

Germany - National Report

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

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.

III. Employment

At present, the total number of female military personnel in the Bundeswehr is 10.030, that is to say 5,2% of all temporary-career volunteers and regulars (=190,570). 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.

5,274 female soldiers belong to the Medical and Military Music Services, i.e. approx. 31% of the total personnel strength of this sector, while 4,756 women belong to the line service and other specialised services which is only 2,7% 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 8%. Given the current total strength of approximately 190,570 temporary-career volunteers and regulars, this would correspond to approximately 15,000 female soldiers.

IV. Recruitment

Shortly after the ruling of the European Court of Justice in January 2000 the first applicants were lodged at the recruiting centres. Parallel to the legislative measures for recruiting women for all career groups and careers the Ministry of Defense in Bonn made the necessary preparations to recruit and integrate women.

If we examine the number of female applicants for a line officer career, we will find that the number of enlistment requests for 2003 has fallen by 32, or 5%, as compared to 2002.

The 4,292 female applicants for line service as NCOs / junior ranks in 2003 was 4.7% more than the 4,090 applicants in 2002.

If we examine the number of female applicants for the Medical Service, we will find that there has been an increase of 10.2% from 666 officers applying for entry into service in 2002 to 737 in 2003.

The number of female applicants for the career categories of NCO / junior ranks in the Medical Service increased by 23.3% from 2,134 applicants in 2002 to 2,780 in 2003.

The majority of the officer candidates are most interested in medical service assignments (40%), followed by logistics and command support service (36.9%), flying service (11.9%) and combat and combat support duties (7.8%).

After completion of the officer training, the female officer candidates will start their academic studies. For the following courses of studies, 199 female officer candidates have been included in the planning: 42 for engineering sciences; 62 for economics, 5 for computer, science and business data processing and 90 for human sciences.

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 229 servicewomen on deployment outside Germany (98/4 ISAF/Kunduz, 11 EF, 47 SFOR, 51 KFOR, and 18 AE). Nearly 3% of the military personnel on deployment outside Germany (7.663 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 4 to 5 years' time. The first female battalion commanders (pay grades A 14 / A 15) will be appointed in some 12 to 14 years.

VIII. Special Interest Items / Events

Experience Gained

According to initial experiences reported in the field, the servicewomen have been integrated excellently as a whole. By mutual agreement, it was stated that women are notable for being highly motivated, extremely ambitious and very willing to achieve. Often, because of these characteristics, women have spurred their male comrades on to increase their own achievements.

As regards physical strain during training segments such as road marches, duty in the terrain, bivouacs and the physical fitness test, there were some deficits on the part of the female military personnel. These deficits were partly due to lack of training and partly to the occupation that they still had to get used to.

It was established, however, that women want to be treated just the same as their male comrades. As a matter of principle, they refuse to be granted a special role.

All in all, the integration of women in the armed forces has been gratifyingly successful while the measures taken in preparation of opening up the armed forces having had the desired effect. Problems in connection with the "compatibility of family and job", "partnership and job" and "child care" have been identified and initiatives are under way to make service in the armed forces even more attractive by introducing various incentives.

Further action is required in the following matters:

Preparatory Measures

Integration seminars were held at the Bundeswehr Leadership Development and Civic Education Center, in order to adequately prepare commanders and unit leaders for admission of women to the units and formations.

The main contents of this training were as follows: general legal basis, physiology, communication, subjection to strain, motivation, instructor behavior in the military community, supervision procedure and experience gained from the daily work of the commissioner for gender equality.

The findings obtained were implemented by the multipliers in their areas and integrated into the mandatory training and assignment cycle at the officer and noncommissioned officer schools.

Furthermore, the Chief of Staff, Bundeswehr, has issued a leadership guide for superiors on the subject of "Dealing with Sexuality". This guide is to contribute to the reduction of behavioral unsurness, and applies to men and women alike.

The main areas of this directive are based on the code of conduct governing the dealing with sexuality and on the demand for respect, tolerance and reserve.

In order to facilitate access to their future scope of work, the female applicants were provided with detailed information brochures by the recruiting organization in addition to the personal counseling.

The information material included, among others, informational brochures on the subjects of "Women in the Bundeswehr" and "Social Security Benefits for Female Military Personnel".

This means that applicants are not only informed about the potentialities and special characteristics of military service, but also provided with comments on subjects such as maternity protection, parental leave, health care, grants, occupational safety and health, and points of contact for the specific problems of female military personnel.

Compatibility of Career and Family

For the Bundeswehr, the issue of "Compatibility of Career and Family" is of special importance, as the strain which their duty places on servicemen and -women, especially command personnel, has increased substantially because of the increasing international engagement. According to many service members, the balance between, on the one hand, the sphere of life "career" and, on the other hand, the sphere of life "family" has shifted to the expense of the "family" side. More and more, "career" and "family" are caught in a conflict situation, resulting in an adverse effect on the duty-related efficiency of military personnel and on the state of their families.

This means that the organization Bundeswehr has to pay more attention to the compatibility of military career and family duties. This is not least due to the fact that the soldier's motivation mainly depends upon the understanding shown by the people nearest to him. In the competition for the recruitment of qualified personnel, the conflict that arises between career and family is also getting more and more important. This is the reason why, at the end of 2002, the Bundeswehr University, Munich, has been tasked with carrying out a study that is to point out the areas of activity of a family-oriented personnel policy of the Bundeswehr. At present we are examining the results of the study. All in all, they support our ongoing actions.

Even now, we can see that there is a need for speedy action with regard to single parent servicewomen and servicemen on employment outside Germany, who are under particularly severe strain. On 6 December 2001, the Chief of Staff, Bundeswehr, approved the requirement of the military for a childcare system. The review of legal and budgetary matters related to the introduction of a childcare system – for the time being for single parent military personnel on employment outside Germany – has been implemented.

The possibility of part-time employment which up to now is not available to service members who have military status, is being planned. The commensurate law shall entry into force until end of this year.

Part-time employment of military personnel requires a statutory regulation governing the on-duty hours, which does not exist yet either.

The inclusion of military personnel in the statutory regulations governing the on-duty hours of civil servants and the application of these regulations to the entire armed forces would result in a large degree of restrictions with regard to the routine in the armed forces. This would be hard to bring in line with the special conditions of a service career, especially with the requirements regarding constant availability and a high degree of operational readiness, for example during the time-intensive basic training, during operations and while staying at training areas, during guard duty times or service at sea.

At present, part-time employment is only possible for military personnel during leaves, for example during parental leave within the framework of a civilian employment relationship.

At the same time, the Federal Ministry of Defense is investigating the manner in which organizational measures can be used for extending the possibilities of part-time employment for the purpose of better compatibility of career and family for a limited time during leaves.

Federal Law on Equal Opportunities

In December 2001, the Federal Law on Equal Opportunities, the purview of which does not include women in the armed forces, has come into effect.

At present, statutory provisions regarding gender equality of servicewomen and servicemen in the Bundeswehr are being prepared on the basis of a legislative guideline and an armed forces requirement. If at all possible, the Bundestag should pass a law on equal opportunities for female and male military personnel until the end of this year.

Application of the Federal Law on Equal Opportunities poses a new and major challenge to the armed forces. We have to formulate rulings to ensure legal equality of female and male military personnel on the one hand, and also ensure the operational readiness of the armed forces, on the other hand, as well as permitting smooth cooperation of military personnel of both sexes.

In particular, the provisions on part-time work, leave to take care of family members, the quota arrangement, and the election of the spokeswoman for equality of the sexes and her legal status are examined and oriented by particularities specific to the military.

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” in the former “male sphere” of the Bundeswehr.