

National Report – Hungary 2008

Policies

Last year the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) were renewed in their structure completing a long lasting military reform procedure, which was accelerated by the latest governmental measures decreasing and simplifying most of its elements besides the HDF. As a result, our army has become smaller, simpler and a more transparent organization, and it is still able to execute all of its national roles and international tasks completely. The army needed to be reduced in its units and military personnel as well, to make it more well-financed. Besides that, the organization as a competitive actor is also providing alternatives on labour market for both male and female employees. Due to these processes many legislation had to be done, fundamental acts were amended, affecting the whole sector.

In military law equal rights for women in labour and employment are guaranteed, based on the rules of the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, the Labour Law Act and related international documents. In our Military Status Law Act equal rights are implemented stating the necessary requirements of anti-discrimination, forbidding negative discrimination especially based on gender. At the same time positive measures has to be taken in special circumstances for a group of employees according to service. In the field of gender equality it means encouraging female employees to join the army, providing them opportunities to choose military professions, studies and trainings, or having civilian occupations to bring in, giving competitive benefits for them. Their participation has to be strengthen on every field and all levels, according to their own needs and expectations and for benefits of the organization.

Although in practice there are still special cases in which discrimination occurs, both in positive or negative way, mainly following from our historical and social traditions.

Military employment of women dates back to the revolution and independence war in 1848-49. Women served as medical nurses in the army during the wars, and in the most part of the 20th century. After the Second World War women, mostly officer's wives could join the army. They worked still on medical, or signal fields according to their civilian occupation, without real military training, because men considered them as female employees, but not as soldiers. This image of female soldiers hasn't changed significantly up to now, especially in administrative areas. The post-military training for women, who have served for a long time in the army without military training, was not

really effective, because their working environment and the requirements for their jobs have not changed.

As a part of the new influences and political changes, in 1994 military schools - NCO school, colleges and the Military Academy - finally opened for women, however admission for them was limited to logistics, finance, signal, radio-reconnaissance, and informatics' fields back then. Since 2005 (in 1997 as "antitank destroyers" and airborne infantry posts from 2001) all faculties and training programs - except reconnaissance - are opened for women.

Military education is getting more popular, and for female professionals HDF offers positions, that may be competitive in labour market, providing more equality and safety in existence by its special positive regulation in family support.

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 Special Forces, where currently there are no female officers on operational duty. Nobody can say that women are not good enough for having certain jobs in the army; therefore the only solution is setting unequivocal requirements (including physical fitness test, psychological tests, tests on functional and military knowledge as well) that is the same for women and man by the selection of jobs.

Nowadays, according to the changing political and security environment, professional soldiers have to meet new requirements and challenges – regardless of genders. As other professional careers, military posts need to set up the same requirements, challenges and benefits for both men and women. Therefore, in HDF army servicemen and women have to meet equal regulations, training, tasks and responsibilities. Men should learn to accept and treat female soldiers equal to their male counterparts, and female soldiers should understand, and show a role model for youngers and soldiers in lower rank.

Since 1st July 2007 a female politician has been acting as Senior State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence of Hungary. It shows a new increasing tendency of women employees in the military, not only in a more positive gender rate, approaching national standards and international examples, but even in key positions.

Organization

Accomplishing the process of changing the structure of the army and military education system within the Hungarian Defence Forces by 2008, the number of personnel has been reduced through the reform of military schools, restructuring the units and the MOD. In the last two years units were disbanded, others contracted but the new structure is ensuring the latest demands of the security environment, and successfully dealing with national tasks and goals of international alliances (NATO/EU).

Although the reduction of military personnel – included medical service, financial, and logistic units as well, where many women are employed – was radical, it has not affected women’s representation among military professionals negatively, because the majority, who reached retirement and pension were male employees, and younger professionals including women were mainly relocated.

In comparison with other NATO countries, the Hungarian Defence Forces have a relatively high proportion of professional female soldiers (officers, NCOs or contracts) in many fields. (See the chart below)

Officers	Total % of female soldiers	% of female flag officers	% of female senior officers	% of female junior officers	% of female NCO	% female of soldiers lower rank than NCO	% of female soldiers participating in military operations
Joint Force Command	15	0	3	14	22	10	
- Air Force							
- Army							
Ministry of Defense	32	0	11	41	74	0	
Defense Staff subordinated units	27	0	9	29	38	17	
TOTAL	20	0	8	21	29	11	5

The total percentage of female professional and contract soldiers (19,6%) covers very high rates in some ranks. Although we still have no female flag officers, females serve in every other officer ranks. Among junior officers the rate of females is over 20%, moreover among contracts it is even higher, every second officer from OF-2, and every third of OF-1 is female. It shows, that besides professional military education, highly educated civilian females tend to join the army, giving their special knowledge, and undertaking the circumstances living in uniform. Even if their majority is in "special positions", which means a slow and defined advance, many of them should be promoted for higher officer ranks in 5-10 years, if we can keep them in the army.

The female NCOs' rate from OR-6 to OR-9 is between 22-42%, which is very high. One reason is, that those women who joined the army earlier, whether as a soldier, or rather as civilian employee, by now reached higher ranks (civilians got the opportunity to become professionals).

Also female employees have at least secondary school degree and professions before they join the army, and of course the vast majority comes to serve in combat support and combat service support branches. In combat positions male soldiers are highly over-represented, and due to the army structure, this number determinates the total higher percentages of males, and totally lower rate of female soldiers.

From another perspective, there are special fields and jobs, in which female personnel are in majority. The female employees' rate is over 60% in the fields of medical, administrative and human management and welfare. It means also high numbers of soldiers and civilians, as numerous of these jobs and positions exist in the whole organization. The opposite tendency can be seen in jobs and positions related to combat, and in traditionally male positions (there is no female among parade soldiers, armours, and in field chaplain service).

Recruitment

New contracted military personnel may only join the army after a basic military training. Requirements are the same for men and women in all levels, without discrimination. The minimum requirements are: completion of 8 classes of primary school, age limit of 18-47 years, appropriate physical fitness.

Professional career begins with military schools. Entrance criteria is age 18 years and up, Hungarian nationality, secondary school graduation, mental and physical health and physical fitness. Since 1997 all professional and contract soldiers have to undergo a screening process before joining the army. It consists of medical, mental, and general physical fitness tests that are made in Military Health Care Resort.

Besides the work of the Recruiting Commands, communication and CIMIC branches, where women get little information about every day practices, the so-called "Open days" or "Military road shows" have high importance in career orientation. These kind of programs give opportunity to the military educational institutes, and military organizations themselves to introduce the units, their jobs, activities and operations directly. Recently there are approaches to get higher publicity in society by using everyday media, TV shows, radio programs and well-known individuals, which would make the Hungarian Defense Forces popular and more attractive for civilians.

In Hungary women are interested and motivated by military service because of the lack of proper civilian jobs, better financial and social benefits, challenge and adventure, positive experiences of friends on military service, desire to belong to a group and will to prove to themselves or for their family.

Training

Servicewomen may attend the same specialization courses and participate in all trainings and schools required for promotion to higher rank. There are no limits restricting access of women to military schools. The Military Academy and NCOs school training center has been set up to provide training for men and women by chosen fields. All faculties are open to both women and men, without discrimination in entrance or in

studies.

Training programs (basic, advanced military, etc.) for women are identical with the ones for their male counterparts, and are organized in the same institutes and training centers.

All personnel in the basic training must fulfill the same requirements. There is no significant difference in basic training for men or women, but the physical fitness standards alter by sex, counting the given physical parameters and abilities of genders, age and future post.

Physical fitness: Fitness is being tested for all personnel annually related to his/her specific functions (office work or combat units, paratroopers, special forces, military divers, etc.), and in special cases, as before getting higher job, before deployments and before schools abroad. All the soldiers should meet those requirements in order to be suitable for military service. The fitness test differs in age and genders, and consists of the same elements as that of the specific fitness test (see below).

The annual physical test is scaled by age groups and by types of physical work. There are 4 categories for identifying the physical demands and stress of jobs:

T1: Basic fitness for sedentary occupation

Cardio test: 3200 m running in training suit or 6 km march in training suit (max. 140 points)

Muscle-power test for males: push-up or pull-up and sit-up (max 100-100 points)

Muscle-power test for females: light push-up and light sit-up (max 100-100 points)

Max. points: 340 point

Min. points: 200 point

T2: Medium level of fitness for light physical jobs

(Are the same elements, as in T1.)

Max. points: 340 point

Min. points: 220 point

T3: Advanced level of fitness for medium physical work

Cardio test: 3200 m running in training suit (max. 160 points)

Muscle-power test: pull up or push-up and sit-up (max 100-100 points)

Max. points: 360 point

Min. points: 240 point

T4: Enhanced level of fitness for heavy physical work

(Are the same elements, as in T3.)

Max. points: 360 point

Min. points: 260 point

The fitness test has been changed from time to time, in order to reduce the causeless difference between the achievement of men and women. Some organizations and units have special or additional physical training programs.

Deployments

The importance of female personnel has become enhanced in recent deployments abroad in the last couple of years, especially in areas where gender differences can affect the outcome of the mission.

In missions in Muslim countries it is improper for a man to talk directly to a woman, or for a woman to receive medical aid from a male doctor. In airports and check points it is essential to be able to separate people by sex, under examination.

In these situations and many others, as CIMIC operations and programs, public relations where units have to interact with local people or organizations it is very useful having female soldiers in operations, the outcome can depend on it. The other reason for sending women to these missions is inner relations in a unit abroad, the posts which can be fulfilled typically by female soldiers, and of course the size of our army, and the human demand of these missions.

All positions in missions are open to women, but it shows similarity to tendencies at the whole organization, as most of the women serve in medical field, public information, communication, administration or logistical branches, and only a few women serve in infantry squads or other fighter-jobs.

The participation of Hungarian female soldiers in multinational operations is successful. We have officers, NCO's and contracts in every mission the HDF participating. They live and work in same requirements and conditions as men, without differences. Females have important role in the relationship with local women, children, and social organizations.

Although the service law ensures the right for the commander to send his servicemen or women for six month missions abroad without their agreement, there are enough volunteer personnel for these missions, so in practice service in missions abroad is on a voluntary basis.

Main motivation for servicemen and women is the better financials, because the difference between the peacetime salary and salary in mission is big. Secondary motivation is the evaluation system; it is advantage to have mission experiences for getting a higher position. The third motivation is the challenge they can face in missions working in foreign environment, dealing with local inhabitants and organizations, and cooperating with other nations.

Steps were taken to build up the family support system. If married couples with children serve in the Defense Forces, and one of them is in mission abroad, it is taken in account: the other family member cannot be obligated to be on 24 hours duty until the child is 6 years old.

Career Development

According to the Defence Law, females have the same opportunities to develop their careers as males. Servicewomen can attend the same specialization courses and participate in all trainings and schools required for promotion to higher rank. There are no limits restricting access of women to military schools, for example four women began their studies at Military Leaders Faculty in Military College from the 2006/2007 year. All faculties are open to both women and men.

There is an opportunity for contracted service personnel to become professional, if they are NCOs OR7-OR8, having a recommendation from their commander, and having the experience and can fulfill the physical fitness test. They can also become officers after getting a college university diploma.

Special interests

Maternity leave – (the law allows also for men to be on maternity leave). The army adopted the civilian law on maternal leave. According to this law (service) women are entitled to maternity leave in case of giving birth. After 6 months of maternity leave they are allowed to be assigned in so called “personnel reserve status” for a year. However, continuation of their military carrier is ambiguous and more complicated, especially in cases where the units they have served have been disbanded during their absence due to restructuring of the military. Women reporting back to the work after giving birth to

their babies are entitled to breast feeding breaks until their babies' 6 months age.

Child care support – Single mothers (or fathers) can not be obligated to be on 24 hours duty until the child is 6 years old.

As female undergarment is not available in the military shops servicewomen receive money for buying it in civilian shops.

An all-men conference was organized last year, where company commanders, platoon leaders and squad leaders were interviewed about their experiences.

The new female Senior State Secretary focuses on the issue of the servicewomen.

Conclusion

Hungarian Defense Forces guarantee the same opportunities and same rights for servicewomen and servicemen, set the same standards and requirements. Although the main focus was on the army restructuring in the last years, the support of female colleges, single mothers/father and the family support was maximally taken into consideration – as a function of possibilities. The ratio of servicewomen in the Hungarian Defense Forces has not changed after the reduction of personnel. To serve in the Defense Forces is attractive for women in the Hungarian society. The Committee of Women in Uniform in Hungarian Defense Forces continues its work on integration of women in all jobs and ranks in order to eliminate all the discriminations.