

## LATVIAN NATIONAL REPORT FOR 2007

### POLICY CHANGES/ NEW POLICY AFFECTING WOMEN IN UNIFORM

Gender equality is officially ensured by Latvian legislation, international and European legislation that serve as basis to create real gender equality in all life spheres. According to the State Defence Conception adopted in the end of year 2005 and the Action plan for transition to professional military service approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, the National Armed Forces starting from 1 January, 2007 completely transfers to personnel recruitment with soldiers, civil and military staff of professional service.

In 2006 and in the beginning of 2007, there were not new policy changes and service regulations especially regarding employment of women in the military (political, social, personnel management).

Women are accepted in the professional service from 19 years of age, provided they comply with the health, education, professional and physical fitness and state language law requirements and possess required moral and psychological qualities. The soldiers' salary depends from rank and position and there is no gender influence. In accordance with the law a woman in service is granted a fully paid prenatal and maternity leave as well as officially stated maternity allowance and is also paid the soldier rations compensation for this period. At a request a soldier (any parent) may receive one single childcare leave without the retention of the service pay until the child reaches 1.5 years.

### ORGANIZATION

The following chart reflects the distribution of women soldiers of Latvian National armed forces among services (facts on 1 May 2007):

		Officers	NCOs	Privates	Professional service total	C	ME	TOTAL
<b>AF</b>	Women	12	29	19	60	0	8	68
	Total	116	111	60	287	1	23	311
	%	10,3	26,1	31,7	20,9	0	34,8	21,9
<b>Navy</b>	Women	16	56	20	92	13	7	112
	Total	122	209	227	558	26	29	613
	%	13,1	26,8	8,8	16,5	50,0	24,1	18,3
<b>TRADOC</b>	Women	22	71	19	112	119	13	244
	Total	184	194	67	445	179	23	647
	%	12,0	36,6	28,4	25,2	66,5	56,5	37,7
<b>LC</b>	Women	25	101	61	187	77	56	320
	Total	122	299	150	571	132	125	828
	%	20,5	33,8	40,7	32,7	58,3	44,8	38,6
<b>LF</b>	Women	10	30	32	72	0	0	72
	Total	107	259	602	968	0	0	968
	%	9,3	11,6	5,3	7,4	0	0	7,4
<b>NG</b>	Women	25	82	9	116	83	7	206
	Total	257	256	42	555	143	8	706
	%	9,7	32,0	21,4	20,9	58,0	87,5	29,2
<b>Other</b>	Women	51	111	65	227	24	31	282
	Total	409	607	493	1509	39	58	1606
	%	12,5	18,3	13,2	15,0	61,5	53,4	17,6
<b>Total</b>	Women	161	480	225	866	316	122	1304
	Total	1317	1935	1641	4893	520	266	5679
	%	12,2	24,8	13,7	17,7	60,8	45,9	23,0

In the beginning of the 2006, there were 837 women serving in the armed forces or 18,2 percent of the total personnel.

The amount of women soldiers increases but the percentage reduces. This is due the fact that at the present time a military career can be started in the NAF Headquarters battalion, 1st and 2nd infantry battalion of Land Forces, Mine or Patrol Ship Squadron of Naval Forces and the Services of Naval Surveillance and communication or Coastal Guard, Air Defence Division of Air Forces or Air Space Surveillance and Aviation Squadron - units with specific military tasks – but in Commands, Military police or Special Task Units service can only be started after previous service in one of the aforesaid units.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

During the service women are subjected to the same requirements as men soldiers both for obtaining civil and military education and assignment to a post or promotion in service rank. A soldier in the Latvian army becomes eligible for promotion if he/she has received a positive evaluation by the attestation board and meets all requirements for promotion in general and for the specific rank in particular and has no record of punishment in his/her file. A soldier can be promoted to the next higher rank upon serving the required time in the previous rank (grade) if the position he/she is assigned to require a higher rank, or for combat achievements. Assignment to position takes place upon signing the professional service contract or according to his/her evaluation results

Salary in armed forces is paid according to the real rank and term of service of a soldier, thus women get the same salary as men.

## **RECRUITMENT**

Also prerequisites for joining professional military service are identical for both genders (except physical training tests, which are differentiated by age and gender). A person must meet certain age, health, educational, professional, physical training and Latvian language skill requirements and posses certain moral and psychological qualities in order to join military service. After joining military service personnel with no prior training must complete a military training course required by the particular position. Taking into consideration the reorganization processes in the Latvian Armed Forces recruitment of new personnel is currently very limited.

## **TRAINING**

All training requirements and programs in the Latvian Armed forces are based on identical principles for males and females.

## **DEPLOYMENTS (I.E. PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS, PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS)**

In order to confirm Latvia's decision to be not only a consumer of security but also actively participate in maintaining security in other countries Latvia's Armed forces personnel has been participating in peacekeeping operations.

Only professional service soldiers – men and women – can be sent to military operations abroad, and requirements are the same for both genders. Criteria for assessing a soldier's suitability for operations include physical training, health condition, professional skills and experience, character reference from his/her unit and English language skills.

Currently 8 women from Latvian National Armed Forces are participating in international operations:

- Afghanistan - 2;
- Iraq – 4;
- Kosovo – 2.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

In order to meet the needs of the Latvian Armed forces there are unified career models for each category of soldiers describing training requirements, professional experience and career self development goals as well as qualifications required by each rank and position, which are equally accessible for both genders.

Increasing number of females is assigned to higher positions because of their training and abilities; however, currently, the density of females among the higher ranks is relatively small.

## **SPECIAL INTEREST ITEMS/EVENTS (RECENT AND PROJECTED DEVELOPMENTS)**

Up to now there have been no sociological researches to clarify society's opinion on women's service in the armed forces. In separate articles and television stories women's service in the armed forces has been received positively and has not been highlighted as something unacceptable or unfamiliar for the society. Although the position of certain commanders of different levels has been negative towards women's service and this position has also been expressed publicly.

## **CONCLUSION**

The National Armed Forces do not define the allowable amount or percentage of women, as well as there are no units or particular specialities and posts which are not open for women service. Nor is such a document going to be adopted in the near future. Respectively, women in professional military service in Latvia do not have particular requirements, privileges or restrictions thus abiding to the principle of gender equality. They are actively involved in pursuing career and qualification improvement goals; they participate in international peace operations and successfully serve in positions at all levels.

Integration of women in the Latvian armed forces has been successful and a gradual positive progress is observed in this area.