

ITALY
NATIONAL REPORT

1. Policy

Voluntary female military service, established in 1999 by law n. 380, is part of the important ongoing process of transformation of the Italian Armed Forces, which has led to a full volunteer-based recruitment system with pre-established service terms of different duration.

In today Armed Forces, both Officers and NCOs are volunteers.

The new personnel policy pays great attention to the female component and Italy benefits from its Allies' experiences in dealing with gender discrimination issues.

The fact of having lagged behind other nations was one of the main factors that determined the immediate opening of the military world to women without any preclusion at all.

According to domestic legislation, the law itself was not enough to implement the new system and therefore some Decrees were promulgated by the Italian government in accordance with the criteria of "no discrimination and equality" in terms of careers, salaries and benefits.

- decree n. 24, dated January 31, 2000, established the procedures for recruitment and careers' developments. Moreover, the status of pregnancy was ruled. This decree was amended in 2006, by Decree n. 198, including a list of all equal opportunity rules;
- decree n. 114, dated April 4, 2000, dealing with pathologies precluding enrolment in the Armed Forces, including those typical of female gender.

Besides these, there is the provision of a yearly decree to establish the percentages of female candidates admitted to join each Service. Until 2005 these percentages have increased steadily each year .,

2. Organisation

Current percentages (data 2007) of the total female force within each service:

	Total % Female soldiers	% of female flag officers	% of female senior officers	% of female junior officers	% of female NCO	% of female soldiers lower rank than NCO	% of female soldiers participating in military operations
Army	6,4%	0	0	3,2%	0,1%	10%	2,8%
Navy	3,3%	0	0	1,1%	0,8%	5,8%	
Air Force	2%	0	0	4,8%	0,3%	4,5%	
Carabinieri	0,8%	0	0,2%	1,1%	1,2%	0,5%	

At present, more than 10.000 women are serving within the Italian Armed Forces.

3. Recruitment

There are different options to join the Italian Armed Forces as officer, a petty officer or a rating, but all these ways pass through public competitions. Since 2000 these competitions are all addressed to both young men and women.

The Defence General Staff chose gender-neutral recruiting programs, based on tests (cultural, physical, and psychological) regardless of sex.

Since the very first stage, recruitment of female personnel has been driven by an action plan aimed at smoothly increase figures, beginning from Officers, then NCO and finally Enlisted personnel. This choice was made according to the principle to “train the trainers” so that junior recruits could always have senior female trainers to look after them.

Therefore, in 2000 the Armed Forces proceeded to enrol female officers, in 2001 began to enlist cadets in NCO Schools and finally, in 2002, Training Centres for Enlisted personnel enrolled female citizens.

As already mentioned, until 2005 female recruitment was limited to a maximum percentage of the total available places. Starting with an initial figure of 20% (year 2000) this “quota” was reviewed and increased each year and, in the end, all restriction has been removed. The limit was conceived to provide a benchmark to guarantee the feasibility and the affordability of the entire project in relation with the needs of manpower of the Armed Forces in single specialisations and qualifications and in order to reorganise schools, facilities and infrastructure. In any case the limit never involved the spread of women into any fields of the A.F. that are open to both genders without preclusions. It is to be noted that since 2006, when all restriction was abolished the number of female candidates and, more important, of female recruited personnel has remained about the same of the previous year when the limitation was still in force. Moreover, the absence of any difference in the evaluation of physical fitness is to be emphasised male and female candidates are scrutinised on the basis of the same medical protocols, except for the height and for specific tests which are tailored on natural and biological differences. The driving policy is to recruit the best personnel regardless of the gender.

In fact, there are no precluded fields of employment for female. Presently only submarines and special forces do not enrol female. For submarines, the reason is the particular logistic situation, being impossible to grant privacy aboard. As for Special Forces, high physical standards are required to be employed in these particular units.

In 2007 the recruited female personnel was about 21%, while applications forms submitted by women accounted for 20%.

4. Training

Training is being carried out normally and basically in the same way as before women’s admission to the Armed Forces. Ultimately, military schools are like any other school with the exception of a greater emphasis on discipline. As for learning skills, no differences have emerged between male and female personnel; graduations at the end of academic years show no difference between male and female.

In general, the only differences between male and female personnel resulted in the physical performances, but that is obviously due to natural differences.

In that respect, female volunteers asked to increase their physical training in order to gain the same physical standards requested to the male component.

5. **Deployments**

The Italian legislation enshrines the principle of non-discrimination and ensures that male and female personnel have the same opportunities in terms of career development, training, combat commitments. Therefore, there are no specific rules regulating female deployment overseas.

Non-restriction policies are already in force in the three Services, in the Carabinieri Corps and in the Customs & Financial Police.

Women are employed in large field of action with various tasks, in logistical and operational sectors, in accordance with their skills and, if possible, their wishes. Nowadays the number of enlisted women has increased, therefore female personnel are effective in nearly the totality of Units, including those at a high level of "Combat readiness". As a matter of fact, there are female paratroopers, pilots and personnel on board warships; the Carabinieri Corps also recruits female personnel to be engaged in operations against crime.

Female personnel has been deployed overseas since fall 2001

Kosovo, Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and, from last year, Lebanon have all witnessed the presence and the capability of women of the Italian Armed Forces, often posted in key positions with high responsibilities.

From these experiences some considerations may be drawn. Firstly, women have showed great self-denial and the ability to adapt and integrate into different environments. Secondly, their performances in the field gave remarkable feedbacks in relation with the selection and training criteria. Their ability to deal firmly but with respect and moderation with local women in such critical environments has been appreciated also by foreign military communities.

6. **Career Development**

Female personnel' career development encompasses the same criteria and rules already in force for male colleagues.

Indeed enrolment and retiring ages are the same such as the minimum periods scheduled for each rank prior to be evaluated for promotion. As well as for male there are some steps which are mandatory condition to be strictly accomplished in a specific timeframe before being promoted. These steps are designed especially for Officers to wider and to enhance the leadership and the professionalism thorough the entire career. Therefore there are some courses to be attended and some appointments to be performed when the Officer is ranked between Captain and Colonel. Courses and appointments are specifically shaped for the different specialisations and categories in order to enable each Officer to fulfil the new responsibilities he/she is called to.

Should a pregnancy occur during these specific periods, the woman will be requested either to attend again the course or to stay in office longer than the scheduled period, in order to complete the training or the period of command.

7. **Special Interest/Items**

- a. It is important to mention that in the aftermath of the law concerning "female military service", the Italian Parliament intended to emphasise its importance by mandating the Government to establish an Advisory Committee. The Committee was established with the fundamental task of monitoring the integration of female personnel and advise the Chief of Defence and the Commander of the Customs & Finance Police in order to promote any useful procedure to facilitate their commitments.

In accordance with the Decree of June 2000, amended in 2007, the Committee is composed by 7 members. Four are representatives of the Ministry of Defence, two

represent the Ministry for Equal Opportunity, one represents the Economy and Finance Ministry. All of them have specific backgrounds in the fields of gender integration in different working environments.

During its eight-year life, the Committee carried out different activities aimed at keeping strict contact with the different realities of the Armed Forces. Many visits have been made, with a special attention towards those units having a significant percentage of female personnel. Indeed, Military Academies and Schools, Training Centres and units engaged in the field overseas have been surveyed and scrutinised. Thanks to these visits the Committee gathered an informal *intelligence* which resulted very important to advise the concerned staff officers, both at joint and single service level, in order to refine single issues with impartial mind and unprejudiced perspectives.

- b. As for the status of pregnancy and the period of maternity leave, the rules adopted for civilian servants within other governmental agencies are entirely applied in the "military world". In particular:
 - while pregnant, military personnel are allowed single-day-off for medical monitoring, analysis and screenings without any cut to their allowances;
 - 5-month of mandatory time-off: of which two months before the birth and three after. This period doesn't have any impact neither in terms of salary nor for career development, given for granted the accomplishment of other tasks
 - within the 8th year of baby's life, parents are entitled, together, 10-month-off period, equal to 6 months as a maximum per each parent. These periods are considered entirely as active duty although salaries would be cut after a period of 45 day-off each three years.
 - Single-day-off for baby's sickness are deducted from the salary
- c. To improve the work-life balance with the new financial law, a budget has been apportioned to build nurseries in the military structures;
Men and Women with children up to 3-year old are allowed to perform different working schedule to give assistance to their baby, and they can't be deployed abroad at the same time.

7. Conclusion

The eight-year experience gained by those who have briefed, trained and employed female personnel shows that there is a high level of acceptance and that women easily integrated into the military context. Perhaps, in the very beginning, there was some embarrassment on the women's side and thoughtfulness on the men's side, due to the novelty of the situation. Those attitudes, however, disappeared as attention was focussed on professional qualifications and skills and especially on employment in real situations.

The high degree of integration is due to the sound criteria established for selection and employment. The fruitful combination of those two elements made women's integration and professional training to proceed gradually and in parallel with those of their male colleagues.

Obviously, we do not believe that all problems have been solved. As a matter of fact, based on the experience achieved and in order to stress the importance of ethics and irreproachable conduct, we have felt the need to revitalise the main features of military ethics and update them. Therefore a directive, drafted by the Defence General Staff, was issued. It is a sort of ethics and behaviour handbook providing guidelines to be followed within the military environment regardless of gender and any other type of difference.

In conclusion, we can express favourable comments on women's admission to the Armed Forces as they easily identify themselves with the military environment. The good performance of women on the operational theatres helped overcoming some initial prejudices and proved that the employment of women in operational activities is a good choice.

Therefore we are satisfied with the work we have done so far and we will confirm the policy adopted so far.

However, more reliable and consolidated data will be available only after further periods of employment in the field.