



Proposal for a law on the renovation of the national universal service

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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L'Armée de Terre dans la société

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the commitment made to the French people by Emmanuel Macron, the candidate for President of the Republic, a number of institutions and actors in society have produced their contributions on this subject. Of all these contributions, the one we made with my colleague Emilie Guerel, as part of the fact-finding mission on universal national service by the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces, has been very well received by both civil society (educational and associative in particular) and the military.

The present bill is the result of this work.

The National Service Reform Act of 28 October 1997 did not simply suspend conscription. It established a new legislative framework to adapt the armies and the ways in which the French contribute to national defence to the challenges of the 21st century. This new legal framework has been gradually fleshed out, in particular by the 2010 law on civic service.

Today, Article L. 111-1 of the National Service Code provides as follows: "Citizens contribute to the defence and cohesion of the Nation. This duty is exercised in particular through the fulfilment of universal national service".

The United Nations system already exists; as the law stands at present, it includes obligations and arrangements based on voluntary service.

Since the call to arms has been suspended, national service actually takes the form of a three-stage process: defence education in schools, the census at the age of 16, and the defence preparation call, which became Defence and Citizenship Day (DCD).

In the unanimous opinion, these obligations have not had the desired effects: defence education is a diverse and dispersed whole that does not facilitate a clear understanding of the concepts of national defence and security; the DDC has become a bit of a "catch-all" day, often decried by those who have participated in it.

As the compulsory phase of the universal national service was considered too "light", forms of additional commitment were considered to be too "light". The mandatory phase of universal national service was considered too "light", so additional forms of commitment were introduced to help strengthen the link between the nation - and particularly its youth - and its army.

Under the National Service Code, these include military periods of initiation or advanced training in national defence, as well as various forms of voluntary service: voluntary service in the armed forces, international voluntary service, voluntary service for integration.

Above all, the Act of 10 March 2010 integrated civic service into the national service. Finally, at the initiative of Marianne Dubois and her colleague Joaquim Pueyo, the 2017 law on equality and citizenship also incorporated a new chapter on defence cadets into the code.

The SNU is thus protean. But other mechanisms also help build citizenship, strengthen the link between youth and the military and contribute to the country's resilience.

These include the national guard, the civic reserve, adapted military service, voluntary military service and the establishment for integration into employment.

Everyone agrees on the weaknesses of the path implemented since 1997 and on the lack of coherence between its different stages.

Similarly, contrary to what tenacious prejudices suggest, French youth are more committed than they have ever been. This commitment is sometimes invisible, and while **some** young people are committed, not all **young people** are. Indeed, studies show a form of social reproduction with regard to the practice of engagement.

This bill has been built on three pillars:

- To meet **the expectations of** young people **in** France without neglecting the importance of the "acceptability" of a renewed SNU by those concerned and, for minors, by their parents.

- **Maintain and enrich the** existing system. The number of young people between 16 and 25 years of age invested in commitment schemes, excluding voluntary work in associations, represents a significant increase in the number of young people in the SNU. The number of young people between 16 and 25 years of age invested in commitment schemes, excluding voluntary work, represents between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of an age group, i.e. between 150,000 and 200,000 young people. It is our duty to encourage them by promoting their commitment.

- To take **into account** the consequences of this re-foundation for the actors in charge of implementing it, as it concerns 800,000 young people every year.

Three pillars and a single objective: to contribute to the training of citizens in the service of national cohesion.

Increasing the country's resilience, developing the spirit of defence, disseminating information about rights and duties and encouraging The increase of the country's resilience, the development of the spirit of defence, the dissemination of information on rights and duties and the incentives to engage in commitment are all part of the construction of the citizen, inserted into society, ready to commit himself to defend it according to his abilities.

This must be the ambition of the new universal national service and of this bill.

The nine articles of the bill amend the national service code in order to initiate the overhaul of the universal national service. The aim is not to carry out an overall rewriting of this code, which would certainly merit a more extensive update, but simply to make the few adjustments necessary to implement the reform proposed by the authors of this text.

The **first title** of the bill contains general provisions relating to the development of the universal national service.

Article 1 thus **amends** Article L. 111-1 of the National Service Code in order to enshrine the renewal of the UNS in the form of a citizen's path consisting of compulsory and optional stages. It also affects Article L. 111-2 of the Code in order to replace the Defence and Citizenship Day with a Defence and Citizenship Week, the terms of which are defined in Article 3 of the bill. Furthermore, article L. 111-2 is amended to clearly include defence and citizenship teaching in the citizen's curriculum.

Article 2 determines the persons concerned by this reform, thus defining the modalities of its entry into force. As the most fundamental stages are those of the census and the Defence and Citizenship Week, it is proposed to apply the new provisions to young women and men whose sixteenth birthday will occur in the year 2025. The aim is to allow time to prepare for the assumption of responsibility for an entire age group during a week of enlistment and, at the same time, to give them the opportunity to prepare for the defence and citizenship week. On the other hand, the new citizenship programme will begin at the start of the 2020 school year with the introduction of a new defence and citizenship course in secondary schools. Also, most students entering the sixth form in 2020 will have followed this course for four years at the collège before completing their week of defence and citizenship, for the most part during the second year of secondary school.

This is why the new provisions of the National Service Code will apply to young women and men born after 31 December 2008.

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