

HUNGARY

Increasing the recruitment and retention of women in the armed forces

Between 2005 and 2006, Hungary raised the participation of women in its armed forces from 4.3 per cent to 17.56 per cent. In 2007, Hungary had (with Canada) the second highest rate of female participation amongst NATO countries, at 17.3 per cent.¹

Hungary's dramatic success in increasing the retention, promotion and deployment of women reflects a number of targeted initiatives:

- The *Hungarian Military Service Law* upholds the equal rights of men and women and guarantees non-discriminatory promotion based on professional skills, experience, performance and service time. Combat positions have been opened to women since 1996 and women are allowed to occupy all positions within the armed forces. Eligibility requirements for employment are the same for women and men.
- A Committee on Women of the Hungarian Defence Forces was established in 2003, with the purpose of ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in the defence forces through research, analysis and policy recommendations. The Committee holds meetings with servicewomen to gather experiences, from which they prepare a report on the status of gender equality, including problems and recommendations for change. Members of the Committee are assigned by the leadership of the Ministry of Defence and the Hungarian Defence Forces, and represent all the female personnel serving in organisations and units of the Hungarian Defence Forces. A network of women's focal points has been also established at unit level in collaboration with the Committee.
- An Equal Opportunity Team of five people representing middle management in each service was established. The Team reports to the Chief of Defence and is charged with providing information and exchanging ideas with leadership and personnel in subordinate units, attending conferences to gather and exchange information on gender integration, and publicising its work through the media and civilian organisations.²

Servicewomen are integrated into the Hungarian Defence Forces: women work and train together with their male counterparts, and are subject to the same chain of command, standards of performance and discipline. Female soldiers entering the service have to complete the integrated basic training, which is equal to that of their male counterparts, although with different physical standards. Servicewomen are entitled to maternity leave. Changes have also been made to pre-deployment training to include gender issues, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, and culturally-specific information about women.

Because of high interest from female candidates for service, in Hungary there is currently no need to develop special recruitment programs for women.

► The need for more representative security sector institutions is discussed on pages 7–8 of the *Security Sector Reform and Gender Tool*.

► Recruitment, retention and advancement of women is discussed on pages 13–14 of the *Defence Reform and Gender Tool*.

¹ Latvia had the highest rate of female participation with 23 per cent. Committee on Women in the NATO Forces, *Percentages of Female Soldiers in NATO Countries' Armed Forces: 2001-2006* (Brussels: NATO, 2006) http://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/perc_fem_soldiers_2001_2006.pdf and http://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/perc_fem_soldiers_2007.pdf (both accessed April 27, 2009).

² Committee on Women in the NATO Forces, *Hungarian National Report for 2006* (Brussels: NATO, 2006), http://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/hungarian_report_2006.pdf (accessed April 27, 2009).