

Norway – National Report

Introduction

Women in the Norwegian Armed Forces have a long history of service. They have had access to military posts since 1938. During World War II they served in all arms and services, both in officer and enlisted ranks. A political decision in 1947 reduced women's service to civilian posts only. Due to increased demand for personnel, women were allowed to serve as reservists on a voluntary basis in 1959.

Women were given non-combat military appointments and functions between 1977 and 1984, following a resolution passed by the Norwegian Parliament. In 1985, the Parliament decided that the equal opportunities act should also apply to the military. Consequently women were allowed in all combat functions. In recent years there has been a huge focus upon increasing the number of women in Service. Women serve on a voluntary basis, yet they have the same obligations as men to serve in the event of mobilisation.

Policies

The Ministry of Defence (MOD), in co-operation with the Chief of Defence (CHOD), has developed a Strategic Plan for Gender Equality in the Armed Forces. The four main objectives include proficiency enhancement, marketing (including recruitment), family policy, and career opportunities at various stages. Additionally, equal opportunities and family policy are two of eight areas, which have been rendered special attention in "the Chief of Defence Personnel Policy". This was published in June 1998, and has since been further developed.

In the Armed Forces Ethical Tenets document, Equal opportunities for women is also one of the stated values. This was published in 1998. In the introduction CHOD says: "It is my wish that this moral code be instrumental in increasing our awareness of ethics and moral values and in enhancing our defence". In this context women are instrumental in forming a diverse force.

In 1999, the "Chief of Defence Action plan for recruitment" was updated and improved. As a rule the military follows public services' policy on maternity and paternity leave.

Introducing conscription boards for women is considered to be necessary by CHOD, in order to sustain the recruitment of young women to military service or the Officer Candidate Schools. This is supported by the government and is likely to pass as a resolution in Parliament this spring.

Organisation

There is no compulsory service for women in Norway. They serve under the same conditions as men and are integrated in mixed gender units. Training standards, performance levels and discipline (rules and regulations) are equal. Approximately 700 women serve as officers or enlisted personnel on active duty. This makes up nearly 6.3% of the total force. They serve in all types of units, including combat units. Despite this, most women serve in logistics/administrative service.

Employment

As mentioned above women serve under the same terms as men, competing for admission on all levels and holding the same opportunities for promotion as men. All positions are available to them and they have no limitations on combat operations. With the exception of Army and Naval special operation forces there have been women in all kinds of operational functions in the Armed Forces. As of yet few women have advanced to the senior ranks.

Recruitment

Over the past three years Norway has had an extensive recruitment campaign, particularly in the Officer Candidate School (OCS) applications, using new methods to reach their set goal of 7% female personnel strength by 2005 (conscripts excluded). In 2003, the percentage of female students attending Officer Candidate Schools was approximately 9,5%.

Affirmative action /recruitment campaigns that have been undertaken to encourage the recruitment of women:

- Army camp for teenage girls
- Advertising - cinema, TV, magazines, public transport

- Exhibitions and visits to secondary schools.

The Army is widely accepted as a “male dominated environment” yet in the past few months their recruitment campaign has focused upon women’s strengths as an invaluable part of the armed forces.

In addition to this, a new plan of action for recruitment has been developed. It focuses upon reducing the number of women who choose to leave the armed forces after a short term of service.

Training

The changing security threats both nationally and internationally, on a political and territorial level demanded a change in personnel structure and education within the Norwegian Armed Forces. As a result we are in a huge process of reorganisation and reduction.

Today’s Officer Candidate Schools will be partially replaced by a three-month Basic Officer’s Course immediately followed by an apprenticeship totalling two years. Because women are in the Armed Forces on a voluntary basis, some Officer Candidate School will continue to recruit from Secondary Schools and conscription boards.

The Military academies’ current levels (2+2 years) will be replaced by a three-year education resulting in a Bachelor of Military Science.

The Staff College levels 1 and 2 will be replaced by a module-based one year Staff College. Students may apply for a second year Master degree program.

The highest level of Military education takes place at the Norwegian National Defence College. Civil servants, military civilians and officers are educated together at the Defence College. 50 % of the civilian students are female; in comparison only three female officers have graduated from the College.

Despite intensive recruitment campaigns and increased equal opportunities the number of women in the Armed Forces has failed to increase. As a result it has been suggested that the entrance requirements to the Military Academies are not neutral to gender. (Made by men for men) This has been addressed and as of summer 2004 the entrance requirements will be adapted so that the official selection boards have a sounder basis when trying to find the leaders of tomorrow.

Deployments

Norwegian servicewomen have been, and will continue to be deployed in International Operations. They have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and the Middle East. Norway was one of the lead nations to get acceptance of deploying females to UN missions (manoeuvre elements). Since the mid-nineties Norwegian women have been employed as military UN observers. The percentage of women serving in international missions is larger than the percentage on active duty in Norway.

The changing nature of missions:

The importance of female officers has become apparent in recent deployments in areas where gender differences can affect the outcome of the mission.

- Cultural reasons: e.g. countries in which it is deemed improper for a man to talk directly to an unknown woman, or for a woman to receive medical aid from a male doctor
- Three-month deployment contracts abroad - In the interests of family welfare, also enabling a greater number of officers to serve abroad.

Career Development

The Norwegian Defence Leadership Institute has developed and holds the Norwegian Defence Female Senior Leadership Program. The main theme of the program is for the women to further develop themselves and gain personnel growth (Personal insight, self confidence). 52 (including the class of 2004) officers and civilian military leaders have completed the course so far. Results from an evaluation report on the programme proves that The Norwegian Defence Leadership Institute has been successful in developing a course that helps motivate the women to keep building their career in the Armed Forces.

The Air Force has its own mentor program for both women and men. The aim is to prepare potential directors/leaders as well as possible for top military positions. At present only 4

female officers have completed the program. The Army has a mentor program for both women and men due to commence in May 2004. There exists no such mentor program in the Navy.

The army is to introduce a program whereby female officers are given a "point of contact" at the start of their career. The "point of contact" will be a junior female officer. This program is intended to offer new officers support and guidance throughout their first years in the army.

Special Interest Items/Events

2003:

The award for Best Student at the Military Academy (Army) was for the first time presented to a female officer.

The CHOD Norway Honour Prize was awarded to a female officer at The Staff College level 2.

The Air Force appointed two new female Squadron Commanders'. The Army also appointed their first female Battalion Commander and the Navy appointed three female Commanding Officers of the Combat Boat 90.

The Air Force initiated a work shop (ws) called "Women strengths/The power of women". This ws focused on how to motivate women in mid career to stay in the Armed Forces. The program has helped to place "coaching and the mentoring of women" on the map. At present it is decided to further develop a coaching package that will be more widely available to women in the Forces'. (Regional groups). This is mainly a direct result of the conference held in Trondheim in 2003 – The power of women.

2004:

The centre for equality commended the Forces' advertising campaigns.

In March The Armed Forces Equal Opportunities Award was awarded to a psychologist at the Norwegian Defence Leadership Institute. Honouring his effort in highlighting the fact that both men and women are necessary when building a successful organization. The award was presented for the first time in 2003.

The Air Force initiated a work shop (ws) called "Women strengths/The power of women". This ws focused on how to motivate women in mid career to stay in the Armed Forces. The program has helped to place "coaching and the mentoring of women" on the map. At present it is decided to further develop a coaching package that will be more widely available to women in the Forces'. (Regional groups). This is mainly a direct result of the conference held

In addition to the above the following has also been implemented: Free childcare travel, Kindergarten, the possibility of using a "mobile office" etc.

In 1989 a support group was formed by Female Officers for Female Officers. Nettverk for kvinnelig Befal (The Network for Women in the Forces) was established to give women an informal arena in which they could exchange experiences and support each other. The Network works closely with the Armed Forces, and receives support in the form of financial aid etc, in order to carry out its work. The Network is now an organisation, which CHOD consults in issues concerning women in the Armed Forces.

Conclusion

Although it is stated that women have precisely the same opportunities as their male counterparts, in practice this is not always the case. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Special Forces where, as of date there are no female officers on operational duty. The Ministry of Defence is concerned about attaining its target of employing a force comprised of at least 7% women by 2005 (excluding conscripts). It has stated that the issue of gender equality demands to be followed up and a plan of action is under development. The Chief of Defence will also focus on the retention of women.

However, encouraging changes have taken place. Over the last few years the Armed Forces have changed their approach to what was previously considered to be "specifically female matters". As oppose to segregating these issues and defining them as gender related they now focus upon the individual, regardless of sex. Emphasizing the importance of gender equality they believe that diversity is the key to success in a time of constant change and pressure.