

National Report of Germany
to the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces
2006

I. Policies

Since 1975 women have been employed in the Bundeswehr, initially exclusively as medical officers. Applicants were able to be recruited as candidates for the career group of medical officers beginning in 1989. This step was followed in 1991 by the opening of the career group of NCOs and junior ranks in the Medical Service. Since 1992 the armed forces have also promoted top female athletes.

A fundamental change was the complete opening of all careers and career groups to women 2001. The ruling of the European Court of Justice prompted the German government 2000 to make the necessary legal changes to the constitution, the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act and the Military Career Regulation in order to open up to women all career groups and careers. Article 12a of the constitution was changed so that it clearly allows women to volunteer for military service involving armed combat. At the same time, the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act and the Military Career Regulation were modified. This laid the legal foundations for recruiting women for the career group of NCOs / junior ranks (January 2001) and for officers (July 2001).

II. Organisation

At present, the total number of female military personnel in the Bundeswehr is 12.350, that is to say 6.5% of all temporary-career volunteers and regulars (approx. 190,000). This figure underlines the fact that the percentage of women in the Bundeswehr is still rather small despite gradual increases. Since January 2001 women in the forces are no longer barred from certain assignments. Like their male colleagues, they are employed, trained and promoted according to the sole criteria of aptitude, ability and achievement.

The differences are even more pronounced if we consider the percentages of female soldiers in the Medical and Military Music Services on the one hand, and the line service and Military Geographic Service on the other.

5,800 female soldiers belong to the Medical Services, i.e. approx. 32% of the total personnel strength of this sector, while 6,550 women belong to the line service and other specialised services which is only 3.3% of the total personnel strength of this sector. The percentages given refer to the total number of temporary-career volunteers and regulars.

Due to the fact that this sector of the public service was opened up to women rather late, the percentage of female soldiers in the Bundeswehr will only rise gradually. Based on the many years of experience of allied forces, however, this figure is expected to level out at approximately 10%, on the long run even at 15%. Given the

current total strength of approximately 190,000 temporary-career volunteers and regulars, this would correspond to approximately 19,000 female soldiers.

III. Employment

Female soldiers are unlike men not subject to compulsory service. They are serving only on a voluntary basis. Like male soldiers, they are integrated in the usual chain of command. There are no differences in work and female soldiers train with their male counterparts. They are subject to the same standards of performance and discipline.

IV. Recruitment

In 2005 the percentage of female applicants for line officer careers was approx. 15% and for medical officer careers approx. 60%. The number of female applicants for careers of senior NCOs, NCOs and other ranks augmented to an overall percentage of approx. 20% (approx. 11% for the line service and approx. 9% for the Medical Service).

Comparing the years 2004 and 2005, the number of female applicants for line officer careers (1,564) rose by nearly 8% and for medical officer careers (1,700) by approx. 17%. Due to a decrease of applicants for careers of senior NCOs, NCOs and other ranks, the number of female applicants for all career categories of NCOs / junior ranks sunk by 9% from 8,374 applicants in 2004 to 7,610 in 2005.

The number of 4,261 female applicants for line service as NCOs / junior ranks in 2005 means a reduction by 11% in contrary to the amount of 4,799 applicants in 2004. Concerning the number of female applicants for the Medical Service, a reduction of 6% from 3,575 female applicants in 2004 to 3,349 in 2005 has to be stated.

The majority of the female officer candidates are primarily focussing on medical service assignments (43%), followed by logistics and command support service (36%), flying service (13%) and combat and combat support duties (8%). Also most of the female NCOs / junior ranks candidates primarily aim for the medical service (44%), followed by logistics and command support service (41%), combat and combat support duties (8%) and some special services (3%). 4% of the female applicants didn't articulate a special interest in any service.

In 2005, a total of 150 service agencies took part in a nation-wide career-information-event for young women, the 'Girls' Day'. The Bundeswehr provided approx. 6,000 places and offered thereby basic information on the various educational and occupational areas. The focus once again was laid on technical fields of activity. The next nation-wide 'Girls' Day' is scheduled for the 27th of April 2006.

V. Training

Female soldiers entering the Bundeswehr participate in integrated basic training. They are trained as their male counterparts, however, different physical standards

have been established due to the physiological differences between men and women.

After basic military training and continuous physical training, female soldiers are capable to withstand the physical and mental strains of military service like men. Nevertheless, there may be some problems in areas requiring high levels of physical stamina.. This problem must be given appropriate consideration in the selection of personnel and in assignment planning.

Soldiers have to take part in an annual test of physical fitness until they are forty years old. This test consists of strength and endurance disciplines. Performance in each discipline is rated with points. A few years ago the standards have been adapted to the age of women.

VI. Deployments

During all operations conducted under United Nations and NATO auspices in Cambodia, Somalia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Australia/East-Timor, Afghanistan women in the Bundeswehr have done and continue to do an excellent job.

At present, there are 261 servicewomen on deployment outside Germany (77 ISAF, 20 EF, 53 EUFOR, 111 KFOR). 3,5% of the military personnel on deployment outside Germany (7,374 service members) are women.

VII. Career Development

Within the German armed forces all standards are equal for women and men. All career groups and careers are open to women. Recruiting and selecting personnel for further education or higher positions is based only on the joint criteria of aptitude, performance and ability. There are no quotas for employment's in assignments for women.

It is expected that women who started the officer education and training cycle in 2001 will fill military leadership positions in the line service at the level of company commander or higher only in 2 to 3 years' time. The first female battalion commanders will be appointed in some 10 to 12 years.

VIII. Special Interest Item

On 1 January 2005, the Act on the Enforcement of Equal Opportunities for Female and Male Military Personnel of the Bundeswehr has come into force. This Act contains the first extensive set of statutory equal-opportunity regulations for female and male military personnel of the Bundeswehr. It implements the pertinent constitutional and European provisions and simultaneously takes into consideration the special nature of military service.

This Act serves a twofold purpose. First, it is necessary to reach equality between female and male soldiers, especially as regards access to employment and vocational promotion, and to avoid any gender-related discrimination. Second, compatibility between family life and work is to be improved. The major provisions of this Act are specified below:

1. The Act applies to all male and female soldiers. Basically, it is also applicable to special assignments abroad unless by way of exception it is declared inapplicable by the Federal Ministry of Defence for reasons of sustained operational readiness or security of the deployed force.

2. The Act specifies quotas (50% for the Medical Service, 15% for all other careers) below which women are regarded as underrepresented in certain statutory areas. As long as the number of servicewomen in these areas remains below the quota, women are given priority over their male competitors as to employment, training and promotion provided that their qualifications are equal to those of male applicants or servicemen and unless there are certain reasons for giving preference to the man in question. The requirement of equal qualification ensures that, in the future, assignment and selection decisions will continue to be exclusively guided by the principle of selection of the best based on the criteria of aptitude, qualification and achievement.

3. The Act requires all agencies of the armed forces to develop and provide the necessary general conditions for family-friendly working hours to improve compatibility between family life and work. Servicemen and women are, for the first time, offered the legal opportunity of part-time employment in order to assume family duties such as taking care of children under 18 years or attending to family members requiring nursing care. Entitled persons include both male and female regulars as well as temporary-career volunteers having completed four years of service. Part-time employment is restricted to a maximum period of 12 years. A regulation on part-time employment specifies details of the application procedure and a list of assignments which generally rule out part-time employment for official reasons.

With the creation of the prerequisites for part-time employment in the armed forces, the military profession has come to also appeal to those men and women who previously regarded military service as incompatible with family life. Sustained operational readiness of the forces will, however, continue to take precedence in the future. At the end of 2005 there were 99 female soldiers and 34 male soldiers fulfilling their duties in part-time employment.

4. The Act provides for the election of equal opportunities officers (only servicewomen) at division level and above. The equal opportunities officers participate in all personnel, organisational and social measures of their respective agency, designed to further equal opportunities for male and female soldiers, to improve compatibility between family life and work, and to protect personnel against sexual harassment. Furthermore, they act as points of contact for the servicewomen in their electoral district for all matters within the scope of their responsibilities.

Equal opportunities officers are normally granted paid leave for accomplishing their tasks. Further details are specified in the pertinent implementing provisions. Until the end of 2005 there have been elected 40 equal opportunities officers.

Furthermore, agencies at regiment and brigade level appoint an equal opportunities ombudswoman who is to act as a direct point of contact for the servicewomen and men and the responsible equal opportunities officer.

The provisions of this Act are for the benefit of all servicewomen and men without involving the risk of gender-related discrimination against individuals. It is only by an unbiased assessment of the Equal Opportunities Act that existing reservations can be overcome and equality of opportunities and compatibility between family life and work can be improved in the armed forces. The Bundeswehr should seek to soon have the objectives of this Act put into everyday military practice.

IX. Conclusions

Open-mindedness beyond the gender bounds will make a success of the future-oriented concept. We are sure that women will make an ever-growing contribution to the mission accomplishment of the armed forces and will help shape the public image of the Bundeswehr. They will doubtless continue to have a positive influence on the “working climate” of the Bundeswehr.