

## **Romania – National Report**

In the Romanian Armed Forces, the first women in military uniform began to appear in 1973, when compulsory military service for all citizens, regardless of gender, was introduced.

The female military personnel' task was to train the female students within higher education institutions, who at that time had the obligation to fulfil the military service. Military training was provided in military occupational branches such as infantry, communications, chemical, railway service, civil defence, topography and engineering construction.

The number of military specialities for females increased after 1980, when female officers began training as helicopter pilots, doctors, pharmacists and logisticians.

Since 1990, the military training of female students has been abandoned, because the new Romanian Constitution - adopted after the overthrow of the communist regime - stipulated that military service was to be compulsory for male citizens only.

During the 1990s, many women left the Armed Forces before reaching legal retirement age because they were assigned only to administrative and secretarial positions which carried limited responsibility, concurrently restricting access to senior decision-making levels.

Beginning in 2001, the Romanian Ministry of National Defence resumed a female recruitment and selection programme aimed at developing, utilizing and promoting women according to their genuine professional skills and potential.

The revised Constitution and "*The Status of Military Personnel*" represent the legal framework in which women within the Romanian Armed Forces develop and function. The fundamental law guarantees equal opportunities for both men and women upon assignment to public, civil or military positions, including senior-level appointments. The legal ground by which women are also allowed to serve on a voluntary basis, represents one of the first regulations designed to ensure that all citizens have free access to military service, regardless of gender.

### **Organisation**

At the moment, female military personnel represent 3.99% of total Romanian Armed Forces manning. Though this is a relatively small percentage now, it has doubled since 2000 and, if we take into account the number of female civilian personnel that work in the Armed Forces and are interested in a military career and couple this with the good image of the Armed Forces in the public opinion, we believe that, before long, the number of women within the Romanian Ministry of National Defence will notably increase.

One mark of obvious success is that women have now been thoroughly integrated into each military service: Land Forces – 2,47%, Air Forces – 3,61% and Naval Forces – 1,71%, as well as in the central directorates within the Ministry of National Defence – 7,89%. The positive influence they have had on the working climate through their discipline, perseverance, knowledge, and attention to detail cannot be denied even by the harshest protesters of females in the Armed Forces.

### **Employment**

Statistics say that out of the total number of female military personnel, 38% are officers and 62% are either NCOs or warrant officers. Of these, 32.5% female personnel are either staff officers or commanders.

The main fields in which female officers are found include staff and logistics positions, officers in branches such as finance, medical service, information management and technology, military law and military engineering. In addition, female officers are often

found in various centralized structures within the Ministry of National Defence, including project and resource management, administration, public relations and military education. For their part, female warrant officers and NCOs occupy positions in fields such as administration, technology, economics, medical service and finance within the different military services.

### **Recruitment**

In 2002, the passing of *Law no. 202 on equal opportunities between men and women* provided an additional justification for the Romanian Ministry of National Defence to improve its programme of female recruitment for, and selection of a military career. Statistically, one-third of the candidates annually selected for military educational institutions are female, and the achievements they have obtained reinforce our belief that these girls take seriously the challenge of conquering a field that was men's exclusive purview not too long ago.

### **Training / Education**

Female military personnel now enjoy access to all forms and methods of training necessary for full and equal professional development, career promotion, and job success, in country or abroad.

Postgraduate education for all military personnel, regardless of gender, is now completed at both the National Defence University as well as at various civilian universities.

However, in higher military institutions, while one third of the candidates are women, the actual number of females accepted and receiving instruction is much smaller than that of males. The situation is different in military high schools, where more than 50% of the candidates are females and therefore the number of female students is consequently larger.

### **Deployment**

The presence of female military personnel is also starting to be felt not just in various multi-national peace support operations such as KFOR and SFOR, but in ongoing anti-terrorist operations such as ISAF, ENDURING FREEDOM, ANTICA BABILONIA which Romania is taking part in.

Although the number of women currently participating in these missions is still small, the risk they have assumed is just as great as their male counterparts, as surely participation in such operations poses one of the most serious challenges to their military careers.

### **Career Development**

In Romania, according to the law, there are equal career opportunities for both men and women in civil and military life. In this, professional aptitudes must and will prevail.

Today, within the Romanian Ministry of National Defence exists a profound interest in creating more compatibility between the military career and the family life of our female personnel.

Therefore, according to the law, female military personnel are allowed to take maternity leave for a period of up to two years in order to take care of the baby. However, this period spent away from the military is not included in the computations for promotion to the next higher rank.

### **Retirement**

All male and female military personnel will eventually transition from active duty to the reserve according to the provisions of "*The Status of Military Personnel*".

The recent restructuring process of our Armed Forces affects all personnel, regardless of gender, and for this reason the Ministry of Defence has initiated a program of professional reconversion which aims to assist those individuals who must reintegrate into Romanian social and professional life.

### **Special Interest Items**

Despite the general high interest in a female military career and all related efforts undergone so far, there remain remnants of prejudice regarding women in the Romanian Armed Forces. Although no longer considered exceptions within the Romanian forces, women must still make the extra effort in comparison to their male colleagues in order to be considered equally competent.

Moreover, there are still certain issues of concern that need to be addressed, such as the appointment of women to more senior career positions than office or section chief, including a need for equal consideration for promotion to the rank of general.

Beyond all these issues, I continue to militate with all my strength for the promotion and integration of more women into the Romanian Armed Forces. In doing so, I have enjoyed great personal satisfaction in demolishing preconceived ideas by the recognition of my professional abilities and potential when I was appointed Chief of the Legislation and Legal Councillering Directorate and promoted to the rank of Brigadier General.

### **Conclusions**

There has never been, within the Romanian Ministry of National Defence, a stronger desire to increase the number of women in uniform, integrate them within all services, and offer them better positions and higher responsibilities than within the last four years.

We believe that the continued integration and acceptance of women within the Romanian Armed Forces - on equal terms with men - will produce more and more important contributions to the fulfilment of its missions. These women will inevitably provide serious competition to their male colleagues, which will inevitably lead to the transformation of our military institution into an even more elite, professional and effective organization.