

THE NETHERLANDS – NATIONAL REPORT

Oslo, June '05

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 initially comprised several hundred Dutch women who had 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 (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 any solid reasons for maintaining several separate female Corps, and so by 1 January 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 Opportunities 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.

Policies

Many policy memorandums and measures in the domain of equal opportunities (and later gender policy) date from the nineteen-eighties and nineties. Although there were plenty of measures present within the Defence organisation, there were no success stories. As a consequence, a number of additional measures and initiatives were taken.

Gender ambassadors were appointed in the Defence organisation in the autumn of 2002. Gender ambassadors are the deputy commanders-in-chief of the Services, and have the task of keeping attention focused on the subject of gender in their Service; they act as point of contact for gender-related matters.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security' in October 2000. On the one hand, the resolution calls for the role of women to be increased in the planning, preparation, decision-making and execution with regard to peace missions, and on the other hand for more attention to be paid to the effects on women of conflicts and peace operations. The resolution provides a general framework for the integration of gender aspects into policy surrounding international peace and security. The government's point of view in respect of 'gender mainstreaming'¹ was established in 2001. Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes in such a way that the perspective of gender equality is integrated into all policy. Preconditions in this regard are as follows:

¹ Government Viewpoint on Gender Mainstreaming, a strategy of quality improvement, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, June 2001.

- commitment at the senior level;
- explicit gender policy with clear objectives and responsibilities;
- availability of gender expertise, and
- availability of resources and instruments.

UN Resolution 1325 and the government's viewpoint on gender mainstreaming ensured the equal opportunities policy was given new impetus in the form of gender policy.

The implementation of Resolution 1325 began to take shape. The ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence are responsible for the implementation of Resolution 1325. In 2002, a civil service working group assessed whether there was a need for new policy in order to properly implement the resolution. The working group concluded that attention was being paid in many areas to women and gender issues and that work was necessary at unit level only with a view to the further embedding of the theme of gender in foreign and Defence policy. These conclusions were submitted to the House of Representatives in a joint report on 26 March 2003; the report contained the following points for the Defence organisation:

- gender needs to be embedded in training and instruction;
- the gender perspective needs to be integrated in peace operations;
- gender mainstreaming;
- a well-balanced composition of male/female Defence employees needs to be achieved in order to include deployments.

The above conclusions led to a change of direction. First of all, the focus was shifted from the equal opportunities process in personnel policy to gender in the core business of the Defence organisation, namely crisis management operations. Another shift of focus concerned that from policy development to policy implementation. The latter shift in focus was given shape in 2003 when a Plan of Action for Gender Issues was drawn up. The plan of action consists of sub-plans for the individual elements of the organisation, as well as a joint part. In the plan of action, 10 sub-plans for each element of the organisation are mapped out, showing clearly and measurably what is going to happen in order to increase the intake, retention and throughput of women in the organisation, and bringing about a culture in which both men and women are welcome, in which they can perform together better. The plan of action was signed by the gender ambassadors; together with the commanders-in-chief they are responsible for the implementation of the actions. The implementation is currently well under way.

So as to be able to reserve sufficient resources for the implementation of these policy objectives a grant was applied for from the European Social Fund (ESF-EQUAL). The grant should ensure that gender policy in the Defence organisation is dealt with in a three-year project, entitled Gender Force. The application for the ESF-EQUAL grant was approved at the end of 2004.

Organisation

The Dutch armed forces are 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 (2004, in persons)

	Male	Female	Total
Navy	10,239 (90%)	1,091 (10%)	11,327
Army	20,445 (92%)	1,734 (8%)	22,179
Air Force	9,356 (91%)	928 (9%)	10,284

Marechaussee	5,473 (90%)	583 (10%)	6,056
Total	45,510 (91%)	4,336 (9%)	49,846

Table 2: Development of percentage of female military personnel

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Navy	9.2%	9.2%	9.1%	9.1%	9.6%	
Army	6.9%	7.2%	7.9%	7.9%	8.0%	
Air Force	7.5%	8.0%	8.6%	8.9%	8.9%	
Marechaussee	8.5%	8.7%	8.7%	9.4%	9.5%	
Average	7.7%	8.0%	8.4%	8.5%	8.7%	

Employment

With the exception of the Marine Corps and the Submarine Service, all posts are available women. These two Services have remained closed to women for reasons of combat effectiveness and practicality. At the moment a study is being conducted to determine what measures should be taken to open up these services for women and how to deal with opposition in this respect.

Within the other Services, women serve in various positions within the Headquarters staffs combat units and support units. However there are still a disproportionate number of women in certain branches, which might be considered traditionally "female", such as the medical and 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

In the next few years, the Defence organisation will have vast recruiting requirements. In order to realise those requirements, a number of additional measures are necessary. An important measure in this regard is to ensure that job requirements are properly in line with the selection requirements. At present, the selection requirements are often set higher than those set for the ability to do the job. Making the job requirements in line with the selection requirements is expected to lead to there being more candidates found suitable for a job in the Defence organisation.

The recruitment objective is actually achieved by specific recruitment among target groups who do not traditionally apply for a job with the armed forces. Consequently, special recruitment campaigns are being set up specifically to recruit young women. On the other hand, ways of being looked at of designing the current campaigns so that they appeal to both men and women.

Retention and Career Development

The retention of women is one of the points for attention if a more even balance in the proportion of male/female Defence personnel is to be achieved. In order to make sure that women stay in the organisation, a number of projects are to be developed in the next few years. One such project is the creation of so-called 'combi jobs'. These are jobs for both men and women, enabling them to combine work and care satisfactorily (this means that they do not undergo training or deployment while in this posting). Fulfilling such a posting must be a part of the career, and may in no way cause a break in the career. Another project is to add to the programme for women. Under this programme, women are matched with a more senior, of

male colleague, and the two undergo a career-supporting programme as a 'pair'. An initial evaluation of the pilot study shows that the mentor programme has a positive effect on work their network is expanded and they have the opportunity to 'spar' with commanders from the organisation. The effect on commanders who act as mentors is that the women in the organisation become more visible to them, and they gain greater insight into working in the Defence organisation from a minority position. Providing more female role models in visible influential positions is another project aimed at improving the retention of women. Example influential positions are those of instructor, senior staff NCO or head of a division. The underlying thought is that young women new to the organisation will be able to identify with women in senior NCOs' and officers' ranks.

With regard to military personnel, the Dutch armed forces have chosen to pursue an integrated 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 2004 for servicewomen in higher ranks have been revised to 6% from the rank of major and to 3% for the rank of colonel.

Table 4: female military personnel in higher ranks (2004)

	Navy	Army	Air Force	Marechaussee	Total
% female major and above					
% female colonel and above					

Table 5: Distribution of male and female personnel by service level (2004, in persons)

	Male	Female	Total
Officers	9,112 (92%)	748 (8%)	9,860
NCOs	19,281 (94%)	1,293 (6%)	20,574
Corporals/Privates	17,117 (88%)	2,295 (12%)	19,412
Total	45,510 (91%)	4,336 (9%)	49,846

Training

Although female military personnel are given the same training as their male counterparts, the Defence organisation has additional physical training programmes for men and women who have difficulty in this area. Contacts have been made with local sports facilities where 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 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 is the introduction of new ergonomic designs of tasks 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 mostly last 6 months. According to regulations, "the military personnel of the armed forces, both men and women, are serving the obligation to be fit for duty abroad. Deployment is not on a voluntary basis. Women with or more children under the age of five are not deployed abroad, unless operational reasons make it absolutely necessary."

When assessing the objective of deployments, the gender perspective is emphatically included in the considerations. This means that attention is paid to the effects of a Dutch deployment on women and men in the unit to be deployed, as well as on local women and men. Attention is also paid to involving women in the process of peace-promoting activities and reconstruction and to ensuring that women and girls are protected from sexual violence and acts of war.

In order to properly harmonise policy and the practical situation, various working conferences have been organised, involving military personnel from the operational staffs of all armed forces units, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the aims of such conferences has been to give concrete form to Resolution 1325 in respect of the deployment to Iraq, by consciously employing female military personnel in, for example, house-to-house searches and roadblocks. In practice, this would appear to have an extremely favourable influence on relations with the local population.

During the reconnaissance mission for the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) operation in Afghanistan, gender aspects were included as an item, and a specific briefing on gender was given during the formation and activation orders. The conclusions of the above findings must be disseminated within the organisation. There is a need for a (standard) checklist that can be used during the reconnaissance mission and preparations for an operation.

In order to give further shape to this checklist, 'Gender Force' proposes to set up a pilot project in which a gender expert looks at the issue of crisis management operations, by actually joining such an operation on a temporary basis. The gender expert must come up with concrete advice indicating how the integration of gender aspects can improve the quality and effectiveness of an operation. The intention is for the checklist to be laid down in a directive issued by the Chief of Defence Staff before the summer of 2005.

Another gender-related issue is human trafficking, in particular trafficking in women and children for the sex industry. Last summer, the NATO policy on trafficking was endorsed during the NATO summit in Istanbul. This policy document states that military personnel must be aware of human trafficking, and must be trained to deal with it and its consequences for the operation. Military personnel must know how they can act.

Conclusion

The appointment of gender ambassadors at a high level in the organisation, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the point of view that the policy must be actively implemented in practice have ensured huge progress in the integration of gender in the Defence organisation of the Netherlands.

In terms of content, many different action items are currently being implemented. For instance, work is currently taking place on the course material on gender for mission-specific training and instruction. It is the intention that all courses that begin at the School for Peace Missions at the end of the summer will focus attention on gender aspects. Other Defence courses will follow at a later stage in the project. The aspect of gender is to be incorporated in all Defence courses before December 2007.

The checklist with which to make gender a part of the preparation and implementation of operations is beginning to take concrete shape. The intention is for the checklist to be laid in a directive issued by the Chief of Defence Staff before the summer of 2005. The aforementioned development is an example of gender mainstreaming. In the context of gender mainstreaming, gender has also been given a permanent place in planning and control cycle of the Defence organisation, as gender has become a permanent of the quarterly report submitted to the House of Representatives. Consequently, the progress gender policy is to be reported to the House of Representatives every quarter. A great deal of work is also being done with a view to the implementation of the Plan of Action for Gender Issues, which aims at realising an increase in the number of women in all elements of the Defence organisation. The gender ambassadors are highly enthusiastic and are shouldering their responsibility. However, they do acknowledge that there is still a long way to go.

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