

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	501
Land:	Ukraine
Kilde:	OFPRA
Titel:	Ukraine: Russian military recruitment in the occupied territories
Udgivet:	17. maj 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	20. februar 2025

17 May 2024

Ukraine: Russian military recruitment in the occupied territories

Warning

This document, drafted in accordance with common European Union [guidelines](#) for the processing of information on the country of origin, has been produced by the DIDR in order to provide useful information for examining international protection applications. It is not intended to comprehensively cover this issue, nor to provide conclusive evidence of the grounds for any given international protection application, and should not be viewed as an official position of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra).

Any reproduction or dissemination of this document, other than for personal use, is not permitted without the agreement of Ofpra, pursuant to Article L. 335-3 of the French Intellectual Property Code.

Table of contents

1.	The situation in the separatist republics before their annexation	3
2.	The situation in the territories annexed in September 2022	5
2.1.	Military registration	5
2.2.	Conscription	7
2.3.	Mobilisation	7
	Bibliography	9

Résumé : Si les républiques séparatistes du Donbass organisent une mobilisation générale des hommes à compter du 19 février 2022, les sources sont contradictoires sur la poursuite de cette mobilisation après l'annexion de ces régions par la Russie et sur l'organisation d'une mobilisation dans les *oblasts* de Zaporijjia et de Kherson. En revanche, la Russie implante dans ces territoires des bureaux de recrutement militaire, procède à l'enregistrement militaire des hommes et de femmes de certaines professions, et a annoncé procéder à la conscription des jeunes hommes depuis l'automne 2023.

Abstract: While the separatist republics of Donbass have been organising a general mobilisation of men since 19 February 2022, sources are contradictory on the continuation of this mobilisation after the annexation of these regions by Russia and on the organization of a mobilisation in the *oblasts* of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. On the other hand, Russia is setting up military recruitment offices in these territories, is carrying out the military registration of men and women in certain professions, and has announced that it has been conscripting young men since the autumn of 2023.

Note: The translation of sources in foreign languages is provided by the DIDR.

Many of the sources used to support this note are linked to one or the other of the belligerents in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Information from these biased or unreliable sources should therefore be regarded with caution.

1. The situation in the separatist republics before their annexation

The political crisis known as the "Maidan movement" or "Euromaidan" that shook Ukraine from November 2013 to February 2014, leading to the fall of the authoritarian and pro-Russian regime of President Viktor Yanukovich, led to a series of reactions in Crimea, annexed by Russia in March 2014, as well as in the *oblasts* of Donetsk and Luhansk. In March and April 2014, pro-Russian and separatist demonstrators seized the headquarters of several administrations in eastern Ukraine, prompting the Ukrainian authorities to launch a military operation in mid-April 2014.¹ On 11 May 2014, following the holding of referendums not recognised by the international community, the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) unilaterally proclaimed their independence.² Since the signing of the Minsk II agreements in February 2015, the front line has stabilised.³ Between 2015 and 2022, however, sporadic exchanges of fire persisted despite the ceasefire, and the political settlement of the conflict remained at an impasse.⁴ For more information on the conflict in Donbass before 2022, see DIDR, "Ukraine : Situation sécuritaire dans le Donbass", OFPRA, 22/12/2021, [url](#).

Between 2015 and 2021, recruitment into separatist militias was mainly voluntary, although cases of forced recruitment were reported.⁵ In addition, while the separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk carry out the initial registration of young people between the ages of 16 and 18, military service was not organised until 2021.⁶ Indeed, the separatist republics have laws on military obligations and military service that are similar to Russian law: these provide for military service between the ages of 18 and 27 and the registration of men in the military reserve at the end of their military service or after the age of 27, if they have not completed their military service.⁷ In March and April 2021, the DNR and the LNR each adopted decrees to conscript, for the first time, 200 men born between 1994 and 2003.⁸ For more information on military recruitment in the DNR before 2019, cf. DIDR, OFPRA, 02/04/2019, [url](#).

Claiming to fear a Ukrainian attack, as of 19 February 2022, the authorities of the separatist republics of Donetsk (DNR) and Luhansk (LNR) decreed a general mobilisation within the separatist militias of men aged 18 to 55,⁹ who are prohibited from leaving the territory under separatist control.¹⁰ According to the BBC, the payment of bribes can sometimes make it possible to reach Russia although this is not guaranteed.¹¹ A student from Donetsk, enrolled in a Russian university and not under military registration in the DNR, also reports that he was allowed to travel to Russia.¹² On 21 February 2022, the head of the separatist republic of Luhansk, Leonid Pasechnik, authorised the mobilisation of men over the age of 55 on a voluntary basis.¹³ In March 2022, Denis Pushilin ordered the mobilisation of men over 65 for the special units of the Ministry of the Interior, according to the German newspaper *Deutsche Welle*.¹⁴ According to the military commissioner of the separatist republic of Luhansk, military commissariats are rapidly being established in the territories newly conquered by Russia in the Luhansk and Donetsk *oblasts*, but men from these territories were not affected by the 2022 mobilisation.¹⁵

¹ Belgium, Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Cedoca, 19/02/2019, p. 6, [url](#) ;

² Challenges, 07/02/2015, [url](#) ;

³ United Nations, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 12/03/2019, p. 2, [url](#) ; Le Monde, 12/11/2018, [url](#) ;

⁴ United Nations, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 12/03/2019, p. 2, [url](#) ; Le Monde, 12/11/2018, [url](#) ;

⁵ Atlantic Council, 11/10/2016, [url](#) ; United Nations, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 15/12/2014, [url](#) ;

⁶ BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#) ;

⁷ LNR, People's Council, 14/06/2018, [url](#) ; DNR, People's Council, 13/02/2015, [url](#) ;

⁸ United Nations, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 01/05/2021, p. 3, [url](#) ; United Nations, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, 23/09/2021, p. 9-10, [url](#) ;

⁹ Civicmonitoring, 31/03/2022, [url](#) ; Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, 07/03/2022, [url](#) ; BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#) ; Novosti Donbassa, 19/02/2022 [1], [url](#) ; Novosti Donbassa, 19/02/2022 [2], [url](#) ; Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#) ;

¹⁰ BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#) ; Ukraine Times, 13/05/2022, [url](#) ; Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#) ;

¹¹ BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#) ; Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#) ;

¹² Novaya Gazeta, 22/03/2022, [url](#) ;

¹³ LNR, Alchevsk Municipality, n.d., [url](#) ; Luganskiy Informatsionnyi Tsentr, 21/02/2022, [url](#) ; LNR, Head of the LNR, 21/04/2022, [url](#) ;

¹⁴ Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#) ;

¹⁵ Luganskii Informatsionnyi Tsentr, 29/03/2022, [url](#) ;

During the first days of mobilisation in the separatist militias, reservists were summoned to the recruitment offices.¹⁶ According to a testimony collected in the DNR by *Novaya Gazeta*, public sector employees were the first to be mobilised with between 50% and 100% of agents summoned, depending on the administration.¹⁷ They were then followed by students,¹⁸ and on 22 February the head of the DNR, Denis Pushilin also called for the mobilisation of men aged 18 to 27 to the separatist forces.¹⁹ As part of this mobilisation, the DNR also asked companies to mobilise half their workforce, but one business owner says he was only able to keep between 20 and 30% of his male employees.²⁰ According to *Radio Svoboda*, the mobilisation accelerated sharply after 24 February 2022 and the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.²¹

Some mobilised men received official notices, while others were simply contacted by telephone or by their employer, and coerced by threats of criminal prosecution to report to the military recruitment office.²² Many testimonies published in the press also reported that men had been hunted down in the street or at home, and mobilised without taking into consideration their state of health, their disability or any reasons for exemption due to professional or family circumstances.²³ The Ukrainian National Resistance Centre provides an instance of people with disabilities being mobilised as drivers at the beginning of 2023.²⁴ Students sent by their universities to the recruitment office to request a reprieve are forcibly incorporated into the separatist militias as "volunteers".²⁵ Men wishing to avoid mobilisation are forced into hiding and unable to leave their homes.²⁶ Witness statements also report cases of corruption to escape mobilisation or to obtain a safe job at a cost of between 1,000 and 2,000 US dollars (between 920 and 1,840 euros) and people who have nevertheless escaped mobilisation for health reasons, but this is not a regular occurrence.²⁷ Finally, several articles report that people called up as part of the general mobilisations are registered as volunteers and are promised rapid demobilisation after 90 days.²⁸ Some mobilised soldiers have been deployed to the front without training, without adequate equipment, and without food or water.²⁹ They report that they have been forced to loot for food, as the Russian army does not share its rations.³⁰ Compensation is much lower than that of the Russian army and is not always paid to soldiers or their families, especially in the event of death.³¹ *Radio Svoboda* reports on cases of dead soldiers whose death certificates given to families give coronavirus as the cause of death.³²

On 28 February 2022, Denis Pushilin declared that the call-up notices would stop because enough men were mobilised, but many testimonies maintained that the mobilisation was ongoing.³³ At the end of February and the beginning of March 2022, Leonid Pasechnik made similar announcements, but specified that the mobilisation decree remains valid and that additional recruitments could be made if necessary.³⁴ In August 2022, the deputy military commissioner of the LNR, Alexei Kurchenko, emphasised that there was no mobilisation underway in the separatist republic, but that the recruitment offices were receiving volunteers.³⁵ However, that same month, the Ukrainian media outlet *Ostrov*

¹⁶ Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#); Luganskii Informatsionnyi Tsentr, 19/02/2022 [2], [url](#); Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#);

¹⁷ Novaya Gazeta, 12/03/2022, [url](#);

¹⁸ Novaya Gazeta, 12/03/2022, [url](#);

¹⁹ Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#);

²⁰ Ukrainskii Tijden, 13/05/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, 03/08/2022, [url](#); Radio Svoboda, 01/06/2022, [url](#); DNR, Head of the DNR, 23/02/2022, [url](#); Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#);

²¹ Radio Svoboda, 01/06/2022, [url](#);

²² Novaya Gazeta Europe, 03/08/2022, [url](#); Mediazona, 19/09/2022, [url](#); Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#);

²³ Orlenko, Olesya, Le Monde diplomatique, 01/03/2022, [url](#); Civicmonitoring, 14/05/2022, [url](#); BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#); Krym Realii, 18/10/2023, [url](#); Ukrainskii Tijden, 13/05/2022, [url](#); Meduza, 12/04/2022, [url](#); Ukraine, National Resistance Centre, 11/01/2023, [url](#); Ostrov, 05/10/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, 03/08/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, 22/03/2022, [url](#); Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#);

²⁴ Ukraine, National Resistance Centre, 11/01/2023, [url](#);

²⁵ Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", 22/03/2024, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, 22/03/2022, [url](#); Tribun, 31/10/2023, [url](#);

²⁶ Orlenko, Olesya, Le Monde diplomatique, 01/03/2022, [url](#); Civicmonitoring, 14/05/2022, [url](#); BBC, 18/05/2022, [url](#); Crimea Realia, 18/10/2023, [url](#); Ukrainskii Tijden, 13/05/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, 22/03/2022, [url](#);

²⁷ Meduza, 12/07/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, 12/03/2022, [url](#);

²⁸ Novaya Gazeta Europe, 03/08/2022, [url](#); Radio Svoboda, 01/06/2022, [url](#); Mediazona, 19/09/2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, 22/03/2022, [url](#); Tribun, 31/10/2023, [url](#); Meduza, 25/02/2022, [url](#);

²⁹ Novaya Gazeta Europe, 03/08/2022, [url](#); Mediazona, 19/09/2022, [url](#);

³⁰ Mediazona, 19/09/2022, [url](#);

³¹ Radio Svoboda, 01/06/2022, [url](#);

³² Radio Svoboda, 01/06/2022, [url](#); Radio Svoboda, 17/09/2023, [url](#);

³³ Deutsche Welle, 27/04/2022, [url](#); RBC, 28/02/2022, [url](#); Ria Novosti, 28/02/2022, [url](#); DNR, Head of the DNR, 28/02/2022 [1], [url](#); DNR, Head of the DNR, 28/02/2022 [2], [url](#);

³⁴ Luganskii Informatsionnyi Tsentr, 28/02/2022, [url](#); Luganskii Informatsionnyi Tsentr, 22/03/2022, [url](#);

³⁵ Novorossia, 20/08/2022, [url](#); Alchevsk, V Kontakte, 20/08/2022, [url](#);