee may request the attendance of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces at any time.

§ 7 Service personnel's right of petition

Each and every servicewoman and man shall have the right to contact the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces directly and individually without having to go through official channels. They may not be reprimanded or penalised because of their appeal to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

§ 8 Anonymous petitions

Anonymous petitions will not be processed.

§ 9 Confidentiality of petitions

If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces takes action on the basis of a petition, it shall be at their discretion to disclose the facts of the petition and the name of the petitioner. They shall refrain from disclosure if the petitioner so wishes and there are no legal obligations to prevent meeting the request.

§ 10 Duty of confidentiality

(1) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be obliged to maintain confidentiality with regard to matters that have come to their official knowledge, even after the end of their term of office. This shall not apply to communications in the normal course of official business or to facts that are obvious or do not require confidentiality due to their level of significance.

(2) Even if no longer in office, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces may not give evidence or make statements on such matters in or out of court without authorisation. Authorisation shall be granted by the President of the Bundestag in agreement with the Defence Committee.

(3) Permission to testify as a witness may only be refused if the testimony would be detrimental to the welfare of the country or a German state or would seriously jeopardise or considerably impede the performance of public duties.

(4) This shall not affect the statutory duty to report criminal offences and to advocate and stand up for the preservation of the free democratic basic order should it be endangered.

§ 11

(omitted)

§ 12 Federal and state authority information obligations

The judicial and administrative authorities of the Federal Government and the states shall be obliged to inform the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces of the initiation of the proceedings, the filing of the public complaint, the ordering of the investigation in the disciplinary proceedings and the outcome of the proceedings if the

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces has forwarded the cases to one of these authorities.

§ 13 Election of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

The Bundestag elects the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces by secret ballot with a majority of its members. The Defence Committee, the parliamentary groups and as many MPs as to equal the required amount of a parliamentary group in accordance with the rules of procedure shall be entitled to submit proposals. Debate is not provided for.

§ 14 Eligibility for election, term of office, prohibition from pursuing another profession, oath, exemption from military service

(1) Any German person who has the right to vote for the Bundestag and has reached the age of 35 shall be eligible for election as the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (amended by the Act of 30 March 1990 – BGBl. I, p. 599).

(2) The term of office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is five years. Re-election is allowed.

(3) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces may not hold any other paid office, trade or profession and may not be a member of the management or supervisory board of a profit-oriented company or of a government or a legislative body of the Federal Government or of a German state.

(4) On taking office before the Bundestag the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall take the oath provided for in Article 56 of the Basic Law.

(5) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be exempt from military service for the duration of their term of office.

§ 15 Legal status of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, commencement and termination of the official relationship

(1) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall have an official relationship under public law in accordance with this law. The President of the Bundestag shall appoint the person elected.

(2) The official relationship shall begin with the handing over of the certificate of appointment or, if the oath has been taken beforehand (§ 14 paragraph 4), with the swearing-in.

(3) Apart from expiry of the term of office in accordance with § 14 paragraph 2 or death, the official relationship shall end:

- 1 with dismissal,
- 2 with release on request.

(4) At the request of the Defence Committee, the Bundestag may instruct its President to dismiss the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. This decision requires the approval of a majority of the members of the Bundestag.

(5) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces may request their release at any time. The President of the Bundestag shall pronounce the release.

§ 16 Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, senior civil servant, employees, budget

(1) The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is in the Bundestag.

(2) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is supported by a senior civil servant. Further employees shall be assigned to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to perform their duties. The civil servants working with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces are Bundestag civil servants pursuant to § 176 of the Act on Federal Civil Servants in the version published on 3 January 1977 (BGBl. I, pages 1, 795, 842), last amended by § 27 of the Act of 26 June 1981 (BGBl. I, page 553). The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be the superior of all employees assigned to them.

(3) The necessary personnel and material resources to be provided to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to perform their duties shall be shown in a separate chapter of the Bundestag section of the budget.

§ 17 Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces representative

(1) The senior civil servant shall assume the rights of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, with the exception of the right under § 3 No. 4, if the Commissioner is prevented from doing so and after the end of their term of office, until a successor takes office. § 5 (2) shall apply accordingly.

(2) If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is unable to perform their duties for more than three months, or if more than three months have elapsed since the end of the Commissioner's official relationship without a successor's term of office having begun, the Defence Committee may authorise the senior civil servant to exercise the right under § 3 No. 4.

§ 18 Remuneration, pensions

(1) The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall receive official remuneration from the beginning of the calendar month in which the official relationship begins until the end of the calendar month in which the official relationship ends. § 11 (1)(a) and (b) of the Federal Ministers Act shall apply mutatis mutandis with the proviso that the official salary and the local allowance amount to 75 percent of the official salary and the local cost-of-living allowance of a federal minister. The remuneration shall be paid monthly in advance.

(1a) To mitigate the consequences of increased consumer prices, the following special payments shall be granted to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces in corresponding application of § 14 (4) to (8) of the Federal Civil Service Remuneration Act:

1. A one-time special payment of EUR 1,240 for the month of June 2023.
2. A monthly special payment of EUR 220 for the months of July 2023 to February 2024.

(2) In all other respects, § 11 (2) and (4) and §§ 13 to 20 and 21a of the Federal Ministers Act shall apply mutatis mutandis, with the proviso that the two-year term of office (§ 15 (1) of the Federal Ministers Act) shall be replaced by a five-year term of office. Sentence 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis to a career soldier or temporary-career volunteer who has been appointed as a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, subject to the proviso that for temporary-career volunteers retirement shall be replaced by termination of service with application of § 18(2) of the Federal Ministers Act.

(3) The provisions of the Federal Travel Expenses Act in the version published on 13 November 1973 (BGBl. I, page 1,621), last amended by the ordinance of 31 May 1979 (BGBl. I, page 618), the highest level of travel expenses and the Federal Removal Expenses Act in the version published on 13 November 1973 (BGBl. I, page 1,628), last amended by Article VII of the Act of 20 December 1974 (BGBl. I, page 3,716) shall apply mutatis mutandis to relocations required by the appointment and termination of the official relationship.

§ 19

(omitted)

§ 20

(entry into force)

Excerpt from the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag in the new version published on 17 October 2025 (BGBl. 2025 I, No. 250)

§ 113 Election of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is elected by secret ballot (§ 49).

§ 114 Reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

(1) The President shall send the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to the Defence Committee, unless a parliamentary group or five out of one hundred members of the Bundestag request that this be placed on the agenda.

(2) The Defence Committee shall report to the Bundestag.

§ 115 Consultation on the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

(1) The President shall allow the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to speak in the debate on the reports submitted by them if this has been requested by a parliamentary group or by five out of one hundred members of the Bundestag present.

(2) A parliamentary group or five out of one hundred members of the Bundestag present may request that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces be summoned to sessions of the Bundestag. Paragraph 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis.

Procedural principles for cooperation between the Petitions Committee and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

1. The Petitions Committee shall inform the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces of a petition if it concerns a Bundeswehr servicewoman or man. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall inform the Petitions Committee whether a case has arisen in the same matter and whether they will take action.

2. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall inform the Petitions Committee of a case if the Petitions Committee recognises that a petition has been submitted on the same matter.

3. If the Petitions Committee and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces are involved in the same matter, the case shall basically be handled by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces first. If the Petitions Committee takes action, it shall inform the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces accordingly. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and the Petitions Committee shall inform each other, regularly and in writing, of the progress of the processing and its result.

Excerpt from the A-2600/2 general regulation, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters

Table of contents

1	Constitutional status of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces
2	Tasks and powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces
2.1	Tasks
2.2	Powers
3	Rules of procedures
3.1	General remarks
3.2	Processing
3.3	Hearings
3.4	Processing of requests when a complaint has been made concurrently
3.5	Processing within the jurisdiction of the agency concerned
3.6	Visits conducted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces
4	Notification of servicewomen and -men, rights and obligations
5	Data protection
6	Cooperation in a spirit of trust

1 Constitutional status of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

101. A Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be appointed to protect the fundamental rights of servicewomen and men and to assist the Bundestag in exercising parliamentary oversight. Further details shall be stipulated by the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (Act pursuant to Article 45b of the Basic Law – Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces) in the version of the Notification of 16 June 1982 (Federal Law Gazette I, page 677), which was most recently amended by Article 15(68) of the Act to Restructure Civil Service Law of 5 February 2009 (Federal Law Gazette I, page 160).

2 Tasks and powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

2.1 Tasks

201. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall act

- on the instructions of the Bundestag or the Defence Committee to examine specific cases,
- at their own discretion and on the basis of their own decision, if circumstances become known to them
 - + with their visits in accordance with § 3 number 4 of the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces,
 - + via notification by members of the Bundestag,
 - + via petitions in accordance with § 7 of the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces or
 - + in any another way

that indicate a violation of the fundamental rights of service personnel or of the principles of leadership development and civic education.

2.2 Powers

202. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall in particular have the following powers in performing the duties assigned to them:

- a) They may request information and access to files from the Federal Minister of Defence and all agencies, offices and persons subordinate to them. This right may only be denied to them if there are compelling reasons for confidentiality. The decision on such a denial shall be made by the Federal Minister of Defence or their permanent deputy in office. They must represent the decision before the Defence Committee.
- b) On the instructions of the German Bundestag or the Defence Committee they shall be authorised to hear the petitioner as well as witnesses and experts with a petition based on a complaint by the petitioner.
- c) They may visit all Bundeswehr units, headquarters, departments and authorities and their facilities at any time, even without prior notification. This right of access is reserved for the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces personally. Exercising this right may only be denied where there are compelling reasons for confidentiality. The decision of the Federal Minister of Defence must be obtained for this.
- d) They may attend court hearings in criminal proceedings and disciplinary proceedings, even if the public is excluded. They shall have the right to inspect files to the same extent as the prosecuting counsel and the counsel of the instituting authority. They shall also be entitled to the authority in sentence 1 in application and complaints procedures in accordance with the Military Disciplinary Code and the Military Complaints Regulations before the military disciplinary and complaints courts and in proceedings before the courts of administrative jurisdiction relating to their area of responsibility. In these proceedings they shall have the right to inspect the files as a party to the proceedings.

e) They may give the responsible agencies or offices the opportunity to settle a matter.

f) They may forward a case to the agency or office responsible for initiating criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

203. With the exception of the right of access in accordance with number 202 letter c), the powers may also be exercised by the staff of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. Fact-finding visits by employees must be registered in advance.

3 Rules of procedures

3.1 General remarks

301. Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters must be dealt with as a matter of priority. If the matter takes longer to process, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall be informed of the status of the matter at appropriate intervals by the office that must issue the statement.

All offices entrusted with the processing must maintain secrecy and confidentiality. This shall also apply if a Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matter is forwarded through official channels or to several offices.

If, in connection with a request by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces for information or access to files or with visits, there are doubts as to whether there are compelling reasons for confidentiality that prevent the request, the decision of the Federal Minister of Defence must be obtained without delay. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces must be informed of this.

3.2 Processing

302. If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces writes personally to members of the Bundeswehr, the person to whom the letter is addressed shall reply. If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces writes to an office of the Bundeswehr, the head of the office shall reply. The final statement must always be signed exclusively by the head of the office.

303. If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces writes to offices of the Bundeswehr, a confirmation of receipt must be issued by the office responsible for processing and providing information.

304. Any necessary investigations shall be performed by the responsible superior. Victims, affected or accused persons named in the petition must not be entrusted or tasked with an investigation. If a need for action is identified, any deficiencies found must be remedied after processing has been completed. The same shall apply if an office of the Bundeswehr has been instructed by the Federal Ministry of Defence to respond to a request from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

305. The processing of Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces matters within the Federal Ministry of Defence shall be governed by the provisions of the

Federal Ministry of Defence's supplementary rules of procedure.

306. If a petitioner's superiors are requested by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces to submit a statement, they shall arrange for the facts of the case to be reviewed and send the results of the investigation submitted to them together with their own statement to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

307. The documents resulting from the review must be sent to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. This shall in particular include:

- Questioning minutes, minutes of hearings
- Official declarations or statements
- Decisions on the submission of a case to the prosecuting authority
- Notifications of proceedings
- Disciplinary orders
- Orders to refrain
- Measures and decisions in the area of military personnel matters (e.g. dismissals, extension of service periods)

308. If the subordinate department of the Federal Ministry of Defence is directly involved by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, that is, without the involvement of the Ministry, the A-500/1 "Cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Defence and subordinate offices" general regulation shall apply. With cases that are important for the management of the Federal Ministry of Defence, the relevant specialised office in the Federal Ministry of Defence must be involved for information purposes. In cases of prominent fundamental or strategic importance, a report must be submitted to the technically responsible ministerial office through official channels before being issued. The EBU III 6 unit must be involved for information purposes in all cases.

309. Statements from Bundeswehr offices that were submitted at the request of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces on the basis of reports in accordance with the A-2600/10 VS-NfD "Reporting on the internal and social situation of the Bundeswehr" general regulation must be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Defence EBU III 6 immediately after they have been issued, together with the essential cases that have arisen.

This concerns:

- Petitions or reports with "Suspicion of criminal offences in accordance with the Military Criminal Code" (A-2600/10, numbers 322 to 325).
- Petitions or reports of "Suspicion of criminal offences against sexual self-determination and other forms of sexual harassment by or against members of the Bundeswehr" (A-2600/10, number 341).

- Petitions or reports with "Suspicion of espionage, extremism or violation of the free democratic basic order, carried out by or against members of the Bundeswehr" (A-2600/10, numbers 361 to 363).

310. All statements submitted by Bundeswehr offices to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, together with the essential cases that have arisen, must be submitted to the Federal Ministry of Defence through official channels upon request, if

- the matter is of political or public/media importance or
- judicial disciplinary proceedings have been initiated in the matter or criminal proceedings have been initiated or are expected to be initiated.

311. Where servicewomen or men release the attending doctors or medical experts from their duty of medical confidentiality in connection with their petitions to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, this shall in case of doubt relate exclusively to their statements made directly to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

Copies of these statements and attached annexes, which are to be submitted to other offices in the Federal Ministry of Defence's area of responsibility through official channels, must not contain any facts or assessments that are subject to medical confidentiality.

312. The statements addressed to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall, where appropriate, be drafted in such a way that the statements subject to medical confidentiality are summarised in a special annex and sent only to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces directly with the original correspondence.

313. All parties involved must also observe the duty of confidentiality with regard to petitions, their content and corresponding statements in accordance with the statutory or collective agreement regulations (§ 14 of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act, § 67 of the Act on Federal Civil Servants, § 3 (1) of the Collective Agreement for the Public Service, for example).

314. A petition matter is generally concluded with a letter from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. If the Commissioner notifies the conclusion of the procedure, the office that received the letter shall notify all offices involved in the processing of the result of the Commissioner's review.

315. Petitions that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces sends to the Bundeswehr offices or the Federal Ministry of Defence for comment may only be treated as complaints in accordance with the Military Complaints Regulations (MCR) if such a reinterpretation corresponds to the express will of the petitioner. If necessary the petitioner must be questioned accordingly.

3.3 Hearings

316. If the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces exercises the right to information and access to files (number 202 letter a), this must be supported in

every respect. Where required, leave or special leave in accordance with § 9 of the Military Leave Ordinance in conjunction with § 5 (2) of the Ordinance must be granted for a hearing. The possibility of travelling on official duty can be examined with consideration of the applicable instruction situation.

317. If servicewomen or men are to be questioned on matters that are subject to the duty of confidentiality in official matters, authorisation to give evidence must be obtained from the responsible disciplinary superior. Authorisation to give evidence shall be deemed to have been granted if the evidence does not contain classified information or only contains classified information up to a maximum OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE classification level. The provisions of civil service and collective bargaining law on confidentiality in official matters shall apply accordingly to statements made by staff. In their statements to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, the persons interviewed must state that their statements contain classified information.
318. The persons interviewed shall be compensated in accordance with the Judicial Remuneration and Compensation Act of 5 May 2004 (Federal Law Gazette I, pages 718, 776), which was last amended by Article 6 of the Act of 21 December 2020 (Federal Law Gazette I, page 3,229). This shall be done at the request of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

3.4 Processing of requests when a complaint has been made concurrently

319. If a complaint has been lodged in accordance with the MCR, including a disciplinary complaint in accordance with § 42 of the Military Disciplinary Code, and if a petition has been filed in the same matter, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces must be informed of the status and progress of the complaint. A copy of the notice of appeal must be forwarded unsolicited. The lodging of an appeal and the non-appealability of the decision on it must be notified separately.
320. If a petition matter goes beyond an appeal lodged in accordance with the MCR, this part of the petition must be dealt with in the same way as other petitions.
321. A petition to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces does not replace the appeals in accordance with the MCR and the MDC. Even if a petition to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces is to be regarded as a complaint or an application in accordance with the MCR or the MDC, the dates specified here are only complied with if the petition is received by the office responsible for receiving the complaint or application within this period.

3.5 Processing within the jurisdiction of the agency concerned

322. The following applies to the processing of cases that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces sends to Bundeswehr agencies or offices for settlement for which they are responsible:

- a) If the case concerns a servicewoman or man, it must be forwarded to the relevant disciplinary superior.
- b) Other cases must be forwarded to the office responsible for assessing the subject matter of the case.

323. The office referred to in number 322, letter b) shall provide the petitioner an answer through official channels, which may also be given orally by the responsible disciplinary superiors.

3.6 Visits conducted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

324. Visits by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces for special reasons (in connection with reportable events or several identical or similar petitions in the same unit or office) must be reported to the Federal Ministry of Defence in writing/by e-mail by the heads of the offices concerned as follows:

Bundesministerium der Verteidigung
EBU III 6
Stauffenbergstraße 18
10785 Berlin

(E-mail: [BMVg EBU III 6/BMVg/BUND/DE](mailto:BMVg_EBU_III_6@BUND.DE)) for information purposes through official channels:

Higher command authorities and higher federal authorities of the respective organisational component or military offices directly subordinate to the Federal Ministry of Defence

(KdoH, KdoLw, MarKdo, KdoSKB, KdoSanDstBw, KdoCIR, EinsFüKdoBw, PlgABw, LufABw, ZlnFü, FüAkBw, BAMAD, BAPersBw, BAAINBw, BAIUDBw, BSprA, BiZBw, UniBw HH/M, EKA, KMBA, BWDA, ZMSBw)

Contents:

Re: Troop visit by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces for a special reason

- Date/time
- Unit/office
- Location and accommodation
- Reason

4 Notification of servicewomen and men, rights and obligations

401. All servicewomen and men must be informed of the duties, tasks and powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces at the beginning of initial training and again by their next disciplinary superior after transfer to their parent unit.
402. Every servicewoman and man shall have the right to submit petitions directly to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces without having to go through official channels.
403. The address is:

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin

(E-mail: wehrbeauftragte@bundestag.de or wehrbeauftragter@bundestag.de)

The address must be announced in accordance with the A2-2630/0-0-2 “Life in the military community” general regulation, number 145 by posting it on the information board or the information portal in the unit/office.

404. Petitions/letters from members of the Bundeswehr to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces are also sent with the postal service. They can be handed in at the unit/office.
405. Servicewomen and men may only contact the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces individually.
406. Anonymous petitions will not be processed.
407. If servicewomen or men contact their disciplinary superiors before drafting a petition, they must be given advice and assistance. It may be a disciplinary offence and at the same time a criminal offence in accordance with § 35 of the Military Criminal Code (MCC) if superiors use orders, threats, promises, gifts or other means contrary to their duties to prevent subordinates from making petitions to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces or to suppress petitions. Even such an attempt is punishable and can be punished as a disciplinary offence.
408. The servicewoman or man may not be reprimanded or penalised because they have submitted a petition to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. Compliance with the prohibition of discrimination pursuant to § 7 sentence 2 of the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces must be ensured. If the petition contains breaches of official duty or criminal offences, e.g. insults or defamation, this can be punished by disciplinary action or prosecuted as a disciplinary offence (see number 3323 of the A-2160/6 “Military Disciplinary Code and Military Complaints Code” general regulation).
409. Servicewomen and men may not enclose documents classified as CONFIDENTIAL or higher with their petitions to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. This restriction also extends to the disclosure of information which, to their knowledge, is subject to a higher level of confidentiality than OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE. If the petitioner considers it necessary to report these circumstances, this can be indicated in the petition or the petitioner can contact the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces directly to present their concerns in compliance with the applicable security regulations. **Classified documents may only be processed electronically on or by information technology that is approved for processing classified information and sent electronically. Passing on classified documents with the OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE classification level by e-mail via the open Internet is**

therefore not permitted. Classified documents with the OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE classification level may be sent by private delivery services as ordinary letters or parcels. The envelope or parcel is not labelled “Classified documents”.

410. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces has the authority to request information and access to files from the Federal Minister of Defence and all offices and persons under their authority in the performance of the tasks assigned to them. These rights may only be denied to them if there are compelling reasons for confidentiality. The decision on such a denial is made by the Federal Minister of Defence or their permanent deputy in office. Classified information rated as CONFIDENTIAL or higher is forwarded to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces via the Federal Ministry of Defence to the recipient’s TOP SECRET control office.

5 Data protection

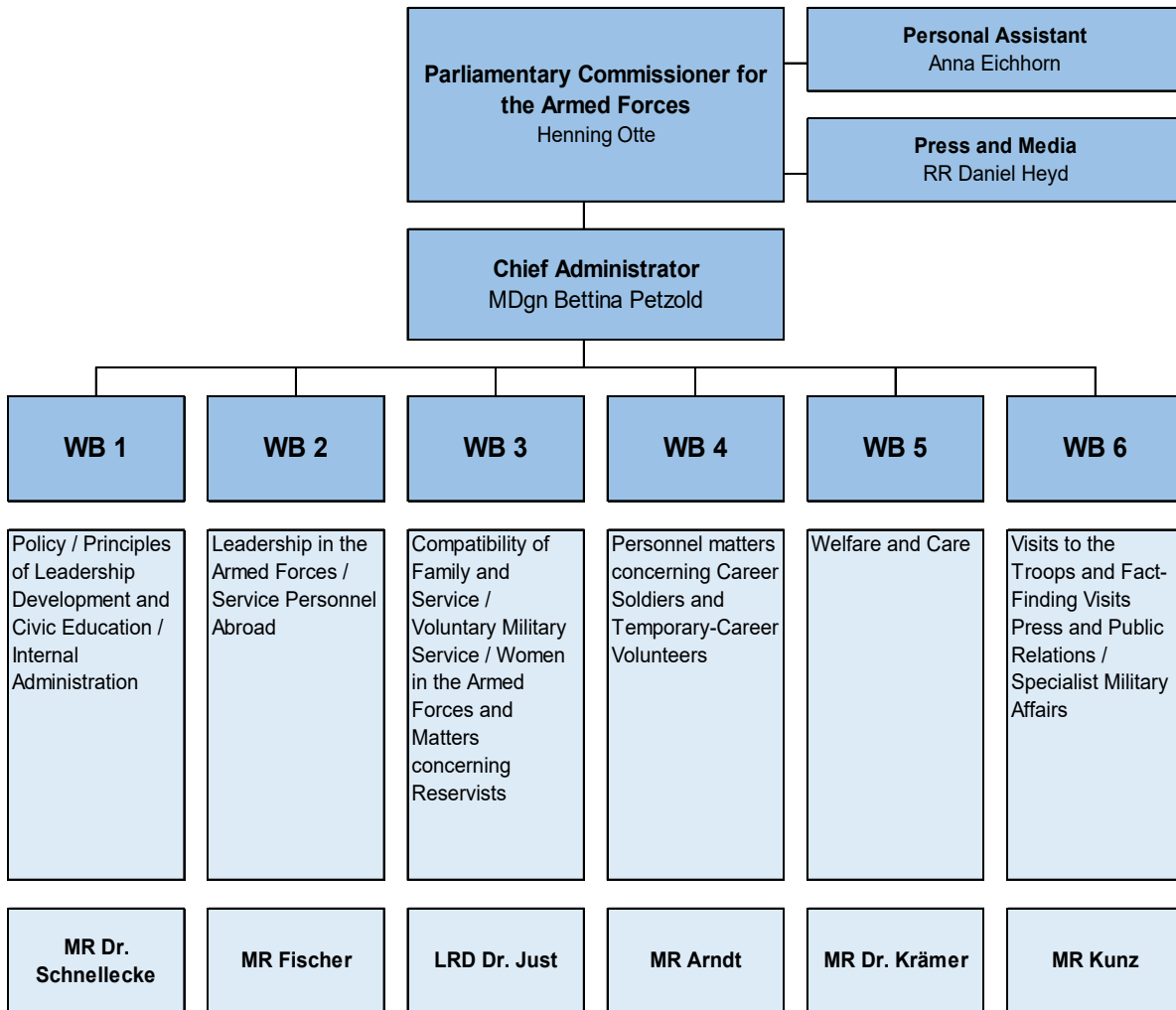
501. The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the German Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG) must be observed when processing matters concerning the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (questioning, obtaining statements, preparing reports/original documents, written replies, and so on). The provisions of the A-2122/4 “Data protection – requirements for implementing the European General Data Protection Regulation and the Federal Data Protection Act” general regulation, in particular with regard to the information obligations to be met, apply here for explanatory purposes. The planned security measures, up to restricted area 3, must also be taken into account.
502. The information obligations pursuant to Article 13 ff. GDPR are generally complied with as follows: The petitioner has already been informed of the processing procedure by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. There is no obligation to provide information here. Third parties named in the petition processing must generally be informed as part of the procedure (e.g. as part of an enquiry – see general regulation A-2122/4, numbers 5001 ff., section 5 “Information obligations sample”).

6 Cooperation in a spirit of trust

601. All superiors are expected to work together with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces in a spirit of trust, thus providing them the opportunity to obtain information quickly and thoroughly.

The service personnel’s understanding of our system of government and legal system, trust in democracy, but also in the Bundeswehr, can thus be significantly enhanced.

20. Organisational chart of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces



Postal address

Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin

Address for visitors:

Neustädtische Kirchstraße 15
10117 Berlin
Phone: +49 30 227-38100
IVBB-Rufnummer: +49 30 1818-38100

wehrbeauftragter@bundestag.de
www.bundestag.de/parlament/wehrbeauftragter

