

## Netherlands - National Report

### Introduction

The participation of women in the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces began in 1944, when the Dutch Women's Corps was formed in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. The Corps was initially comprised of several hundred Dutch women who fled the Netherlands during those years. Later, the Corps was divided into three separate Women's Corps, one for each branch of the Armed Forces: the MARVA (Navy), the MILVA (Army), and the LUVA (Air Force).

In January 1979, the integration policy for women within the Armed Forces commenced when female personnel were assigned to the various arms and branches of the three Services (Army, Navy and Air Force). The integration policy was inspired by the UN 'Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW). There were no longer solid reasons for maintaining several separate female Corps, and so by January 1st, 1982, the Women's Corps were disbanded.

Since 1988, the Services have been implementing various measures as part of the "Positive Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into the Armed Forces and Equal Opportunities Memorandum". These measures include increasing female recruitment, adjusting (when possible) selection criteria, implementing career policies, providing physical training, making ergonomic adjustments, regulating part-time work, maternity leave, parental leave and child-care and enforcing the rules for the prevention of undesirable conduct. The Defence Equal Policy Memorandum of 1997 is the last approved memorandum and is still valid.

This report will outline the status of the integration of women into the Dutch Armed Forces. Current activities, initiatives and gender issues will be covered.

### Policy Changes

At present, the Dutch Defence organisation is facing a huge reduction of personnel capacity. Now, of all times, the importance of increasing the number of women within the Defence Organisation should be underlined. During the coming reorganisation, due attention will be paid to the reinsertion of female Defence employees in order to achieve the target figure set for 2010. In practice, this means that during the reinsertion process female employees will take precedence over their male counterparts in cases of equal job-suitability. The upward mobility of Servicewomen through the ranks will also be supported by revising the target figures for 2010. The figures are now set at 6% Servicewomen from the rank of major and 3% Servicewomen from the rank of colonel. In 2000, the UN Security Council enforced resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It is clear that the enforcement of this resolution has given quite some push to discussing the subject of gender issues in conflict situations. In 2002 the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael<sup>1</sup> investigated how the Netherlands (including the Armed Forces) would be able to contribute to increasing the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The UN resolution and the research by Clingendael brought us into contact with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Social Affairs and several NGOs (on the

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<sup>1</sup> Frerks, G. and T. Bouta, *Women's Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Literature review and institutional analysis*, Research by the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael, Conflict Research Unit, under commission of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2002.

subject of women in armed conflict). These contacts have really broadened our scope on gender.

In November 2003, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment installed a taskforce called 'Women in conflict situations and peacekeeping' of which a Brigadier General of the Army is member. This taskforce is meant to assist in opening the discussion on women in armed conflict within the armed forces in the Netherlands.

Finally we are exploring the possibilities offered by the EQUAL programme of the European Social Fund (in particular theme H: Gender Equality). Since this is a new subject, we will need additional finances to implement our policies.

#### Organisation

The Dutch Armed Forces is an all volunteer professional organisation. Dutch servicewomen are integrated in the units and serve under the same rules and regulations as men. Requirements in terms of training standards, performance levels and discipline are equal. Servicemen- and women have the same obligation to serve in the event of mobilisation.

*Table 1: Distribution of male and female military personnel in each service (2003, in persons)*

	INDEFINITE CONTRACTS			FIXED-TERM CONTRACTS		
	Male	Female	subtotal	male	Female	subtotal
<b>Navy</b>	6,853 (94,3%)	414 (5,7%)	7,267	3,840 (84,2%)	723 (15,8%)	4,563
<b>Army</b>	9,941 (97,0%)	305 (3,0%)	10,246	10,854 (87,9%)	1,497 (12,1%)	12,351
<b>Air Force</b>	6,428 (93,9%)	419 (6,1%)	6,847	3,744 (86,7%)	576 (13,3%)	4,320
<b>Marechaussee</b>	3,176 (93,7%)	214 (6,3%)	3,390	2,531 (86,8%)	385 (13,3%)	2,916
<b>Total</b>	26,398 (95,0%)	1,352 (4,1%)	27,750	20,969 (86,8%)	3,181 (13,2%)	24,150

*Table 2: Development of percentage female military personnel*

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>Navy</b>	9,1 %	9,2 %	9,2 %	9,1 %	9,1 %	9,6 %
<b>Army</b>	6,5 %	6,9 %	7,2 %	7,9 %	7,9 %	8,0 %
<b>Air Force</b>	6,8 %	7,5 %	8,0 %	8,6 %	8,9 %	8,9 %
<b>Marechaussee</b>	7,3 %	8,5 %	8,7 %	8,7 %	9,4 %	9,5 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>7,3</b> %	<b>7,7</b> %	<b>8,0</b> %	<b>8,4</b> %	<b>8,5</b> %	<b>8,7</b> %

## **Employment**

With the exception of the Marine Corps and the Submarine Service, all posts are available to women. These two Services have remained closed to women for reasons of combat effectiveness and practicality.

Within the other Services, women serve in various positions within the Headquarters staffs, combat units and support units. However there is still a disproportionate spread of women in certain branches, which might be considered traditionally "female", such as the medical services, military administration units, logistics and communications units. On the other hand there are hardly any women in branches, which might be considered traditionally "male", such as combat units, technical services and maintenance units.

## **Recruitment**

Recruitment requirements, especially for personnel with fixed-term contracts, are expected to increase in the coming years. Conversely, the population in the age category between 15 and 29 years is estimated to decrease further in the Netherlands over the next few years and then stabilise. Subsequently, this means that, in the coming years, there will be a smaller pool to recruit from and consequently there will be more focus on the recruitment of women.

Regarding this problem area, the Dutch Armed Forces have implemented a program for young men and women at secondary education with an introductory program for the Armed Forces. It gives them an opportunity to witness what Military life is about and gives an advantage in terms of physical fitness and basic military knowledge. This program seems to have a positive impact on the recruitment especially of women.

The Armed Forces are also trying to modify their image of an "all male society" through information and recruitment campaigns. The aim is to make clear that women are also welcome to join the Armed Forces. Furthermore qualified female personnel are being assigned as recruiting officers and are viewed as role models for potential female recruits.

## **Retention**

Retention of women for the Armed Forces will be one of the main targets for the years to come. To retain women in the Armed Forces, barriers in career development (such as career schooling and compulsory sea duty for the Navy, both around the age of 30-35) must be identified and settled. Also facilities for possibilities to combine work and care will have to be improved by providing better child care facilities and arrangements. Formal arrangements have been made such as the right to work part time, the right to parental leave and the right to re-entry up to six years after leaving the Service. In practice military personnel do not like to be an exception and therefore find it hard to make use of these arrangements. In 2002 an Armed Forces brochure was published describing all of the current rules and regulations regarding work and care. Hopefully brochures like these will make the regulations more familiar within the organisation and more accessible to male and female military personnel.

Another focus area is on the general attitude towards women and the prevention of all forms of misconduct such as (sexual) harassment, pestering, bullying, teasing and discrimination against women. The subject will be incorporated in various educational programs, and the attention of commanders will be drawn to the subject of attitude and misconduct towards women. A policy outlining a Complaints Procedure on all forms of undesirable behaviour has been implemented. It includes the creation of a network of

confidantes and a complaints committee. Both confidantes and the committee are obliged to report to the Ministry of Defence and their respective Commanders-In-Chief on a yearly basis. Finally, an automated registration system has been developed in order to register centrally which forms of undesirable conduct are occurring.

### Training

Although female military personnel are given the same training as their male counterparts, the Defence organisation has additional physical training programs for men and women who have difficulty in this area. Contacts have been made with local sports facilities at which young people are given the opportunity to upgrade their physical status in the pre-recruitment phase. These courses seem to have a positive result on the recruitment of women.

Training is related to realistic functional requirements; therefore, women and men must meet the same physical standards. Currently, several studies are being conducted to find a better solution to optimise training efforts in relation to functional requirements. One major step taken in this area is the introduction of new ergonomic designs of task and equipment to reduce physical requirements without diminishing operational readiness.

### Deployments

Female military personnel have the same opportunities to develop their career as male military personnel (except in the Marine Corps and the Submarine Service). Dutch servicewomen have participated in various mission areas all over the world in support of Peace Support Operations and other humanitarian operations. The operations last mostly 6 months. According to regulations, "the military personnel of the Armed Forces, both men and women, are serving under the obligation to be fit for duty abroad. Deployment is not on a voluntary basis. Women with one or more children under the age of five are not deployed abroad, unless operational reasons make it absolutely necessary."

Table 3: Male and female deployment (Indefinite and fixed-term contracts, 2003)

	Navy		Army		Air Force		Marechaussee	
	male	female	Male	female	Male	Female	Male	female
<b>Officers</b>	308	21	708	74	283	26		9
<b>NCOs</b>	1023	37	1215	49	508	36		145
<b>Corporals / privates</b>	1140	85	2480	220	212	16		8
<b>Total</b>	2471	143	4403	343	1003	78		162

### Career Development

With regard to military personnel, the Dutch Armed Forces have chosen to pursue an integral career policy for men and women. However, the individual needs of female military personnel, especially with regard to their careers in the short and long term, are being brought into focus with a view to taking them into consideration, and thus trying to limit the outflow of women. The promotion of women through the ranks remains limited however, because many women leave military service at a relatively young age.

As was mentioned before, in order to increase the upward mobility, the target figures for 2010 for Servicewomen in higher ranks have been revised to 6% from the rank of major and to 3% from the rank of colonel.

Table 4: female military in higher ranks

	Navy	Army	Air Force	Marechaussee	Total
% female major and ↑	4,1	3,1	2,3	5,7	3,8
% female colonel and ↑	0,7	1,3	0,8	4,5	1,3

Table 5: Distribution of male and female by service level (2003, in persons)

	Navy		Army		Air Force		Marechaussee		n
	male	female	male	female	male	female	Male	female	
<b>Officers</b>	2182	188	4064	265	2517	235	422	13	9
<b>COs</b>	3283	82	7182	385	5163	407	3924	403	19
<b>Corporals/ Privates</b>	5228	867	9549	1152	2492	353	1361	183	18
<b>Total</b>	10693	1137	20795	1802	10172	995	5707	599	473

#### Special Interest Items

In 1992 a Defence Women's Network was founded on the initiative of servicewomen. The Women's Network offers the opportunity to meet other women and to exchange experiences of working in a military and male dominated environment. Defence women try to support and coach each other at network meetings and inform each other by means of a magazine. The Women's Network lobbies for women's issues at the Ministry of Defence.

In 2002, the Dutch Armed Forces appointed so-called 'gender-ambassadors'. These are the Deputy Commanders-in-Chief of the Army, Air Force and Marechaussee (Military Police). The Navy appointed the Deputy Director of Personnel. The gender-ambassadors fulfil an important role in addressing gender issues within their own force and are open-minded on gender issues brought forward by their own personnel. Each ambassador has formulated and published three personal priorities for action in his role as gender-ambassador for his branch.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has installed a watchdog committee on 'Gender Mainstreaming' that will begin its work in 2004. Initially, the committee will interview all departments on how they have implemented gender in their policy and on new intentions in this area.

For the first time, the role of Servicewomen was explicitly taken into consideration in relation to the composition of operational units during the preparations for the SFIR I mission (Stabilisation Force Iraq). The practical situation in Iraq has since shown that the presence of women, in some situations such as house-to-house and body-searches, is indispensable. During the evaluation (lessons learned) of this mission, a structural approach to the integration of women in operational units will be examined.

#### Conclusion

The gender theme remains a priority issue on the agenda of the Netherlands Ministry of Defence. In September 2003, new long-term target figures were set for the higher ranks of female military personnel. As a consequence of the 'lessons learned' during the SFIR I operation, recommendations for the structural inclusion of women in operational units have been put forward, with special regard for house-to-house searches. In this way, substance is being given to UN-resolution 1325.