

'...NEEDED FOR MILITARY READINESS'

Sweden Re-activates Military Conscription amid Baltic Tensions

The Swedish government has decided to re-activate military conscription for both men and women from January 1, 2018. In a statement issued by the Government of Sweden on March 2, recruitment to the Armed Forces "will be both voluntary and conscription. Individual motivation, interest and will should be considered as much as possible. The armed forces is planning for 4,000 recruits annually in basic military training in 2018 and 2019."

These 4,000 men and women will be selected from about 13,000 young people born in 1999, who will be asked to undergo a military assessment, according to Marinette Nyh Radebo, Press Secretary for Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist.

The decision came amid deteriorating security situations and problems connected to the manning of military forces by volunteers. "The Russian illegal annexation of Crimea [in 2014], the conflict in Ukraine and the increased military activity in our neighbourhood are some of the reasons," she added.

"The all-volunteer recruitment hasn't provided the Armed Forces with enough trained personnel. The re-activating of the conscription is needed for military readiness."

Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist told Swedish public broadcaster SVT that if Sweden wants "full and trained military units, the voluntary system needs to be complemented by compulsory military service."

The conscripts will serve for nine to 12 months. The aim is to encourage

them either to become military professionals or, later, to join the reserves.

Sweden introduced universal conscription in 1901 and military service lasted between 80 and 450 days, depending on the position. However, the Nordic country has been downsizing its military since the 1990s and it abolished peacetime conscription in favor of a volunteer-only force in 2010, when the number of servicemen dropped to 1,644, according to SVT data.

At the end of 2016 the Swedish armed forces were missing about 1,000 full-time serving and about 7,000 part-time serving squad leaders, soldiers and sailors. The goal was to have approximately 6,600 full-time serving and 10,000 part-time serving squad leaders, soldiers and sailors in the Swedish Armed Forces.

Proposed changes to the current manning system shall, according to the commission directive, be financed by the existing budget for the military forces for 2016 to 2020.

During 2018 and 2019, 4,000 recruits will undergo basic military training. During 2020 this number will increase to 5,000.

During the next period (2021-2025), the Report has calculated that the yearly need for personnel will be 6,000 in year 2021, and 8,000 yearly from 2022 till 2025.



Photo: Kim Svensson/Försvarsmakten

End to driving licence renewal abroad

Under a bill before the Riksdag, new rules will come into force that will affect people who are permanent residents abroad and who wish to renew their Swedish driving licence.

If you have a Swedish driving licence and live abroad, you can use your Swedish licence for as long as it is valid. Beyond this date, the licence must be renewed. If you are permanently residing in a country within the EEA, you can exchange your driving licence for a licence issued by the competent authorities in the country of your residency. The proposed changes mean that if you are a permanent resident in a country outside the EEA, you can no longer renew your Swedish driving licence; instead the driving licence rules of the country where you are a permanent resident will apply.

The new rules will apply as of 1 May 2017. Until then the current rules apply.

To renew your Swedish driving licence, you must submit a complete application in good time so that the Swedish Transport Agency has time to process your application before the new rules enter into force.

Find out more about how to renew your driving licence on the Swedish Transport Agency website.

Dahl defends his Vasaloppet title

Norwegian athlete John Kristian Dahl and Swedish athlete Britta Johansson Norgren won Vasaloppet 2017. Vasaloppet 2017, with 15,800 registered skiers, was concluded with a tight and thrilling sprint in the men's class where last year's winner, Norway's John Kristian Dahl, managed to defend his victory just ahead of fellow countryman Andreas Nygaard. This took place despite major back-problems in the days before the start. Britta Johansson Norgren won a long-awaited victory in the ladies' class after placing second for the past three years.

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