

# ADMINISTRATION OF THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES CONSCRIPTION AND RECRUITMENT

19 March 2025

No 4-2 (RN)

## SUMMARY

### Relevance of the Audit

In order to strengthen the national military capabilities, the Lithuanian Armed Forces should be recruited on a mixed basis from professional military service, compulsory initial military service and volunteers, to ensure that the peacetime structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces is sufficiently filled<sup>1</sup>. In parallel, it is important to develop the active reserve of armed forces personnel in order to ensure that it is sufficient to fill the wartime structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, and that it is adequately trained and equipped to meet the needs of the State's armed defence<sup>2</sup>.

The needs of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, especially in the light of the major structural changes associated with the establishment of a national divisional military unit, call for a systematic solution to the shortcomings in staffing<sup>3</sup>. The Lithuanian Armed Forces need to be equipped to be capable of independent military defence and to operate alongside NATO allies.

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Strategy approved by Government Resolution No IX-907 of 28 May 2002, para 32.4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, para 32.5.

<sup>3</sup> Programme for Strengthening and Development of the National Defence System, approved by Government Resolution No XIV-2505 of 21 March 2024, para 15.

## Audit Objective and Scope

The objective of the audit was to assess the administration of the conscription and recruitment of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in terms of effectiveness.

Key Audit Questions:

- ✓ whether the Ministry of National Defence's staffing policy ensures the effective recruitment of the Lithuanian Armed Forces;
- ✓ whether the Lithuanian Armed Forces are implementing the administration of conscription and recruitment in an effective manner;
- ✓ whether the retention measures in place are effective in ensuring that the personnel of the Armed Forces are fully staffed.

Audited Entities:

- ✓ The Ministry of National Defence formulates state policy and organises, coordinates and controls its implementation in the areas of governance entrusted to the Minister of National Defence<sup>4</sup>.
- ✓ The Lithuanian Armed Forces are the main part of the national defence system, the purpose of which is to protect the sovereignty of the state, the inviolability of its territory and airspace, to defend the state by arms against aggression or other armed attack, and to carry out military tasks in accordance with the international commitments of the Republic of Lithuania<sup>5</sup>.

During the audit, we collected information from the Ministry of National Defence departments, the General Inspectorate, the Lithuanian Armed Forces Defence Headquarters, the Military Conscription and Recruitment Service, the Doctor Jonas Basanavičius Military Medical of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the Duke Vaidotas Infantry Battalion and other structural units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the Lithuanian Volunteer Force, and the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania. We met with representatives of the Special Investigation Service.

Audited Period: 2022-2024.

The audit was carried out in accordance with international standards of supreme audit institutions. The scope of the audit and the methods used are described in more detail in Annex 2 "Audit scope and methods" (page 56).

## Key Audit Results

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The recruitment of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the administration of conscription are improving, but not sufficiently effectively, as the professional army has a 92% recruitment rate, with an 8% shortfall composed of 28.2% officers, 34.9% non-commissioned officers and 36.8% soldiers. Progress-oriented strategic planning and more

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<sup>4</sup> Regulations of the Ministry of National Defence, para 2.

<sup>5</sup> Regulations of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, para 1 and 2.

effective and targeted retention measures would help to ensure the full recruitment of the armed forces. Equipment provision for all soldiers is improving.

## 1. Recruitment and equipping of the Lithuanian Armed Forces is improving, but targets have not yet been met.

Professional military service recruitment reaches 92%.

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- ✓ There are no specific annual ceilings for Generals and Admirals, Colonels and Naval Captains, Lieutenant-Colonels and Commanders, Majors and Lieutenant-Commanders (senior officers), nor is there a plan for the near-term need. The planning documents of the Lithuanian Armed Forces do not foresee (e.g. for 3 years) the number of posts and ranks required in the different forces (e.g. land or air forces) and military units, which prevents a proper assessment of the staffing needs and the timely recruitment of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (Section 1.1., page 16).

Recruitment of soldiers for compulsory initial military service is improving, but administration needs improvement

- ✓ In the audited period, the recruitment of the Lithuanian Armed Forces' permanent compulsory initial military service improved every year (from 93% in 2022 to 102% in 2024) and exceeded the set targets (Section 1.2, page 19).
- ✓ The law provides that conscripts may be deferred from military service if their service would cause disproportionate damage to their personal or public interests. In this circumstance, conscripts' applications are examined by a Selection Board in accordance with unpublished guidelines approved by order of the Director of the Conscription and Recruitment Service. In 2022, 88% of applicants were deferred, and 90% in 2023 and 2024. We examined a sample of the 380 decisions of the Selection Board which deferred service and found them to be justified. A review of negative decisions taken by the Selection Board on deferment is foreseen, while no review is foreseen for positive decisions to defer service for conscripts. The review of the decisions taken by the sub-commissions of the Military Medical Examination Commission is irregular and does not cover all 4 sub-commissions operating in the region. During the audited period, the assessment of the medical examination records of two of them (Vilnius and Kaunas sub-commissions in 2022) was carried out and the overall quality of the assessment was found to be satisfactory. By laying down the circumstances of deferment from service in a regulatory act and by introducing a systematic review of the decisions of the sub-commissions of the Selection Commission and of the Military Medical Examination Commission, the risk of unlawful and unjustified decisions would be managed (Section 1.2, p. 21).

- ✓ More than half (51% in 2022, 54% in 2023 and 51% in 2024) of conscripts who have undergone a medical examination have been declared unfit for service. Of these, more than 40% were declared unfit for military service due to mental health disorders and psychological problems: 43% in 2022 and 42% in 2023. After assessing the possibility for the sub-commissions of the Military Medical Examination Commission to verify the validity of psychiatric diagnoses presented by conscripts from other medical institutions, we have found that the conditions for this will only be created as of 1 May 2025, when the obligation for personal healthcare institutions to enter mental health diagnoses into eHealth IS will become mandatory (Section 1.2, p. 23).
- ✓ The proportion of conscripts who did not appear at the place of service on the appointed day was 31% in 2022, 34% in 2023 and decreased to 15% in 2024. The proportion of those who did not appear before the sub-commissions of the Military Medical Examination Commission for medical examinations was 21% in 2022, 23% in 2023 and decreased to 17.5% in 2024. Of the 6 sub-commissions, 1 is not complete and the other sub-commissions are more than 10% short of doctors in 2024. Administrative liability for those who failed to appear at the place of service on the appointed day without a justifiable reason ranged from 39% to 62% of conscripts in 2022-2024. The amounts of fines imposed on conscripts as a result of administrative liability amounted to EUR 767 thousand in 2022, EUR 1.11 million in 2023 and EUR 860 thousand in 2024. The absence of conscripts contributed to the failure to recruit the required number of conscripts between 2022 and 2023 (Section 1.2, page 26).

### The administration of the volunteer and active military reserve has shortcomings

- ✓ The criteria for assessing candidates for voluntary non-permanent military service are not sufficient to select motivated candidates. The Conscription and Recruitment Service receives up to 5 times the number of applications for volunteer soldiers than it plans to accept, but volunteer soldiers who are dismissed on their own initiative account for around 63 % of all dismissals each year.

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- ✓ Inadequate assessment of the motivation of candidates for voluntary non-permanent military service does not allow to fill the units with motivated volunteers and to reduce the turnover of volunteers (subsection 1.3, page 29).
- ✓ There were 31 168 conscripts in the active reserve on 31.12.2024. The Army does not have any information on the education and specialisations they have acquired since leaving the service, although the Law on Conscription and the Regulations of the Register of Conscripts provide for the possibility of collecting more information than just for liaison purposes, which is the case at present. As a result, the Army does not have the capacity to call up active reserve personnel with the necessary specialties and competences for exercises, and to recruit professional military service personnel as required (Section 1.3, page 29).

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## 2. More effective retention measures are needed to fully staff the Lithuanian Armed Forces

### There is a lack of targeted retention measures for officers and non-commissioned officers in the professional military service

- ✓ During the audit period, financial measures were applied to soldiers, such as salary increases, allowances and bonuses, subsistence allowances, etc., but there were no measures aimed at the target groups, i.e. officers and non-commissioned officers (e.g. more flexible rotation of troops and extension of contracts, wider publication of selections, etc.). The number of officers leaving the service has increased by 25% (from 88 to 110) and that of non-commissioned officers by 6.1% (from 241 to 256) over a period of 3 years. Between 2022 and 2024, the number of officers leaving the service at the end of their contract has increased from 35.4% to 52.7% and that of non-commissioned officers from 51.5% to 54.3%. The absence of measures aimed exclusively at officers and non-commissioned officers does not allow for the retention of the most needed higher-ranking officials, whose training takes time (Section 2.1, page 34).
- ✓ The 47 surveys carried out by the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of National Defence between 2022 and 2024 revealed that there was a lack of training and/or career courses for servicemen that would provide opportunities for career growth and incentives to stay in the service, as career courses are one of the requirements for the positions according to the concept of the career of the soldiers/sailors and non-commissioned officers in the National Defence System. Between 2022 and 2024, an average of 50,3 % (2 308 servicemen) of the servicemen offered by the military units did not attend the career courses. Servicemen wishing to return to a higher post do not meet the requirements of the concept, although the Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service provides for exceptions. The mechanism established for the selection of compulsory military servicemen to participate in career development courses has shortcomings as there is no provision for the selection and/or ranking of servicemen by the commission. No feedback is given to units and servicemen as to why they have not been admitted to the career courses. The lack of a clear system for selecting and ranking candidates for the courses, the lack of capacity in the training centres limits the career opportunities for servicemen, resulting in a shortage of non-commissioned officers, which is important for the training of servicemen for permanent compulsory initial military service. For example, in 2024, one military unit will be short of 31 non-commissioned officers for the training of servicemen for permanent compulsory initial military service, i.e. 26% of the total number of those training servicemen (Section 2.1, p. 38)

### Increased action by the Lithuanian Armed Forces would help to fill the voluntary non-permanent military service with motivated soldiers

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### 3. Half of the Ministry of National Defence's targets on recruitment have not yet been met

- ✓ The achievement of the indicators related to permanent compulsory initial military service is improving every year. In 2023, 9 out of 11 indicators between 1 and 80 % were not achieved, in 2024, 4 out of 12 indicators between 11 and 50 % were not achieved, all related to the training of young officers' commanders (incompatibility of training with the job, change of university, etc.), which has resulted in fewer conscripts with special skills than planned (Chapter 3, page 44).
- ✓ The Ministry of National Defence has taken steps to improve the achievement of the indicators related to voluntary non-permanent and active reserve military service between 2022 and 2024, but the achievement of 1 (out of 3) indicator related to military volunteers, although improving, reaches 71% in 2024, and 6 (out of 8) indicators on active reserve personnel are underachieved, ranging from 1% to 13%, as the values for three of them are more ambitious and the achievement of the remaining ones is low (Chapter 3, p. 46).
- ✓ The planned indicators of satisfaction with the conditions of service of the professional military servicemen are not ambitious, as they exceed the actual data by about 20%. The number of cadets to be admitted to the Lithuanian Military Academy is also not ambitious. Although this indicator is not achievable for 2022-2024, there is a shortage of young officers in the army. The recruitment of professional military service personnel, which is around 92%, is not achieved. Setting progress-oriented indicators would contribute to improving the situation in the Lithuanian Armed Forces, and an analysis of the reasons for the non-achievement of the indicators would help to identify the causes more accurately and take action to address them (Section 3, p. 45)

### Changes during the Audit

- ✓ The Ministry of National Defence, in order to find out the real reasons for the decision to leave the professional military service and the voluntary forces, and to initiate changes in legislation to ensure more favourable conditions of service, will, from 2025 oblige <sup>6</sup> the institutions of the national defence system, the Headquarters and the Lithuanian Armed Forces to provide questionnaires to all members of the professional military service and members of the voluntary non-permanent military service who are dismissed at their request for serious reasons or who have not requested the renewal of their contracts, and to ask them to state the real reasons for their decision to leave the service.
- ✓ On 26 August 2024, an amendment to the criteria and methodology for the assessment of health status was adopted, which provides that candidates for permanent compulsory initial military service who have a mild mental and behavioural disorder, diagnosed for the first time, and/or who do not require

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<sup>6</sup> Letter No 6IS-249 of the Ministry of National Defence of 20 December 2024-20 December 2024 to the institutions under the Ministry, the Headquarters and the Lithuanian Armed Forces "On the questionnaire for retired soldiers".

medication are suitable for compulsory initial military service, while those with a moderate disorder are to be assessed individually.

- ✓ Amendments to the Regulations on Military Medical Examination have been adopted as of 28 October 2024, simplifying the procedure<sup>7</sup>, for issuing a decision on a person's fitness for service by the Military Medical Examination Commission for conscripts and reserve members of the active armed forces who have expressed a wish to perform other service in the reserve, whereby a decision on a soldier's fitness for service may be issued without the conscript having to be summoned to appear before the commission, after an assessment of fitness based on the declaration of the conscript's state of health and the "e. Health" IS data and by presenting a certificate from non-military medical institutions - the Personal Compulsory Health Examination Card (E049) with a conclusion that the person is fit to acquire and possess a weapon due to his/her health condition; and from 25 January 2025, a similarly simplified procedure for the issuance of a decision of the Military Medical Examination Commission on the fitness of a person for service to be issued to persons aged 17 and older.
- ✓ The Director of the Military Conscription and Recruitment Service approved the Recruitment Plan 2025 and the Annex by Order No V-133 of 27 January 2025 "On the Recruitment of Military Units in 2025", detailing for all the 6 Divisions of the Military Conscription and Recruitment Service the recruitment according to the military units, posts, education and qualifications required for the post, military rank, classification, level of proficiency in English, and the number of posts.

## Recommendations

### To the Ministry of National Defence

1. To enable proper planning of the Lithuanian Armed Forces' professional military service personnel requirements, the threshold numbers of senior officers should be set annually (key audit result 1).
2. To increase the number of officers and non-commissioned officers remaining in service, provide and implement additional retention measures for the intended target group (key audit result 2).
3. To improve the administration of conscription, approve recommendations on the deferment of compulsory initial military service and service in the active reserve when the conscript's service is likely to cause disproportionate damage to personal or public interests (key audit result 1).
4. To recruit servicemen with the most needed specialties, improve the regulatory framework by providing more possibilities to collect information on the specialties and qualifications acquired by active reserve personnel after their release from active military service (key audit result 1).

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<sup>7</sup> Amendments to the Regulations on Military Medical Examination adopted by Government Resolution No 28 of 22 January 2025, para 445.

5. To ensure that the required number of non-commissioned officers in the professional military service is reached:
  - 5.1. improve the career concept for soldiers (sailors) and non-commissioned officers of the National Defence System in order to comply with the requirements of the Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service;
  - 5.2. Improve the training process and take measures ensuring a higher number of trainings (key audit result 2).
6. To achieve sound, results-oriented strategic planning:
  - 6.1. to set more ambitious indicators for the satisfaction of professional military service personnel with the conditions of service and for the admission of cadets to the Lithuanian Military Academy;
  - 6.2. in all cases, analyse the reasons for non-achievement of the Strategic Action Plan indicators and take action to address them (key audit result 3).
7. To ensure adequate recruitment of voluntary non-permanent military service personnel:
  - 7.1. simplify the process of dismissal of inactive members of the voluntary non-permanent military service by providing that the main criterion for the dismissal of an inactive volunteer member is non-attendance of exercises and/or training without a justifiable reason;
  - 7.2. systemise information on the participation of volunteer servicemen in all exercises, training and courses (key audit result 2).

### To the Lithuanian Armed Forces

8. To ensure that programme coordinators approve 3-year indicative recruitment plans for subordinate military units in order to have a perspective on staffing and to plan for the need for military personnel (key audit result 1).

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11. To ensure the justification and legality of decisions taken on exemptions and deferments from military service:
  - 11.1. establish a system for the review of positive decisions taken by the Selection Commission of the Military Conscription and Recruitment Service;
  - 11.2. periodically carry out an assessment of all sub-commissions of the Military Medical Examination Commission with regard to a specific part of the medical examination acts and, if inconsistencies are found, take measures to resolve them (key audit result 1).



We submitted observations to the Ministry of National Defence<sup>8</sup> on the improvement of the information system PerVIS administered by the Ministry and the unmet threshold number of cadets, to the Lithuanian Armed Forces<sup>9</sup> - on the improvement of selection processes for candidates for professional military service, the frequency of updating of the composition of the Selection Commission, the periodic updating of the plan of admission to voluntary non-permanent military service, and the optimisation of administrative processes in the information system PerVIS.

The measures and timeframes for implementing the recommendations, the expected impact of the audit and the indicators for measuring change are set out in the report in the section 'Plan for the implementation of the recommendations' (p. 50). Up-to-date information on the status of implementation of the recommendations, results and developments is published in open data on the National Audit Office website <https://www.valstybeskontrole.lt/LT/AtviriDuomenys>.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter No SD-(220-9.3.1-E-6234)-205 of 17 March 2025

<sup>9</sup> Letter No SD-(220-9.3.1-E-6234)-206 of 17 March 2025