

Maahanmuuttajien Varautumis- ja Maanpuolustusyhdistys
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KANTAMA

NO. 5 | AUGUST 2026

YOUTH'S VOICE

When Service Is Just
Beginning

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S GREETINGS

When the Strength of
Society Is Built on Trust

CALL-UPS

Knowledge, experiences and opportunities
for the start of the service



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Maanpuolustuksen
kannatussäätiö



*Shaho Jaff,
Executive Director of MVM ry*

Executive Director's Greetings

What distinguishes a free, democratic society from one governed by fear?

The answer lies not only in ballot boxes or institutions, but above all in how the state treats its people: are they seen as citizens and contributors to our collective security, or merely as subjects whose role is to obey without question?

In Finland, the foundation of comprehensive security relies heavily on citizens' trust and their duty to contribute to national defence. However, being called to service does not mean subordinating an individual to become part of a machine or an instrument of power.



A strong society does not need to use intimidation to make its citizens serve.

SERVICE AND RESPONSIBILITY — WHEN THE STRENGTH OF SOCIETY IS BUILT ON TRUST

In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, obligations are based on the law, equality, and a shared responsibility for a safe future. The state does not own its citizens—the citizen is a part of the state and, alongside their rights, also has a responsibility to contribute to the common good.

This is why preparedness and national defence are, above all, among the highest expressions of citizenship and shared responsibility, rather than signs of submission. A young Finnish person does not serve a political party, a leader, or an ideology, but instead defends freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and a safe homeland. We defend a society that guarantees everyone access to education and work, freedom of speech, and the right to build a future of their own choosing.

In totalitarian systems, service is turned into a tool of fear and ideology, used to measure loyalty to a dictatorship. There, people become merely instruments for achieving the goals of those in power.

This is where the crucial difference lies: it is not simply about whether obligations exist, but what their purpose is and who imposes them. A strong society does not need intimidation or coercion. It builds trust, strengthens psychological resilience in times of crisis, and reminds us that defending our society and our freedom is always an act for the future of ourselves and those close to us.

This is the true strength of democracy and comprehensive security: it inspires a willingness to defend our shared country through voluntary commitment and mutual trust.

INCLUDING IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND'S NATIONAL DEFENCE

The will to defend one's country does not stem from one's country of birth. It comes from a sense of belonging, trust, and the feeling that this society is my society too—and that I can make it safer through my own contribution.

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Finland's security is built by people. The more people feel that Finnish society is their own, trust its institutions, and see themselves as equal members of society, the stronger society's resilience in times of crisis becomes. This applies to the entire population—including immigrants. At the end of 2025, Finland was home to 660,800 people of foreign background, representing 11.7% of the population, according to Statistics Finland. Their role in Finland's comprehensive security is not a side issue. It is part of our shared security.

However, the will to defend one's country does not only mean armed defence. It means being willing to take responsibility for our shared society. This can take the form of preparedness, volunteering, first aid, communications, interpreting, logistics, cybersecurity, civil protection, or simply being ready to help others when society faces a crisis.

A study completed at the Finnish National Defence University in 2024 demonstrated a connection between young people's sense of belonging and their attitudes towards national defence. The more strongly a person feels that they belong to society, the more positive their attitudes towards national defence may be.

Immigrants are, of course, not one homogeneous group. People's backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances differ.



Some may have experienced war, persecution, or authoritarian systems. These experiences can increase vulnerability, but they can also strengthen crisis awareness, resilience, and an understanding of the value of a safe society.

That is why we must ask ourselves: do we want immigrants to merely be part of Finland's population, or do we want them to feel that they are part of Finnish society—people who share its responsibilities and help build it?

MVM ry has an important role to play in this. We build bridges between immigrant communities, authorities, and national defence organisations. Through training, information events, and the multilingual KANTAMA magazine, we want to make Finnish preparedness, national defence, and comprehensive security understandable and accessible to as many people as possible. Ultimately, it is a very simple matter:

When a person can say, "This is my society too," they have a stronger reason to say: "I want to be part of building and defending it."

“Finland's security is not someone else's responsibility. It is our shared responsibility. Our society needs us—and we need our society.”



CONSCRIPTION AND CALL-UPS

Lieutenant Colonel Ilkka Ikonen
Head of the Uusimaa Regional Office

Under Finnish law, every Finnish citizen has a duty to contribute to national defence. Finnish men are required to participate in Finland's armed defence from the beginning of the year in which they turn 18 until the end of the year in which they turn 65. Women have been able to volunteer for military service in Finland since 1995. Conscription can be completed through armed or unarmed military service, or through civilian service. Attending a call-up and undergoing an assessment of fitness for service are also part of the conscription process. Completing one's conscription duties includes military service and refresher exercises as a reservist. These ensure that, in the event of a crisis, conscripts are prepared to defend Finland's independence by armed means when necessary.

Finnish society is worth defending. We have a functioning democracy in which everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the development of society if they wish. Finland's social support systems also help those who are in a less privileged position.

The call-ups are an opportunity to meet others and to build your own path as part of national defence.

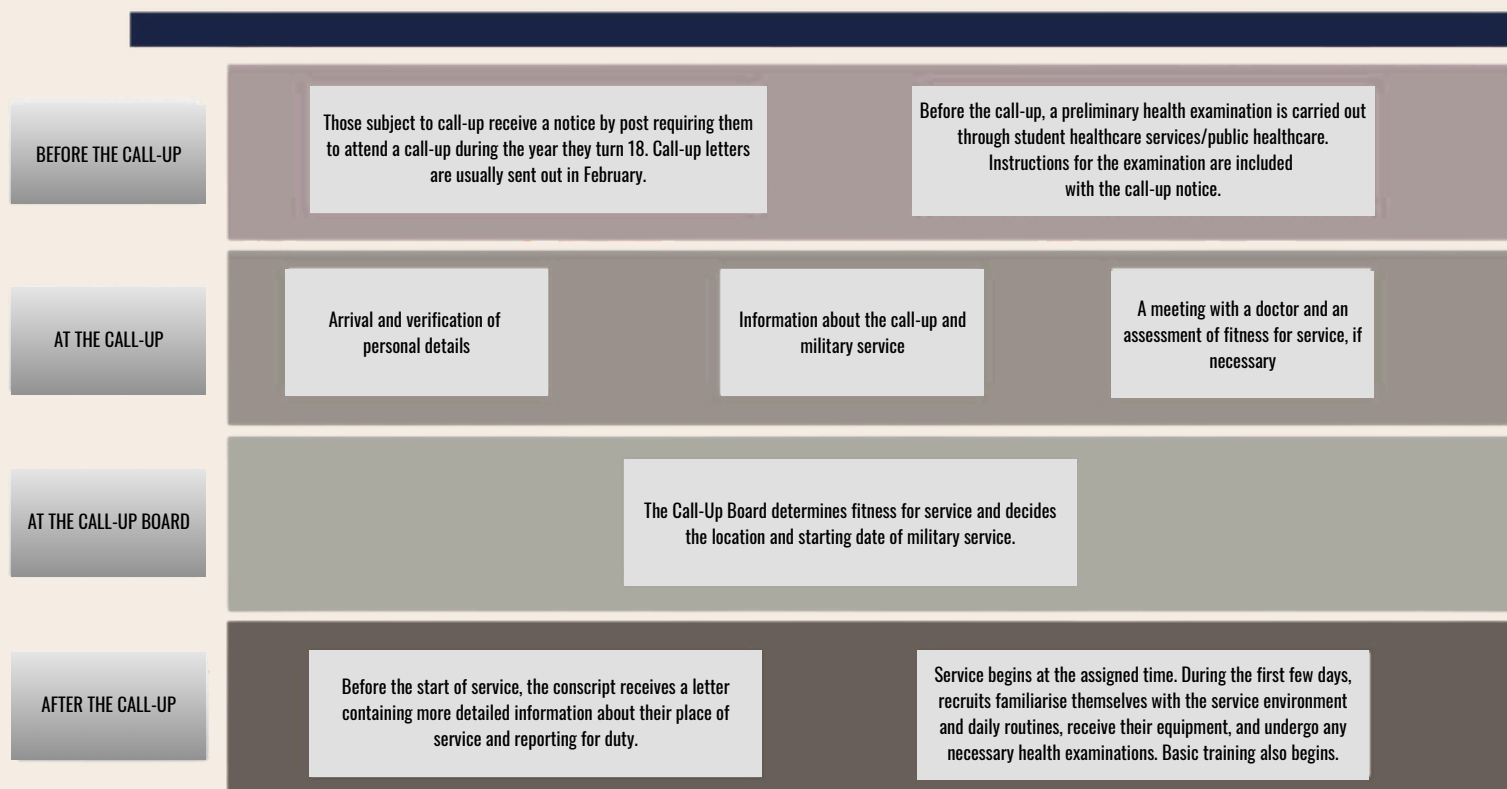
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Of course, there are things that need improving in Finland too, but everyone here can take part in creating change without fear of persecution. Finnish conscription enjoys strong public support. Nearly 80 percent of Finns support the current conscription system, which ensures that Finland has the reserves needed for its defence. In recent years, other European countries have also returned to the idea of conscription; most recently, at the beginning of August, Denmark extended the length of compulsory military service from four to 11 months.

As a NATO member, Finland can receive assistance from other allied countries when needed, but NATO also expects every member state to take responsibility for building and maintaining its own defence capabilities. For a small nation, universal conscription is the only cost-effective way to maintain a credible defence capability. Finland needs all capable people to take part in national defence duties in order to safeguard the security of society as a whole.

THE CALL-UP PROCESS, STEP BY STEP

The diagram below illustrates the call-up process step by step—from receiving the call-up letter to the beginning of military service.



During the year they turn 18, those subject to conscription receive a notice by post from their Regional Office, usually during the first half of the year. The notice provides the date and location of their call-up. At the same time, conscripts also receive a questionnaire related to military service, instructions for their health examination, and a guide to military service.

At the call-up, personal details and health status are reviewed, and the individual's wishes regarding military service are heard. Based on the information available, their suitability for military service—or fitness for service—is determined. The call-up also determines the time and location of service, or whether the individual will be exempted from service.

At the call-up, a young person is assigned to service if they are found fit for service during their health examination. A doctor determines fitness for service in accordance with the applicable legislation and the Finnish Defence Forces' health examination guidelines.

Attendance at the call-up is mandatory and must be in person. Only the Regional Office can grant permission to be absent from a call-up. If a young person is unable to attend the call-up stated in their notice, they must contact their Regional Office. Under the Conscription Act, failing to attend a call-up without a lawful reason, such as a serious illness, is a punishable offence.



**Finnish society is
worth defending.**

EVENTS

Building a Shared Direction

At MVM ry, we are committed to continuously developing both our work and the skills of our team members. High-quality and effective preparedness work requires us to keep learning, critically evaluate our work, and build a clear and stable direction together.



In August, our entire team spent several days together focusing on onboarding, employee well-being activities (TYHY), and strategic planning. As new members have joined our team, this time together provided an excellent opportunity for onboarding, getting to know one another, and clarifying the association's values, goals, and future direction.

Throughout the days, learning, strategic planning, and working together went hand in hand. By understanding our team's strengths and getting to know one another better, we can build stronger cooperation, develop our work more systematically, and respond more effectively to the security challenges facing society.

September's Information sessions



In September, we will continue our series of MVM ry information sessions, which we have planned for different language and target groups throughout the year. Our goal is to provide up-to-date and easy-to-understand information about Finland's comprehensive security, preparedness, national defence, and the call-up process, including to those who are not already familiar with the Finnish system.



ARABIC-LANGUAGE INFORMATION SESSION



Thursday, 3.9.2026



17.00–19.00



Suomi-Syyria Ystävyyssseura ry
Kutojantie 3, 5th floor,
02630 Espoo



RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE INFORMATION SESSION



Sunday, 6.9.2026



15.00–17.00



SVK Liitto ry
Sienitie 18 B
00760 Helsinki

Registration links and up-to-date information about the events can be found on the MVM ry website.

CALL-UPS 2026 —

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY AWARENESS AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The 2026 call-ups have begun. This year, approximately 38,000 young people will take part, with events being held in a total of 245 locations across Finland. The men born in 2008 are the age group attending this year's call-ups, which will continue until 15 December.

However, the most significant change this year is not limited to the actual call-up day. It is also about how information on comprehensive security and national defence is introduced to young people at an earlier stage.

CALL-UP INFORMATION DAYS PILOTED IN ESPOO, IISALMI AND JYVÄSKYLÄ

In autumn 2026, Finland will pilot an information day for the first time aimed at an entire age group. The pilot will take place in Espoo, Iisalmi and Jyväskylä, and is intended for 17-year-old students attending upper secondary schools and vocational institutions in these areas—both girls and boys.

The purpose of these information days is to give young people comprehensive information about national defence, conscription, women's voluntary military service, and comprehensive security before they reach call-up age. The days will also cover young people's ability to cope with everyday challenges, mental resilience, and well-being.

This is a large-scale initiative. In Espoo alone, for example, 11 upper secondary schools and a vocational institution will take part, reaching approximately 3,400 students. The initiative involves, among others, the Finnish Defence Forces, various ministries, the National Defence Training Association of Finland (MPK), municipalities, and educational institutions.

CURRENT TOPICS



38 000

CONSCRIPTS



245

LOCATIONS

MVM RY SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND

The Association for Preparedness and National Defence of Immigrants (MVM ry) also wants to ensure that information about call-ups and Finland's comprehensive security reaches young people and families with immigrant backgrounds in a clear and accessible way.

We are organising information sessions on 3 and 6 September, covering everyday preparedness, comprehensive security, and the call-up process. Our aim is to make the Finnish system understandable and approachable also for families who are not familiar with conscription or Finland's national defence system. (For more information about the sessions, see the Events page of this issue.)

LOOKING AHEAD (2027–2028)

The 2026 pilot is only the first step in a broader societal reform. Based on the experiences gained from the pilot, the model is intended to be expanded nationwide in 2027–2028.

In the future, information about comprehensive security and preparedness will reach the entire age group equally helping to build a stronger, more united, and safer Finland for all of us.



MVM RY IS ORGANISING INFORMATION SESSIONS ON 3 AND 6 SEPTEMBER.
MORE ON EVENTS-PAGE.

WELCOME TO CALL-UPS 2026!

WOMEN INVOLVED



Najma Hirsi

“

**I TOO CAN
CONTRIBUTE TO
BUILDING OUR
SHARED SECURITY.**

Security Belongs to Everyone

For Najma Hirsi, who has a Somali background, MVM ry's activities have opened up new perspectives on preparedness, comprehensive security, and how everyone can contribute to building a safer society. In this issue of Kantama, the topic is especially personal to her: her brother is currently completing his military service in Finland. Najma's experience brings together two key themes for the future of our society—the active role of women in security work and the seamless inclusion of people from different cultural backgrounds as part of Finland's comprehensive security.

“Through MVM ry's activities, I have had the opportunity to learn a great deal about preparedness, security, and community. Getting involved has given me new perspectives on how everyone can contribute to building a safer society in their own way.”

“What has been particularly important to me about MVM ry's activities is that people from all kinds of backgrounds and circumstances are welcome to take part. I grew up between two cultures myself, and I feel that my background enriches the work we do. It has been wonderful to see that different experiences are not an obstacle, but a strength that builds bridges and strengthens our shared resilience in times of crisis.”

“Through my involvement, I have learned about the importance of practical preparedness and how essential cooperation, mental resilience, and helping others are in different emergency situations. At the same time, I have gained more confidence and courage to participate in public discussions. MVM ry has given me a community where everyone has an important role to play.”

“As a woman, I believe it is extremely important for women to be actively involved in work related to security and preparedness. Security belongs to everyone, and it should never be the responsibility of just one group of people. Every one of us has the opportunity to learn vital skills and do our part.”

“This topic has become even more personal to me now that my brother is completing his military service in Finland. Through his journey, I have been able to see up close what taking responsibility and defending one's country mean in practice. It has given me a deeper understanding of how important it is for our society to have the knowledge, skills, and mental readiness to act even in difficult circumstances.”

“MVM ry's activities have given me much more than just information. They have given me the feeling that I, too, can contribute to our shared security. I want to continue learning, improving my own preparedness, and encouraging other women and people from diverse backgrounds to confidently join in and contribute.”

BACK TO SCHOOL — STAY SAFE ON YOUR BIKE

Schools have started again, and the roads are once again busy with children and young people. Everyday preparedness and planning ahead begin right at your doorstep, and it is worth remembering that Finnish traffic rules and practices may differ from what people are used to elsewhere in the world. That's why we want to remind children, young people, and adults alike about safe cycling—and encourage parents to go over the safety rules together with their children.

WHERE SHOULD YOU CYCLE?

A bicycle is legally classified as a vehicle in Finland. If there is a cycle path along your route, cyclists should primarily use it. If there is no cycle path or cycle lane, cyclists should ride on the right-hand side of the road or on the shoulder. Cycling on the pavement is only permitted for children under 12, provided that it does not cause significant inconvenience to pedestrians.

REMEMBER RIGHT-OF-WAY RULES AND STAY ALERT.

A pedestrian crossing does not automatically give a cyclist the right of way. You may cycle across a pedestrian crossing, but who has the right of way is always determined by the traffic signs and rules at the intersection, as well as the specific circumstances. If you walk your bicycle across a pedestrian crossing, you are considered a pedestrian. It is always wise to approach intersections calmly, stay aware of your surroundings, and make sure that other road users have definitely seen you.

EQUIP YOUR BIKE AND CHECK ITS CONDITION.

Before setting off for school, check the basic condition of your bicycle: the brakes, tyres, chain, lights, and reflectors. When travelling in the dark or at dusk, the white or pale-yellow front light and red rear light required by law are essential for visibility and safety.

A HELMET PROTECTS YOUR HEAD—LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

Wearing a helmet is an important safety measure. Make sure the helmet is undamaged, fits properly, and is securely fastened. Adults should lead by example: children learn a culture of safety through what they see, and helmets belong on adults' heads just as much as on children's.

MAKING THE JOURNEY TO SAFETY TOGETHER.

Before the school year begins, parents should walk or cycle the school route together with their child, paying particular attention to busy intersections and road crossings. Remember that the shortest route is not always the safest. Using a smartphone while cycling is a safety risk—if you need to check a message or map, stop somewhere safe first.



DRIVERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TOO.



Once schools start, there is more activity on the roads. Drivers should slow down, especially near schools, intersections, and pedestrian crossings, keep their eyes firmly on the road, and be prepared for unexpected situations.



A safe journey to and from school and everyday preparedness are something we all share responsibility for. Knowing and following the traffic rules helps all of us get around safely—regardless of how long we have lived in Finland.

Sources: Traficom – Traffic Rules Guide for Cyclists; Finnish Road Safety Council (Liikenneturva).

WHEN SERVICE IS JUST BEGINNING

In this issue of Young People's Voice, we hear a slightly different perspective from those featured in previous issues. Our previous interviewees reflected on their military service after completing it, but this time we hear from a young person who is currently serving.

His experiences are still fresh: his service has only just begun, but he has already become familiar with the daily routine, his first exercises, and training periods in the field.

What were your thoughts when you joined the military? What did you expect from your service?

"I started my military service with a determined attitude. From the beginning, I wanted to do my duties well and make a good impression. I was prepared for early mornings, following orders, and plenty of physical training. I didn't have any particular fears. I did wonder beforehand what it would be like to share a room with many different kinds of people and whether I would be able to get along with everyone."

How does military service feel now? What has been the most difficult part?

"At the moment, my service is going well. After just a few weeks, you start getting used to the new daily rhythm, sleeping schedule, and routines of military life. So far, the most difficult part for me has been the field training periods. Days in the field can be exhausting, and sleeping in a tent with ten people takes some getting used to. Unexpected situations come up in the field, and even when you're tired, you still need to be able to perform as well as possible. It develops both physical and mental resilience."



From the beginning, I wanted to do my duties well and make a good impression.

“

What have you learned in the military? What has your service given you so far?

"During field exercises, I have learned practical everyday and preparedness skills, such as how to properly start a campfire and quickly set up and take down a tent. I've also learned to work more efficiently and take care of my own equipment even when time is limited. The biggest change, however, has been in how I view time and the community around me. In the military, I've learned punctuality and that you have to stick to agreed times and look out for your teammates. Punctuality and trust are a soldier's golden rules."

KANTAMA and MVM ry wish you:

We wish you a rewarding remainder of your service, plenty of new experiences, and valuable lessons! Make the most of your service and be brave enough to take advantage of the opportunities that come your way. Military service gives you the opportunity to test your limits, discover new strengths, and take responsibility as part of a community. If leadership interests you, the Non-Commissioned Officer School (AUK) and Reserve Officer School (RUK) can also open up an entirely new path and provide valuable leadership skills that can benefit you well into civilian life and your future career.

Service teaches responsibility, teamwork, punctuality, and deep mutual trust. At the same time, it strengthens a sense of community and an understanding of what shared responsibility for security truly means. Finland needs capable, responsible, and trustworthy young people. Thank you for sharing your experience with us!

Military Slang

ALOKAS A soldier who has only recently started their military service

ALIKKI, ALIKESU Alikersantti (Corporal)

GONAHTAA To lose motivation, give up, or burn out

HÄRVÄTÄ To mess around or do unnecessary things, especially moving or talking when ordered to stand at attention or at ease

JÄKKI Taistelujakkara (combat stool)

JÄPITTÄÄ To stand or sit completely still in a military manner, like a statue

KOKSU, UPSKOK Upseerikokelas (Officer Candidate)

MOVE, MOVETTA A soldier with a motivation problem; avoiding service by pretending to have an illness or injury

MUKE Muonituskeskus, the mess hall / military dining facility.

NOHEVA An abbreviation of nopeasti-heti-valmis ("quickly-immediately-ready"). Describes an enthusiastic and efficient soldier

PINKKA A bedspread folded with meticulous precision on top of the jakkara

PUNKKA A soldier's bed

SIPA Cleaning duty indoors or outdoors, during which soldiers clean shared and communal areas. Cleaning duty is followed by an inspection from a superior

SKAPPARI, SKAPU, KAPIAINEN A military employee who is part of the professional staff

SOTKU, SODE Sotilaskoti, a military café where soldiers can spend time, have munkkikahvit, buy treats, or relax.

SÄRMÄTÄ To put something in order or fix it, for example equipment, so that it meets the required standards and looks neat and well-maintained.

SÄRMÄ A soldier who is neat and well-presented

TEKSI, TKS Tupakaappi ja siisteysjärjestys: the required arrangement of equipment in the locker and furnishings in the room before going on leave

TETSATA Methods of moving across a battlefield as a soldier, such as rushing forward and crawling

TJ "Tänään jäljellä" ("remaining as of today"), the way soldiers count down their service: how much time they have left to serve

VEKSI Varuskuntasairaala (garrison hospital)

VEMPPA A VMTL-taistelija who has been granted Vapautus Maasto-, Taistelu- ja Liikuntasuorituksista (exemption from field, combat, and physical training activities)