

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE STATUTE OF THE FEMALE MILITARY IN THE BULGARIAN ARMED FORCES

Policy changes:

Since 1 January 2004 a Law of protection against discrimination is being in force in Bulgaria. The law forbids during the regular service in the armed forces to be set requirements that are consistent with the sex, except for the implementation of activities and taking positions, where sex is a decisive factor. In practice the restrictive treatment delegated by the Law was being carried out at setting the requirements for taking specific positions (at approving the respective positions) and was being motivated by ethic considerations or official expedience, i.e. the number and the type of the positions that allow accepting women varies every year and as a whole depends on the assessment of different by rank commanders and chiefs. In this regard the information from the research, which has been carried out, concerning female military show that 32,7% of the women in uniform that have been inquired point out that one of the major problems in their professional development is the lack of certain regulations about the possible positions.

This case has been decided by a special Decree of the Minister of Defense from October 2005 concerning the activities during the regular service in the armed forces, where because of their nature or the conditions of their implementation, sex is an essential and decisive professional requirement by the sense of the Law of protection against discrimination. It is specified that the different treatment of the regular female military and the servicemen is not discrimination at the accomplishment of activities in the armed forces. Search or personal search, maintenance and control of submarines, paying honours by the **Honour Guards unit** from the structures of the **National Guards** are given as inappropriate ones.

Organisation:

The total number of the female military in the Bulgarian Armed Forces is **10%**, distributed accordingly in the Land Forces - 10,6 %, the Navy - 3,9% and the Air Force - 12,8%. In comparison for the year **2005** the women are approximately **6%** of the current Armed Forces personnel.

Structure:	officers	sergeants	soldiers	total
Army (Land forces)	1, 6	7, 7	16, 4	10, 6
Air force	3, 0	8, 6	27, 2	12, 8
Navy	3, 0	4, 0	4, 3	3, 9
General Staff	1, 6	9, 0	15, 4	8, 3
total	2, 2	7, 7	16, 8	10, 0

While in the period until 2003-2004 the most common positions for assigning women were psychologists, lawyers, doctors and administrative positions, in 2005 for the first time women were assigned at the positions of a transport helicopter pilot and a battalion chief of staff. Female professional soldiers and NCOs are being already assigned also at the positions of shooters, submachine gunners, artillery calculators, forward air controllers, etc. The tendency is to wider participation of women in all spheres and areas of the profession of the military.

Recruitment :

There are no special programmes for integration of the female military in the Bulgarian Armed Forces. Maybe it is prompted by the fact that there is heightened interest to the profession of regular servicemen on the part of women in Bulgaria.

In 1988 at the acceptance of women for training at a military academy for the first time, more than 10 applicants competed for one vacant place. Now the tendency is 5-6 women on the average competing for one place for training at the faculties of the National Military University, and 3-4 men on the average competing for one place. The situation in our days is the same. There is also high interest in taking positions of professional soldiers and NCOs. More than 50% of the female professional soldiers have a university degree in civil specialties, although it is not a requirement for their positions at the Bulgarian Armed Forces. Unfortunately there is also another tendency – part of the released from the armed forces female officers, for want of other alternatives for development, are forced to accept positions of NCOs and even of soldiers.

With regard to their professional statute, women are equal to men when practising the profession of the military. Moving to the regular service, appointment to a position and promotion to a military rank; working hours, leaves and holidays; disciplinary responsibility; training and qualification; attestation; awards and stimulations, etc. are being arranged by general way with one and the same rules and laws for servicemen and female military. An indicative example of the legal equality concerning the opportunities for professional development is the organization of the training and qualification.

In conformity with the contemporary theory the equality of rights of sexes is being achieved most fully through their equal positioning, which differs from the formal equality/identity concerning treatment. The idea of the equal positioning presupposes overcoming the natural differences among the individuals through respective legal mechanisms for the creation of adequate conditions for complete and equivalent expression of the personality. Equality of rights is being ensured by giving equal opportunities, and not by presenting equal conditions.

Training:

The education, qualification and professional training of officers for the Bulgarian Armed forces is conducted in the military and civilian colleges and academies, and training centers. To this aim, the system of military education and qualification in Bulgaria covers three main areas: higher military education, higher civilian education and military qualification, and is structured in three levels.

- The first level comprises National military University education where the cadets, after being taught in the course of 4 years, receive the educational and qualification level of “bachelor” in the military and civilian specialty. Given certain conditions, the cadets can receive a master's degree in a civilian specialty through additional training in the course of one year.
- The second stage is education in the Command and Staff Faculty of the Defense and Staff College.
- The third stage is education and qualification in the General Staff course (one year long program) or in the Strategic Course delivered in 4 month period for teaching. This training is for receiving the highest degree of qualification.

There is no difference between man and women training standards and procedures in Bulgarian Armed Forces

The training of the cadets, men and women, at the faculties of the National Military University (respectively Naval, Army Faculty, Air Force Faculty, Artillery, Air-Defences and Communication and information systems Faculty) is by one and the same programmes, including the military leadership programmes, moral and commanding skills. The

psychological criteria for selection and control of all cadets are widely used. The discipline is one of main criteria for the final score that is calculated by means of special evaluation system.

At „Rakovski” Defence and Staff College the training is conducted by general way, with one and the same rules for the servicemen and the female military. There is no certain quota at the application for the female military.

The professional development of the female professional soldiers and NCOs starts with their appointment to a position and training at the training bases, which is followed by realization at the Bulgarian Armed Forces units. Training follows the whole period of their regular service and precedes every change in their professional development.

In the Law on defense and the armed forces of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for regular service are regulated the physical and professional criteria, which women, the applicants for regular service, are being selected by. These criteria are not different from the requirements to men excepting the requirement for military conscription and the reduced criteria for the test of physical training.

The applicants for regular service can be Bulgarian citizens meeting the following requirements:

- To have served the military conscription and taken the military oath, provided in the Law on defense and the armed forces of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- To have university education with a qualification degree not lower than a Bachelor of the specialty they apply for – for the officers, secondary or college education – for the NCOs, and for the Navy – for the petty officers and sailors;
- To be not older than: 40 years – for the officers, 35 years – for the NCOs (for the Navy – the petty officers), and 30 years – for the soldiers (for the Navy – the sailors);
- To be fit for service;
- Not to have been convicted of a premeditated crime of a general character;
- Not to have a criminal procedure against them;
- Not to have other citizenship;
- Not to have been released from regular service because of an inflicted disciplinary punishment “discharge”.

The stipulation for having served the military conscription does not apply to women. Women take a military oath together with signing the contract for regular service.

In the orders for announcing a competition for taking positions for regular servicemen in the units by civilians and in the Regulations for accepting cadets in the Military academies are included also additional requirements, which are common for both the sexes and do not discriminate women.

The only substantial difference is in the physical training norms.

The accepted women on regular service are being trained in compliance with unified programmes with men from the respective specialty.

After their moving to a regular service as soldiers, women pass the assigned training modules for acquiring initial military habits and skills as specialists.

On finishing the training at the training bases there follows a period of adaptation at the respective units. Adaptation of the female military in the army staffs goes along with the peculiarities of the military environment. At the initial phase of entering of women in the armed forces, this process was accompanied by a number of difficulties, related with mistrust in their abilities, wrong opinion about the unfitness of women in execution of their functional obligations, the attitude of the male military. Based on the knowledge accumulated, the practical skills acquired and with getting into the specific character of the functional obligations, women have completely changed the negative opinion about their place in the army staffs. The fact that nearly 50% of the female military, graduates from military academies have Master Degrees from civil universities is also of significant importance.

The high professional qualification is a presupposition for the rapid recognition of the women in uniform on the respective position and for their professional development, including when in multinational commands or during missions. More than 120 female military from the Bulgarian Armed Forces have participated in missions abroad, and more than 180 female military have participated in courses for post-graduate qualification.

Deployment:

The requirements to the female military concerning their psychological training for executing their daily duties as well as for their participation in missions and exercises outside the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria are not different from the ones concerning the male military. The high motivation and the psychical adjustment of the regular female military for overcoming difficulties of different character make an impression. The Bulgarian Armed Forces command gives an account that in performance of their duties as officials, women with epaulettes stick rigidly to regulations and instructions, do not allow compromises, distinguish themselves by excellent organization, concentration and professionalism.

As a whole the problems of the female military are in the focus of the Bulgarian Armed Forces command. Representatives of the Motivation and Quality of Life Department from the Personnel Directorate at the General Staff of the Bulgarian Armed Forces every year conduct periodical meetings with the representatives of all categories of the female military with the purpose of timely deciding the problems arisen. Special attention is being paid to the question related to discrimination of sexes. It does not exist a requirement in the Bulgarian Armed Forces that military from one family have to serve at different garrisons or units, on the contrary – the policy of the leadership of the Bulgarian Armed Forces is to give opportunity for service in one garrison. Additional possibilities for recreation of their families are provided for the women, who participated in missions abroad.

Duties given by female military are related to their positions, family status and individual qualities. The Law on defense and the armed forces forbids assigning duties, which include in their duration the working hours from 22.00 hrs till 6.00 hrs, except with their written agreement, on regular female military – pregnant and mothers with children under six as well as mothers taking care of disabled children, irrespective of their age; sending on missions of regular female military and mothers with children respectively under three and under six as well as working overtime. This sometimes creates problems and causes tension because at the service of the professional soldiers only men take guards, and the rest of the duties are not being compensated between sexes. A law protects maternity at the Republic of Bulgaria. Regular female military have the right of leave in cases of pregnancy, birth and child adoption at the proportions and under the circumstances of the Labour code, which is in force in the country. During that time positions of the female military remain unoccupied and their colleagues are taking their obligations, which in some cases also causes tension. Providing special protection has its prime source in the labour legislation and is logically founded by the professional character of the execution of the regular service. Because of the fact that most of the rights are being provided in order to protect socially important interests, they can also be used by regular male military under certain conditions.

Among the social problems of the female military that are still unsolved the following ones can be indicated most generally: lack of appropriate working conditions in some units, which meet contemporary requirements (particularly at field occupations – provision of toilets, bathrooms, etc.); the problems related to the use of sick-leave for taking care of a sick child, especially when both the spouses are military or when the women are divorced or deserted mothers; vacating the service position during the use of maternity leave by the women, etc.

In conclusion:

As content the statute of the female military in Bulgaria does not differ much from the legislation and practice at the European Union and NATO nations. Women as a whole have access to and are equally positioned with men at performing the profession of the regular serviceman.