

Operational readiness of the militia system

Performance audit

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[FULL REPORT \(DE\)](#)



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What we audited and why

From October 2021 to December 2021, we audited the Austrian Armed Forces and the role of the Federal Ministry of Defence (BMLV) in organising and coordinating the professional forces and the army reserve (forces that can be mobilised for an operation and whose role is to assist the professional forces in operations for military defence, security assistance and disaster relief).

Our main audit objectives were to present and assess the army reserve in the overall system of national defence, and the partial mobilisation in the COVID-19 pandemic which took place from 4 May to 31 July 2020.

The period under review was essentially 2017-2020, but in some cases we also took the previous years into account as well as the first half of 2021.

What we found

We found that:

- few personnel had been required to do army reserve training in contrast with an increasing use of temporary personnel (who were not required to do training). Thus, the proportion of those who were required to do army reserve training fell in relation to the total. There was also a shortage of army reserve personnel in the ranks of officers and non-commissioned officers, particularly specialist non-commissioned officers;
- professional army personnel increasingly had to be deployed as the personnel in the army reserve lacked knowledge, training and access right to the IT systems;
- basic shooting skills were lacking within the army reserve personnel;
- there were disadvantages for army reserve members compared to the labour law and social security treatment of professional soldiers, e.g. in terms of (early retirement) pension and childcare;
- the compulsory military service system – consisting of 6 months of basic military service with the option of continuing as an army reserve soldier for 1-6 months for deployment in Austria – meant there was no planning certainty, as the number of available personnel in the medium/long term could not be assessed;



- the army reserve was equipped with less than a quarter of the target levels of equipment and supplementary equipment as equipment was mainly used in the professional army or in foreign operations;
- the equipment for the partial deployment of the army reserve in the pandemic, such as training tools and operational equipment or devices, had to be made available in spring 2020 initially through extensive redistribution among the different units, which in turn weakened the professional army;
- there was no steering and coordination body for army reserve issues in the central office of the BMLV.

What we concluded

In our report, we pointed to several problem areas in the army reserve, such as a shortage of army reserve personnel, insufficient equipment, and the need to improve the basic skills of army reserve soldiers.

We therefore recommended that the BMLV should:

- complete the ongoing projects on the current capabilities of the Austrian Armed Forces and those required in future;
- complete the ongoing projects on the structure of the militia for the performance of tasks required by the Constitution, taking into account our findings and recommendations regarding structure, staffing, equipment, operations, training and procurement;
- put in place structural, organisational, staffing and legal measures to reduce the deviation of the actual levels from the target levels for the army reserve on the one hand, and for the soldiers of the professional army on the other;
- strengthen the coordination of army reserve issues in the central office of the BMLV;
- continue evaluating the recommendations of the audit on partial mobilisation published in December 2020 by the General Staff, the Armed Forces Command and the Armed Forces Base Command that were not supported by implementation at the time of the audit, including structure, staffing and equipment, and develop measures to address the problems underlying the recommendations; and
- evaluate the execution of mobilisation in relation to current threat scenarios to ensure it is error free and without laborious steps.