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# Gender-related Human Resources Policies in Armed Forces

## Introduction

This overview of gender-related human resources policies in the Albanian Armed Forces seeks to contribute to the very fragmented and incomplete literature on human resources policies in armed forces. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis, but a reference for other armed forces in considering ways in which they can promote the retention, recruitment, promotion and full participation of women. It is accompanied by an overview of human resources policies in the armed forces of Ghana and the Netherlands.

“Gender-related human resources” is an indefinite term, but used here to refer to:

- policies that directly refer to gender, equal opportunities or discrimination;
- policies that refer to gender-related harassment or violence;
- policies that seek to deal differently with male and female personnel – including those that exclude women from certain roles, and those that prioritise recruitment or retention of women; and
- policies that seek to address the particular needs of military personnel who are mothers or fathers.

This research draws upon interviews, as well as secondary sources, including books, academic papers, newspaper articles and websites.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview of the Albanian Armed Forces

The Albanian Armed Forces were formed after the declaration of independence in 1912. They consist of Land Forces, the Air Force and Naval Forces. The Albanian Land Forces or Albanian Army, are comprised of a Rapid Reaction Brigade, a Commando Regiment, and the Area Support Brigade. According to the Albanian Constitution, the Albanian Armed Forces are mandated to:

- protect the territorial integrity of the country;
- assist the population in case of natural and industrial disasters and warn of dangers of a military and non-military nature;
- protect the constitutional order, as it is determined by law; and

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<sup>1</sup> This case study is based on research undertaken for DCAF by Dr Jason Franks in 2013, supplemented by desk research by DCAF Project Assistant, Veerle Triquet. Dr Franks conducted ten interviews and a focus group discussion in March 2013 with a range of different stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of human resource policies in the Albanian armed forces, or affected by them as armed forces personnel. The interviewees were from the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces, a number of local NGOs and an international organisation. The focus group discussion was with five female officers from the army and air force. DCAF thanks Ms Mirela Rrumbullaku for her contributions to this case study.

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- participate in international operations as part of multinational forces.

In 2001 the Albanian Armed Forces launched a 10-year reform program to become technologically advanced and fully professional. This included the abolition of conscription. The new professional armed forces consist of about 12,500 personnel.

The Albanian Armed Forces have participated in a number of international operations, including in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq and Kosovo.

### Women in the Albanian Armed Forces

Attempts to change the gender relations in the armed forces have quite a history in the dynamics of the Albanian state. According to Baka-Peço, Salihi and Leka (2011), mechanisms to integrate gender were introduced in the Albanian Armed Forces prior to the 1990s. Women worked in the navy, army and infantry, but many undertook combat duties. The authors claim that female personnel were educated, trained and treated as their male colleagues and gender-based discrimination, abuse and violence were absent. “Women officers before the 90s were seen as models of social promotion and strategic factors. Somehow the women position in the armed force before the 90s gave them a supreme role – impacted definitively by the ideological approach of their inclusion in the Army...”<sup>2</sup> There were senior female officers in different sectors.

The status of women in the Albanian Armed Forces changed in the 1990s, alongside broader political changes. Women were still part of the armed forces but, while some of them kept the old promotion grades of the previous system, others were affiliated in clerical positions, as secretaries, in logistics, as offices administrators or managers of maintenance compartments. Many women requested early retirement.

According to Albania’s 2013 report to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, as of 31 December 2012 women made up 11.2% of Albania’s military personnel on active duty (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Edlira Baka-Peço, Etilda Salihi and Eurona Leka, “Promoting Women in the Albanian Armed Forces from visible to an operation gender balance,” *Policy Brief Security Management Network*, Tirana: Institute for Democracy and Mediation Centre for European and Security Affairs, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Albanian Defence Ministry, *The National Report 2013 Albania*, Brussels: NATO Office on Gender Perspectives, 2013.

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**Table 1: % Female military personnel on active duty in Albanian Armed Forces, 31 December 2012**

Service within Albanian Armed Forces	% female personnel
Navy	9.64
Air Force	14.7
Army	9.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11.2</b>

Table 2 illustrates the percentage of female officers and other ranks, by NATO-standardised grade.<sup>4</sup> The data demonstrates that no women have attained senior officer levels (Brigadier-General/Commodore), and that whilst women are most highly represented in the Air Force (14.7%), few are senior officers.

**Table 2: % Female military personnel on active duty in Albanian Armed Forces according to grade, 31 December 2012**

	% Female personnel according to rank				
	OF-6 and higher	OF-3 to OF-5	OF-1 to OF-2	OR-5 to OF-2	OR-1 to OR-4
<b>Navy</b>		13.8	10.8	10.2	4.1
<b>Army</b>		9.3	16.6	10	5.7
<b>Air Force</b>		2	11	17.5	12

Albania does not have any official policies prohibiting women from joining any branch or serving in any role, including front-line combat service. However, in reality they do not occupy combat roles within a combat branch. One female officer candidate is quoted as saying:

“It’s difficult being a woman in the Albanian army and, now I’m learning how to become an officer, which is even harder for women in Albania. I do the same training as the men, but they do not look at me as equal to them. The women do the secretary and [indoor] jobs and the men do the tough jobs.”<sup>5</sup>

Albania has designated five women to various NATO structures. 12 women have been engaged in missions, of whom seven were posted to Afghanistan as part of medical (doctor, nurse and psychologist) and human resource teams. No women have participated in combat units. In 2012, 1.2% of Albania’s peacekeeping troops deployed abroad were female. Women deployed as part of peacekeeping missions are usually part of the medical teams.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, *Albanian Military Future, Jersey-made*, DMAVA Highlights, May 29, 2014, <http://www.nj.gov/military/admin/highlightspdf/2014/may2914.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Albanian Defence Ministry, *supra* note 3, p. 5.

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An association “Women in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania” was created in February 2011. One of its objectives is to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325).<sup>7</sup>

### Gender-related human resource policies of the Albanian Armed Forces

According to Article 18 of the Albanian Constitution: “... *all are equal before the law. No one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic condition, education, social status, or ancestry.*” The Albanian Constitution also establishes mechanisms for positive discrimination to benefit women in its basic principles.<sup>8</sup>

The *Law on Gender Equality in Society* adopted in 2008 regulates fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, the protection and equal treatment of women and men, equal opportunities and chances to exercise rights, as well as women and men’s participation and contribution to the development of all social fields.<sup>9</sup> More specifically to the Albanian Armed Forces, the *National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence* seeks to support the development of institutional policies to increase women's participation in peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as the promotion of initiatives for a wider involvement in decision-making processes and positions.

### Gender policy

The 2012 Defence Directive defined the development of gender policies and equal chances as a priority and established the Sector of Equal Chances in Personnel and Recruitment Center for Armed Forces.<sup>10</sup> The main mission of the Sector of Equal Chances in Personnel is to combat discrimination by monitoring the implementation of laws, legal/sub-legal acts (regulations, orders, instructions, etc.) and policy documents which respect and comply with diversity and equal chances norms.

In 2013 the Ministry of Defence launched the report of a “gender self-assessment” undertaken to examine the integration of gender in the Albanian Armed Forces. This initiative was supported by UN Women with technical assistance from DCAF, using DCAF’s *Gender Self Assessment Guide for the Police, Armed Forces and Justice Sector*.

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<sup>7</sup> MsC Suzana Jahollari, *Albanian Armed Forces an overview of the current state of women’s involvement in the Albanian Armed Forces*, PowerPoint presentation, undated, [http://www.nato.int/issues/women\\_nato/meeting-records/2012/pdf/Albania\\_NATO\\_conference.pdf](http://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/meeting-records/2012/pdf/Albania_NATO_conference.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Edlira Baka-Peço, Etilda Salihi and Eurona Leka, *supra* note 2.

<sup>9</sup> Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Law on Gender Equality in Society*, Albania: OSCE, 2008, <http://www.osce.org/albania/36682>.

<sup>10</sup> Albanian Defence Ministry, *supra* note 3, p. 1.

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The report of the gender self-assessment noted that the two main strategic documents of the Ministry of Defence have no provisions to combat gender based discrimination in the armed forces, and no strategic objectives related to the promotion of women in higher ranks and decision making positions. The report also found that while the *Law on Gender Equality in Society* recognises the right of servicewomen to equal chances and opportunities to pursue a career as an officer and to be allowed into the various establishments, the absence of mechanisms to support the integration of women within all ranks of the armed forces impedes efforts to implement it.<sup>11</sup> The findings of the gender self-assessment led to the drafting of an Armed Forces Action Plan for Gender Equality 2013-2015 with eight objectives:<sup>12</sup>

1. Raise awareness and enhance gender capacities at all levels of armed forces
2. Drafting of gender equality policies and the implementation of Resolution 1325 and 1820 of the UN Security Council
3. Introduce gender advisor positions in the organigram of missions and operations in and outside the country
4. Introduction of sexual harassment committed by military personnel during and after working hours in the new law on military discipline in armed forces
5. Improve social (work-life balance) and logistic conditions
6. Institutionalise the role of women in preventing and solving armed conflicts (including increasing the participation in UN and NATO missions)
7. Cooperate with the community and civil society.

A set of actors and activities have been identified and developed to meet each objective. For example, in the case of the first objective, a review of the armed forces' institutional and functional courses will be undertaken to ensure the integration of a gender perspective throughout the curriculum. Other activities include a review of relevant NATO best practices, an evaluation of the current situation and proposals from management military and civilian structures, and advisory training to support the retention and promotion of women.<sup>13</sup>

### **Mechanisms to implement gender policy**

The *Law on Gender Equality in Society* specifies that every government department should have a full-time gender equality employee. The Ministry of Defense has had a civilian Gender Advisor since 2010.<sup>14</sup> The Gender Advisor assists the Ministry and the armed forces with the implementation of strategy on gender issues, and has been able to communicate and interact with Gender Focal Points in the armed forces (discussed below), as well as with civil society and international and local NGOs working on gender, to guide and develop this gender strategy. Furthermore, the Gender Advisor is able to convene *ad hoc* external working groups and training in conjunction with local NGOs and

<sup>11</sup> Gender self-assessment, cited Edlira Baka-Peço, Etilda Salihi and Eurona Leka, *supra* note 2.

<sup>12</sup> Albanian Defence Ministry, *supra* note 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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international organisations, such as UN Women. The Gender Advisor also facilitated the gender self-assessment of the armed forces.

Within the armed forces, Gender Focal Points have in the past been designated. These were nominated individuals who received basic gender training or, where possible, participated in gender working groups organised by the Ministry of Defence Gender Advisor in conjunction with local NGOs and international organisations. The Gender Focal Points were located in some units of the Army, Navy and Air Force and encouraged to provide gender advice within their own units and also information and feedback on gender issues to the Ministry of Defence Gender Advisor.

Gender training has been developed within the Ministry of Defence. UN Women has supported the Ministry of Defence to increase the capacities of decision-makers, gender focal points and personnel deployed to peacekeeping missions to implement UNSCR 1325. Several training courses have aimed to improve understanding of the provisions contained in the resolution and its implications; and to increase decision-makers' awareness of the roles of women in peace and security issues, and the need to integrate a gender perspective within the context of security sector reform process.<sup>15</sup>

### **Policy regarding recruitment and promotion**

The "Human Resource Management Strategy in the Armed Forces, 2011-2013" established a target that 15% of armed forces personnel be female.<sup>16</sup> In 2012, a Sector of Equal Opportunities/Chances was established in the Armed Forces' Centre for Personal Recruitment. Its mission is to promote equality of opportunities in the recruitment of men and women in the armed forces and to monitor the implementation of laws, subordinate legislation (regulations, orders, instructions, etc.) and policy that promote gender equality within the armed forces and combat gender based discrimination.<sup>17</sup> Although there are no quotas for female candidates at the recruitment stage, positive action strategies include the creation of a gender position in the directorate of recruitment, the employment of female service personnel in the recruiting staff, and advertising and awareness campaigns. The recruitment criteria for men and women are different in physical requirements (defined in relation to rank and age), in both physiology and the basic tests;<sup>18</sup> while the intelligence, psychological and educational requirements are the same. Nonetheless, the opinion of several female officers interviewed was that recruitment is not equal and preference is given to male candidates.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Albania, *Advancing the implementation of the United Nations Resolution on Women, Peace and Security*, 13 December, 2012, [www.un.org.al/subindex.php?faqe=news&newsid=413](http://www.un.org.al/subindex.php?faqe=news&newsid=413).

<sup>16</sup> Megi Llubani, *Beyond Numbers: Women Representation in the Security Sector in Albania*, Albanian Institute for international studies and Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*; MsC Suzana Jahollari, *supra* note 7.

<sup>18</sup> MsC Suzana Jahollari, *supra* note 7.

<sup>19</sup> Confidential Source, female armed forces officers, *Personal Interview*, Tirana, 20 March,

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Units that employ women in front-line and infantry units are regarded as “mixed”. However, according to interviewees, in practice there is a gendered distinction between infantry platoons, which have all male soldiers, and platoons employing women in the medical or signals branch. It would seem that women are simply not recruited or employed as infantry branch soldiers. Officially, women are able to transfer or be promoted into combat units but in practice they are never selected for combat roles. It is also practice that female soldiers are never employed on guard duty, as this is not seen as a female role. This affects both recruitment into combat units and promotion.<sup>20</sup>

Officially, promotion at the officer and enlisted level is achieved by reference to courses completed, time served and experience - particularly operational deployments. Although these courses and the deployments are open to all, competition for places is very high and also dependant on performance and recommendation by superiors. Men and women face the same selection boards for promotion, which do not include women.

Women are being promoted once the requisite courses and deployments have been met: more women are being promoted to senior positions and some female platoon commanders have all male troops. However, a number of female service personnel complained of large numbers of failed applications and that the promotion selection courses are overly focused on physical tasks and infantry skills, and thus benefit men. There are no positive action programmes or extended training schemes to encourage women to seek higher levels of promotion. Moreover, there is apparently a glass ceiling for female officers at the level of lieutenant colonel.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the *Statute of the Armed Forces Officers*, women have the possibility to take early retirement after 12 years of service, whilst men must serve 15 years.

### **Policy regarding intimate relations and marriage**

There are no rules on marriage within the Albanian Armed Forces. Heterosexual men and women are free to marry when and whomever they wish, including other service personnel and foreigners. There are no rules for in-service relationships; however, there seems to be an unofficial practice that a couple in an established relationship are precluded from working in the same unit.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

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The Albanian Armed Forces do not have concrete policies allowing or prohibiting participation by people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.<sup>22</sup>

Married couples can gain access to rented service accommodation with some postings.

### **Policy regarding maternity and paternity**

Women are not allowed to be pregnant during the recruiting period or in basic training. If they discover their pregnancy before they officially join or during basic training, they must leave for the duration of the pregnancy and return after the mandatory maternity period.

Maternity leave in the armed forces is as specified by Albanian law – one year – and the individual can return to work in the military after maternity leave. However, a common practice is for pregnant women to accrue annual leave and then take this with maternity leave. It is unclear whether the provision in Albanian law for paternity leave is applied within the armed forces.

The Albanian Armed Forces do not provide any particular social support benefits during pregnancy or maternity; nor is there any policy for flexible working hours, career breaks or part-time work. However, if female service personnel are working away from home, they can request a posting closer to home, which will be accommodated if possible. The law requires that a break time for nursing mothers is provided and there are no rules against breastfeeding in the workplace, but there are neither special arrangements nor designated areas in the military to facilitate this.

### **Policy regarding support to families**

Service in the armed forces is seen as a prestigious job and as safe employment in as difficult economic climate. Employment and promotion is competitive and the retention rate is high. However, due to the lack of any child or family support measures, the main losses are women leaving to have a family. This is compounded by the difficulty experienced by female service personnel with young families, who find it impossible to deploy on overseas missions for extended periods of time without family support.

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<sup>22</sup>Joshua Polchar, Tim Sweijs, Philipp Marten and Jan Galdiga, *LGBT Military Personnel-A Strategic Vision for Inclusion*, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies: The Hague, 2014, p. 57.

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The military provides healthcare for serving personnel, spouses and families; the possibility of access to service housing – if available; and a survivor's pension (formerly known as a widow's pension). There is a relocation grant for officers (only) in instances where they are posted to another city or geographical location for an extended period. In this case, money is provided for resettlement of the family and if the partner has to leave their civilian employment, then moderate compensation is provided.

There are no childcare allowances and it is not possible for either men or women to adjust their working hours or arrange part-time work through job sharing. There are no crèches, child care facilities or schools on military camps. The Albanian military considers family life and responsibilities to be separate from the armed forces. This lack of support and cultural understanding is often cited as a reason for the lack of retention of women in the armed forces.<sup>23</sup> It was suggested however, that there are examples of *ad hoc* local arrangements that allow service personnel time away from work to deal with occasional family problems concerning health, schooling or childcare. But it was stressed that such arrangements are not supported by policy, are irregular and dependant on the understanding and inclination of the commanding officer.

### Policy regarding domestic abuse

There is an absence of available data on cases of sexual and/or domestic abuse within the Albanian Armed Forces, but one source suggested that individuals are not reporting incidents.<sup>24</sup> An individual who is a victim of sexual and/or domestic abuse can make a complaint to the civilian police, and it will be handled through the civilian courts. A reporting process is also available to service personnel through the military chain of command, and if the incident occurs within the jurisdiction of the armed forces, the victim has recourse to military justice. This would be in conjunction with a civil process and, depending on the severity of the civilian prosecution, might include a court martial, military prison or dismissal from the service. If a complaint were to be made within the military and be regarded as a serious criminal offence, then it would be referred directly to the police.

### Policy regarding sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is an offence in common law and is covered under Article 284 of Albania's [Criminal Procedure Code](#). The Albanian Armed Forces do not have a formal anti-sexual harassment policy. There is no comprehensive data available on instances of sexual harassment.

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<sup>23</sup> Confidential Source, female enlisted soldier, Albanian Armed Forces, *Personal Interview*, Tirana, 20 March, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Confidential Source, Ministry of Defence, *Personal Interview*, Tirana, 19 March, 2013.

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Complaints of sexual harassment can be prosecuted only when the victim files a complaint. There is a reporting process available to service personnel, but it is not specifically designed for sexual harassment and is initiated through the military chain of command by approaching an immediate superior. If the problem exists in the direct chain of command, there is no independent alternative available. There are no support mechanisms for victims of sexual harassment.