

German army mulls recruiting foreign EU nationals to boost recruitment

While both governing parties supported the idea, the SPD said that citizenship must be given to new soldiers to avoid the risk of it becoming a mercenary army.



Germany's long-understaffed army has a new plan to boost recruitment: allowing foreigners from other European Union countries to serve in the unified armed forces (Bundeswehr). The defense ministry confirmed on Saturday that it was seriously considering the idea.

"The Bundeswehr is growing. For this, we need qualified personnel," a Defense Ministry spokesman told German news agency DPA.

SPD: No mercenary army

Speaking with local newspaper *Augsburger Allgemeine*, Social Democrat (SPD) defense expert Karl-Heinz Brunner said that he could imagine EU citizens serving in the Bundeswehr. But he warned that any soldier who fought for Germany must be promised citizenship.

“If citizens of other countries are accepted, without the promise of getting a German passport, the Bundeswehr risks becoming a mercenary army.”



In comments to the same publication, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) defense spokesman Florian Hahn said that “using the framework of European liberalism, a modern model could be developed here. However, a certain level of trust with every soldier must be guaranteed.”

Germany’s army has had staffing issues together with problems such as outdated equipment, and lack of necessary supplies.

Proposals to increase the defense budget are extremely unpopular in Germany, especially considering the country’s history. The center-right CDU and their center-left coalition partners in the SPD have repeatedly been at loggerheads over defense spending.

es/jm (AFP, dpa)

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