

# German government prepares comprehensive control and travel restrictions for young people as part of reintroduction of conscription

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The new Military Service Modernisation Act being introduced by the German government imposes far-reaching restrictions on travel freedoms for young people, demonstrating how extensive its plans are for the reintroduction of conscription and the militarisation of society.

A central, hitherto little-noticed paragraph stipulates that persons of conscription age—i.e., between 17 and 45 years—must obtain permission from the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) for longer stays abroad. Specifically, this affects stays of more than three months. The military is thereby being given control over whether and for how long young people are allowed to leave the country.

This regulation was initially barely discussed in public. That changed abruptly when it became known on social media following an article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. Within a few days, a broad wave of outrage developed, particularly among youth and young adults.

The Defence Ministry reacted to the criticism with an attempt to downplay the significance of the regulation. Reference was made to the fact that similar provisions had already existed during the Cold War and had not had any major impact at the time.

This comparison is misleading. Today, longer stays abroad—for example, through gap years, work and travel or study visits—are frequently part of the life plans of many young people. In school exchanges alone, the numbers have been in the tens of thousands for years.

Even more important, however, is that the ministry has not withdrawn the regulation. Defence Minister

Boris Pistorius merely announced that an administrative directive would be issued temporarily suspending the authorisation requirement—as long as military service remains formally voluntary.

This means that the legal basis remains in place. As soon as conscription is reintroduced on a mandatory basis—which is being actively prepared by the government—the restriction on freedom of travel can be put into effect at any time.

There can therefore be no talk of a “retreat.” Rather, the government is reacting to public outrage with an attempt to temporarily obscure the consequences of its own law in order to dampen resistance.

The regulation is not a technical detail, but an expression of pursuing a fundamental political course. The reintroduction of conscription prepares not only compulsory military service, but a comprehensive control of conscripts by the state and the military.

In practice, the possibility of approving or refusing stays abroad means that young people can be prevented from evading the grasp of the Bundeswehr. They are to be available at all times, for training, mobilisation and ultimately for deployment in war.

This is directly connected to the government’s aggressive rearmament policy. Germany is actively participating in the escalation of international conflicts, from the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine to preparations for deployments in the Middle East, for example with regards to the Strait of Hormuz.

For this policy, German imperialism needs not only weapons and money, but above all “human materiel.” The officially stated goal of expanding the Bundeswehr

to 260,000 soldiers is only a first step here.

It is noteworthy that the restriction of travel freedoms is not fundamentally questioned by any of the establishment parties.

The Greens merely demanded a “clarification” of the regulation. The Left Party criticised the law as “poorly crafted.” The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), in turn, primarily complained about the potential administrative burden.

This is not opposition to militarism, but de facto support. These parties are not concerned with stopping the militarisation of society and the associated attacks on democratic rights, but with making them more efficient.

What is happening in Germany is part of an international trend. In view of growing geopolitical tensions, neocolonial wars and the preparation of new major military conflicts between the great powers, governments worldwide are once again resorting to conscription and coercive measures.

In the US, the reintroduction of the draft is being prepared in response to falling recruitment numbers. France is expanding programmes for military service. In Ukraine, men of conscription age, who are being consumed as cannon fodder in the NATO war against Russia, are prohibited from leaving the country.

These measures are part of the preparations for an escalation of global conflicts, up to and including a possible direct war between major powers.

Reactions to the new regulation show that this policy is meeting with broad rejection. The outrage on social media was only a first expression of this.

Even more significant are the school strikes against conscription, in which tens of thousands of school students and young people have participated in recent months. This made clear that many young people recognise the connections between conscription, rearmament and war.

This opposition must, however, be further developed. Isolated protests are not enough to stop militarisation.

What is necessary is the building of an independent movement that does not orient itself towards the establishment parties or trade unions, but which mobilises the working class and represents its interests. The attacks on democratic rights, the deterioration of working and living conditions and the official pro-war policy are inextricably linked with each other.

The struggle against conscription and against travel restrictions for young people is therefore part of a broader fight against war and social attacks, and it requires an international socialist perspective.



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