



## **GENDER EQUALITY EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN MILITARY UNIVERSITIES**

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***Abstract:** The report points the need of studying the gender equality topic as an element of leadership formation of the future officers in the European Armed Forces. The analysis of the approaches to the inclusion of the subject in different disciplines will help to increase the sensitivity and the understanding of the military personnel to the questions related to the implementation of the gender equality in a military environment. The equal treatment of the both sexes and the opportunities for successful realization, based on their professionalism, would contribute to the harmonization of the working environment as a part of modern European policies.*

***Keywords:** gender equality, military education, European experience*

### **1. Introduction**

One of the main criteria in the modern democratic world is to ensure gender equality as an essential part of everyone's rights. Therefore, in order to achieve equality between men and women, all activities and policies in the fields of legislation, education and all areas of human rights should be promoted and facilitated.

There is a growing demand to the different education systems which must provide the sustainable knowledge and competences needed because of the constant growth of industries and the expansion of globalization. Young people expect their countries to provide them with opportunities to develop their abilities and talents, to help their personal and professional realization so that they are prepared for adequate participation in all areas of life. [5]

It is hardly a coincidence that the Lisbon Strategy and the European countries encourage investment in education, as quality education is an important condition for the progress of each country, along with ensuring its security and prosperity. In this regard, every educational policy is also seen as an essential part of national security due to the need for qualified human resources for implementation of various tasks.

The “Development of the Defence Capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Republic Bulgaria 2020” Program states that "The Military Educational System is being developed in accordance with the national and European legislation and in accordance with the NATO directives for organizing and conducting the individual training of the Armed Forces personnel. The military educational system is geared towards the building of modern professional skills, leadership skills and capabilities to make responsible, independent decisions. [6] Attention has been drawn to the fact that "in order for military academies and higher military schools to meet the requirements for personnel training in accordance with the requirements of defence capabilities to be built ...", various activities must be organized and monitored. The following elements have been in focus: designing English language programs for training at various levels at the military academies, colleges and universities so that foreign students can also be trained there; increasing the opportunities for bilateral cooperation with other higher education institutions from the countries that are part of different European projects, including the Erasmus + and Military Erasmus Programs; updating curricula and syllabi in line with EU and NATO recommendations to provide training adequate to today's changes and guaranteeing the professional realization and career development of the military personnel.

The current paper focuses on good practices related to gender mainstreaming in the curricula of European military academies and universities. In a number of publications it has been analysed that the inclusion of the topic of promoting gender equality in education is a real prerequisite for the real equality of men and women in all spheres of life. In order for men and women to develop their full potential, it is particularly important during the time of their maturing and training not to limit their capabilities by imposing gender-based obstacles. Many European countries have implemented the principle of gender equality in their national laws on educational strategies but still, due to national peculiarities or existing stereotypes, training in gender equality has not been fully implemented by the majority. [5]

## **2. Main body.**

In the sphere of modern military education, there are many examples of successful incorporation in the curricula and syllabi of a discipline or a group of disciplines that raise young people's understanding and sensitivity to gender equality issues. The internationalization of military education, the mobility of cadets and officers, the creation of common training modules recognized in all higher military schools, along with other successful practices are proof of the flexible attitude of the defence ministries to the modern challenges that the armies of the EU Member States and NATO face. [1] In addition, the presence of female military officers at various positions in the Armed Forces is a growing trend that requires up-to-date analyses and a consistent gender equality training policy to create a harmonious military working environment and professional relationships based on competencies and abilities, rather than gender.

In this respect, one of the successful practices for the harmonization of European military education was the establishment in 2008 of the European Initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus. According to the Chairman of the Implementation Group of the Initiative “The overall goal of this IG is to harmonize the European Union Basic Officer Education and to increase interoperability, thus to strengthen Europe’s security. With all its activities the IG shall promote a European Security and Defence Culture, in terms

of spreading the idea among the Officer Cadets and Students participating in the Basic Officer Education, that current and future challenges can be better managed together. This goes hand in hand with an education for the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). [4]

Different activities have been carried out in the last 10 years, such as the creation of the International Military Academic Forum Conference (iMAF) with its outcomes - new Common Modules, the first steps towards a common international semester; events linked to the European Presidency – CSDP Olympiad; the creation of a network of European education experts, etc. [3]

The challenges and the necessary elaborations for the successful work of the Initiative were separated in the so-called lines of development (LoDs) visible on the Emilyo home page ([www.emilyo.eu/node/970](http://www.emilyo.eu/node/970)). Based on the outcomes of the iMAF 2018 held in Budapest, it was agreed to research new possibilities to strengthen gender issues within the military academies and universities in order to quantitatively increase the number of female cadets during the European basic officer education. The next logical step was the creation of the new LoD – 10, Gender mainstreaming, in November 2018 at the 40th Meeting of the Implementation Group. The future work in this direction is based on various activities such as (<http://www.emilyo.eu/node/1445>):

- collecting information from the European military academies concerning the presence or absence of gender topics in the cadet education and the possibility to incorporate gender related issues in different academic disciplines;

- preparing recommendations to the military academies to train specialists and academic staff for gender equality training by using the ESDC courses;

- searching for opportunities to prepare the common projects regarding gender equality education and research in the different military institutions;

- using IG events and meetings to increase sensitivity to gender topic in the Armed Forces and to attract more participants in LoD10.

Gender mainstreaming questionnaire was prepared in order to collect information concerning the real situation of the implementation of the gender equality education in the European military educational institutions. This paper presents some of the collected data.

The Bulgarian Armed Forces are actively working on the actual implementation of gender equality policies. These activities include conducting military research, training and certification of gender equality advisors in international courses, networking with non-governmental organizations in European armies, inclusion of gender equality issues in military academies and universities curricula and syllabi, etc.

“The training in gender issues in the Bulgarian military academies started in 2015. The aim was to support the increased awareness of gender perspective in military operations for the future officers and to assist NATO Allies and Partners to build their gender capacity and capabilities.” [2] The National Military University in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, offers gender-issue education which is included as separate topics in the Leadership training modules. The knowledge offered reflects the essence of Gender Equality Policies - international framework and documents; national framework and policies of the implementation of gender equality; integration of Gender Equality Policies in the planning, implementation and evaluation of military operations and missions.

All the informal restrictions for women in professional fields, majors, specializations, degrees and forms of education in applying for acquisition of "Bachelor" degree in "Military field" with professional qualification - "Officer" and for "Master" degree have been removed. There isn't a quota for "men" and "women" at the military academies and colleges. In the last 10 years the trainees and future officers have been ranked on the basis of their results achieved at entrance exams. The representatives of the both sexes receive equal opportunity for development and further expression.

In the Theresian Military Academy - Austria the gender equality education is offered to the cadets and students on a regular basis and for the NCOs and officers as a part of their career courses at the Academy. For the cadets and students this kind of education is organized during the following lectures/classes/modules:

- module Physical Education (theoretical and practical sports);
- module Leadership Training CMO/PSO;
- common Module Cultural Awareness.

The content of the gender education in terms of topics is different according to the above mentioned modules. In the “Module Physical Education” the main topic is about the differences of metabolism and different constitutions of females and males. The “Module Leadership Training” offers knowledge for the integration of female soldiers in international operations. And the Common Module Cultural Awareness is dealing with the gender awareness.

In the Austrian Armed Forces there aren't any differences regarding the entrance exams for the military academy and there are not any quotas, either. All military males and females have to pass the same limits for all exams. The only one difference is that females have easier sport limits.

Another good example is that in Austria there aren't any restrictions for females in terms of applying for different military specialties – each candidate can choose any of the branches. In addition, all positions in the Austrian Armed Forces are open for females because of the support of the higher authorities regarding the implementation of a gender equality policy in the Armed Forces. More over the military political level in Austria requests higher percentage female cadets each year in order to attract and retain more women for active military service.

According to the data in the Gender Mainstreaming Questionnaire, at the Spanish Army Military Academy (AGM) in Zaragoza there is gender education by means of both subjects of the curricula and several seminars and lectures. This education is included in different subjects throughout all academic years as follows:

- in the first academic year the gender education is included as part of the “Basic Military Formation” - I and II part;
- in the third academic year the gender topic is part of the “Logistic focused on Defence”;

-in the fourth academic year the gender content is connected to the “Law”.

Apart from the subjects explained, the gender education in AGM is completed by seminars, courses and conferences. Each academic year AGM organizes series of conferences named Cervantes Chair, and meetings about the gender mainstreaming have been included in the last years of training. The Spanish colleagues’ share of the good experience gained during the events:

- “Women in armed conflicts: victims and peace agents” in year 2017/2018;

-“What role for the military in the Women, Peace and Security agenda?” in year 2018/2019;

- Conference “Our actions: the best mirror for our values” for first year cadets since 2018;

- Conference “Protocol of action in cases of sexual harassment or gender discrimination in military force” for all cadets, at least once during their academic training;

- Seminar on “Gender perspective” for the last year cadets.

There are no quotas for men and women, and all of them can enter the Spanish Army Military Academy depending on the grade from their university entry exam, a national test which allows students to enter a university after finishing high school. The only difference is in the entrance physical test, where minimum requirements for men and women are different.

Women can apply for the same branches and specializations as men in the Spanish Army and there are no restrictions in this respect, and also all posts are open to females and males.

These great examples from the Spanish military academies are based on the ongoing concern to obtain real gender equality in the Spanish Army. In the case of AGM, a proof of this is the creation of the working group, as the first step in developing the current preferential Line of Action about Gender Mainstreaming. This line of action is focused on cadets, in order to educate them about this issue as future officers.

The situation at the Military University of Technology in Warsaw, Poland is different. The education is equal despite the gender but Military University of Technology (MUT) does

not provide gender education and the University does not have lecturers, specialists and gender advisors.

In general, MUT provides gender equal policy. Only the physical fitness entrance test is different for males and females. During the education period, physical fitness requirements and tests are different depending on gender. The requirements are standardized within the whole Polish Armed Forces.

MUT does not have quotas related to gender. Males and females have free access to apply for all specializations. All positions in the Armed Forces are open to females. And the military academies receive the support of the higher authorities regarding the implementation of gender equality policy.

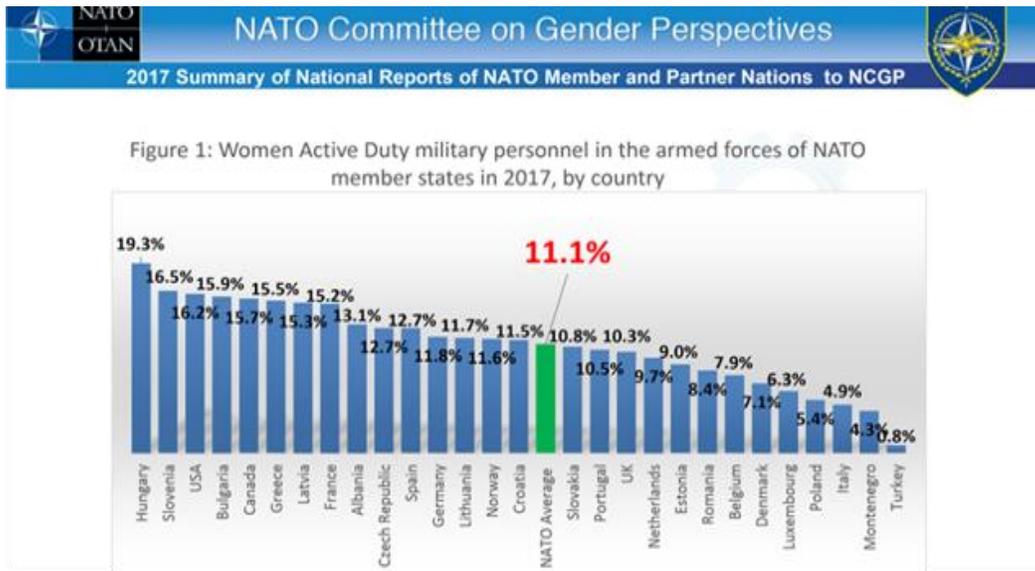
According to the data provided, the situation is similar in the French military academies. The French Air Force Academy in Salon-de-Provence, France doesn't offer gender equality education to the students, cadets, NCOs and officers. There aren't quotas for men and women in the Academy and the only difference between males and females is the scale for the sports entrance exam. During the military preparation the sports education and the tests are the same, but the scale is different for males and females.

All specializations in the French Air force are open to females. The last specialization (fighter pilot) was open to females around 1995 (the first French female fighter pilot got her pilot's license in 1999). It is interesting that in the commando training for the specialists, the scale is the same for males and females. Females have to perform the same score as the males.

Regarding the support of the higher authorities for the implementation of a gender equality policy, the French MoD has just launched a program on gender mix in the armies, to assure the gender equality in the ministry and to facilitate the recruitment, the loyalty and the evolution of the military females in the ministry (Le plan mixité du Ministère des Armées – in French language).

The examples of some European countries concerning the availability or not of gender-specific training to raise young people's sensitivity to this topic and the formation of

professional values for work in the mixed-sex environment of the Armed Forces are also represented in fig. 1.



**Figure 1. Representation of Men and Women in the Armed Forces - 2017**  
(source: Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces – NCGP Meeting Records 2018)

As it can be seen in the graph above, there are 15 countries with higher percentage of female military personnel in the Armed Forces as compared to the NATO average, which is 11.1% for women and 88.9% for men.

The good statistical data based on the annual national reports on gender equality in the NATO member armies and partner armies are an indisputable proof of the steady increase in the proportion of female soldiers in the "male army environment". One should not overlook the fact that while some countries have an exceptionally developed practice of implementing policies of equality in their Armed Forces, others do not use additional or specialized training to prepare future officers and sergeants to manage gender gaps. Although nationally bound by legislation, all states and defence ministries should respond adequately to the demands of the modern environment in military academies and universities and offer trainees attractive and interesting educational modules.

### **3. Conclusion**

Discussions in the European societies about the need to empower women, develop their leadership potential, allow access to different positions and occupations, equal pay for equal work, avoidance of harassment of any kind at work and at home, etc. are a strong signal to the political leaders about the need of urgent measures and the real implementation of gender equality policies at all levels of public life. With even greater force, this challenge lies with the military structures which, in order to guarantee the national and international security, require motivated and prepared officers, NCOs and soldiers with diverse knowledge and competencies, including knowledge and awareness of the gender balance in the Armed Forces.

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