

Postscript

In January 2017, then Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen requested that the ZMSBw undertake the present study. On 17 September 2020 her successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, presented the results from Potsdam to the press and public. The minister spoke in unambiguous terms: “For decades after its founding in 1955, the Bundeswehr [...] systematically discriminated against homosexual soldiers. The Bundeswehr’s stance was wrong. It was wrong even at the time, lagging behind society, and is all the more so from today’s perspective.” She then spoke the words that soldiers who had experienced discrimination must have been waiting decades to hear: “I deeply regret these practices. And for all those who were made to suffer from them, I ask for forgiveness.”

In closing, the minister laid the groundwork for an act of rehabilitation. “We are not indifferent to how people were treated in the past,” Kramp-Karrenbauer affirmed. “Even if we are not able to do justice to every fate, we are going back into it now and will correct as much as possible.” On 25 November 2020, the Federal Cabinet resolved to set the legislative gears in motion for the Rehabilitation Act for Homosexual Soldiers Discriminated against in the Bundeswehr and the National People’s Army.

On 20 May 2021, the German Bundestag voted unanimously and without abstention to pass the Rehabilitation Act for Soldiers Adversely Impacted under Civil Service Law Due to Consensual Homosexual Activity, Homosexual Orientation or Sexual Identity.

It took effect on 23 July 2021.