

Recruitment of minors into the German armed forces (Bundeswehr)

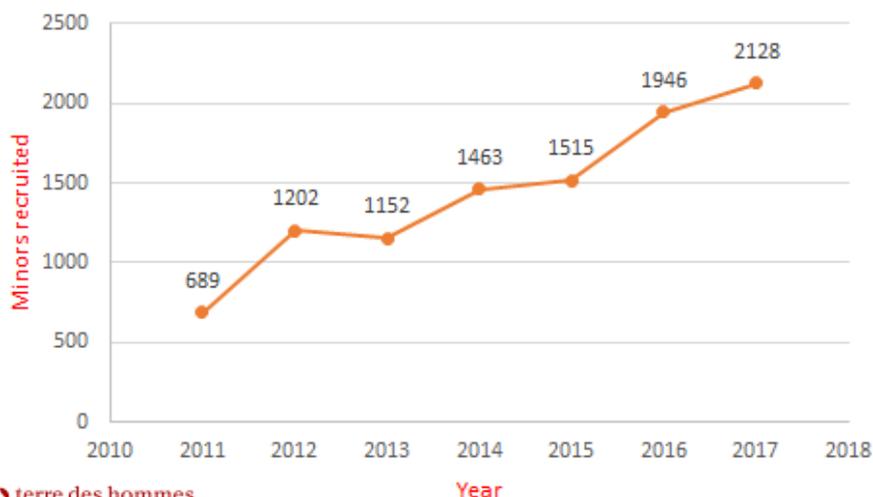


Children sitting in a German tank at "Soldiers Day" in Bundeswehr barracks in Rheine, Germany. Photo: Schulze von Glasser

- The recruitment of minors into the German armed forces (Bundeswehr) has increased strongly and reached the peak value of 2,128 minors in 2017 (more than tripling the value of 2011), out of which 448 were girls.
 - 9.1% of all new Bundeswehr recruits in 2017 were minors (17 years of age)
 - Minors receive the same military training as adults, stay with them in the same housing and face the risk of being sexually abused, undergoing humiliating hazing rituals or harmful training methods with serious injuries or death as consequence - there was at least one case in 2017 where a minor was affected.
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- There are no special protection procedures or contact persons for minors in the army. In cases of rights violations, the Bundeswehr is generally not publishing the age of affected soldiers and there are no studies or evaluations done to screen the situation of minors in the army.
 - Minors in the Bundeswehr are not protected under the Youth Social Law.
 - Minors who voluntarily joined the armed forces risk becoming liable to prosecution, if they decide to leave after their trial period has expired.
 - German military advertising campaigns and informative material are strongly biased, leaving out information about risks of being a soldier as traumatization, injury and death, instead emphasizing team work, adventure, good payment and career opportunities.
 - Many Bundeswehr advertising campaigns in media and social media are clearly addressing minors, for example in the children and youth magazines Bravo and Spiesser or in school newspapers.
 - So called Bundeswehr "youth officers" and "career advisors" are visiting schools in large scale, directly reaching out to about 400.000 school students and thousands of teachers every year.

- More minors are reached by the Bundeswehr at public events, like city festivals, or at fairs for children and youth, like the Didacta or the Gamescom, or at specially designed Bundeswehr youth events like the Bundeswehr Adventure Games, BW Beachen or Bundeswehr holiday camps.
- In only 46 countries worldwide minors are still recruited into the state army; instead 151 countries recruit only adults or have no army.

Minors recruited into the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr)



terre des hommes
Help for Children in Need

The number of minors recruited into the Bundeswehr has more than tripled in seven years. Source of data: Bundeswehr. Diagram: terre des hommes

- The recruitment of minors is undermining the international “straight-18” standard and the international efforts to stop the abuse of children in armed conflicts.
- The recruitment of minors is violating several child rights laid down in the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Therefore, in line with the UN-Committee on the Rights of the Child and the German Parliamentary Children’s Commission, terre des hommes and Child Soldiers International ask the German government to:

- raise the age of recruitment to the German Armed Forces to 18 years
- stop Bundeswehr advertising directed to minors



Bundeswehr advertisement in children and youth magazine “Bravo”, promoting the “Bundeswehr Adventure Games”. Title: “Go to Sardinia or in the Alps – for free! Apply now and win!”