

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Regional Working Group

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Executive Summary

This regional study presents the results from the monitoring of progress towards a more equal position of women in the ministries of defence (MoD) and the armed forces (AF) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia. The results are intended to enable comparison with the findings of the 2012 baseline study. The present study was created as a part of the project *Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans*, which has been implemented by UNDP SEESAC since 2012, in two phases. As a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), UNDP SEESAC provides support to the ministries of defence in the Western Balkans region to integrate the gender perspective into the MoDs' and the AFs' policies and practices as one of the key segments of security sector reform, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. This regional project aims to bring the Western Balkans closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 5 (Gender Equality) of the 2030 Agenda.

The research methodology was set up in accordance with the model of the first regional study and represents a form of institutional research of official practices and processes conducted through a questionnaire and supplemented with qualitative information where appropriate. With the support of UNDP SEESAC, a regional working group, composed of representatives of the Western Balkans' MoDs and AFs, was established to coordinate the data collection process and to draft the study.

This regional study is the result of a unique regional process in which the ministries of defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia took part jointly and actively. For this purpose, the regional Working Group was established by and composed of representatives of each ministry. The final research methodology was agreed upon at the first Working Group meeting, held on February 11, 2020. Data were gathered in the period February-September 2020, followed by the drafting of reports for each country and then the regional report. At the second meeting of the regional Working Group, held on 28 May 2021, the study findings and recommendations were discussed prior to their final approval. It is essential to bear in mind that the findings presented in this report are the product of a regional analysis and that individual remarks and conclusions do not always apply equally to the armed forces of all the involved states.

Gender equality in the countries of the Western Balkans as a context for the advancement of the position of women in the armed forces

The past two decades have been marked by the efforts of the countries in the region to enhance the gender equality normative and policy frameworks. This has led to the improvement of the position of women and the advancement of gender equality, yet gender inequalities remain pronounced in all areas important for achieving equality in the social position, influence, and welfare of women and men.

The four Western Balkans countries are signatories to numerous international conventions establishing, guaranteeing, and protecting human rights, including women's human rights, as well as prohibiting discrimination and defining directions for the advancement of gender equality in different areas. All states have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and participate in the process of regular reporting in this context. They submitted their national reports on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, they have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), and they have implemented United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325- Women, Peace and Security.

Domestic legal frameworks in the countries included in this research also set normative bases for achieving gender equality. Gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, are guaranteed by the supreme legal acts of the states' constitutions (in BiH, in addition to the Constitution of BiH, gender equality is also guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federation of BiH, the Constitution of the Republika Srpska, and the Statute of the Brčko District). Each of the four states have gender equality laws as well as laws on the prohibition of discrimination, which explicitly prohibit gender-based discrimination. In addition, a range of subsidiary legislation and bylaws regulate gender equality and the rights of women in specific areas, such as employment, social protection, protection against violence, etc.

Policies for the advancement of gender equality in the countries of the region encompass umbrella strategies or action plans for gender equality, specific national action plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, strategies for the prevention of discrimination, and policies for the prevention of violence against women, while the establishment of gender responsive budgeting systems is ongoing.

The social context in the four countries of the region that are the subject of this study and in which efforts to advance gender equality are ongoing in the defence sector is marked by gender inequalities in numerous aspects of public and private life. The 2020 ranking of the four countries in the framework of Human Development Report – the Gender Inequality Index (GII),¹ places all four countries

¹ The Gender Inequality Index is a composite index which helps in understanding the gender dimension in the framework of reporting on the Human Development Index. The Gender Inequality Index measures the loss in achieving human development due to inequality between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and participation, and labour market participation.

beyond the 40th position on a scale of 162 countries.² While their positions are relatively good overall, gender inequalities are still pronounced in all countries in the region, including these four, compared to the majority of European Union countries.

The data indicate that the political participation of women is still not at a satisfactory level in the countries of the region, despite an increase in the representation of women in the legislative and, in some cases, executive authorities. It has also been shown that women do not participate equally in the economy. Their participation in the active population (labour force) is significantly lower than men, they are less often employed and more often unemployed than men, and when employed they receive lower salaries than men, on average. This gender gap in employment also carries over to a gap in pensions, with women representing a minority among the beneficiaries of old-age pensions, as well as of disability pensions, and on average they receive lower pensions than men. The most extreme form of gender inequality is gender-based violence against women. According to an OSCE-led survey (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), in 2018, in the countries of the region, more than half of adult women had experienced some form of gender-based violence since the age of 15.

In relation to the context in which the MoDs and the AFs of the four Western Balkan countries covered by this regional survey operate, their strong commitment to gender equality and determination to improve the position of women in the defence sector should be recognized. Through their actions and results, as well as their active participation in this regional research, the defence sectors in all four countries have shown that they can play a leading role in society when it comes to advancing towards gender equality. The findings and recommendations of this regional study should also contribute to the further improvement of policies and practices in the defence sector.

Normative and policy frameworks and gender equality mechanisms in the armed forces

This study confirms that various steps have been taken in order to advance the legislation regulating gender equality in the MoDs and AFs: laws and bylaws have been improved and harmonized with the relevant international documents, attention has been dedicated to the introduction of gender-sensitive language and gender responsive budgeting, and cooperation has been established with key national gender equality mechanisms, alongside other efforts.

All four ministries of defence have estimated that in the observed period (2012-2019) significant progress has been made in promoting gender equality (the MoD of BiH rated achievements in the implementation of gender equality policies in the defence system with the highest mark (5), while the MoDs of Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia rated their achievements as very good (4).

Self-evaluation of the internal policy of the ministries of defence in the implementation of gender equality (on a 1-5 scale)

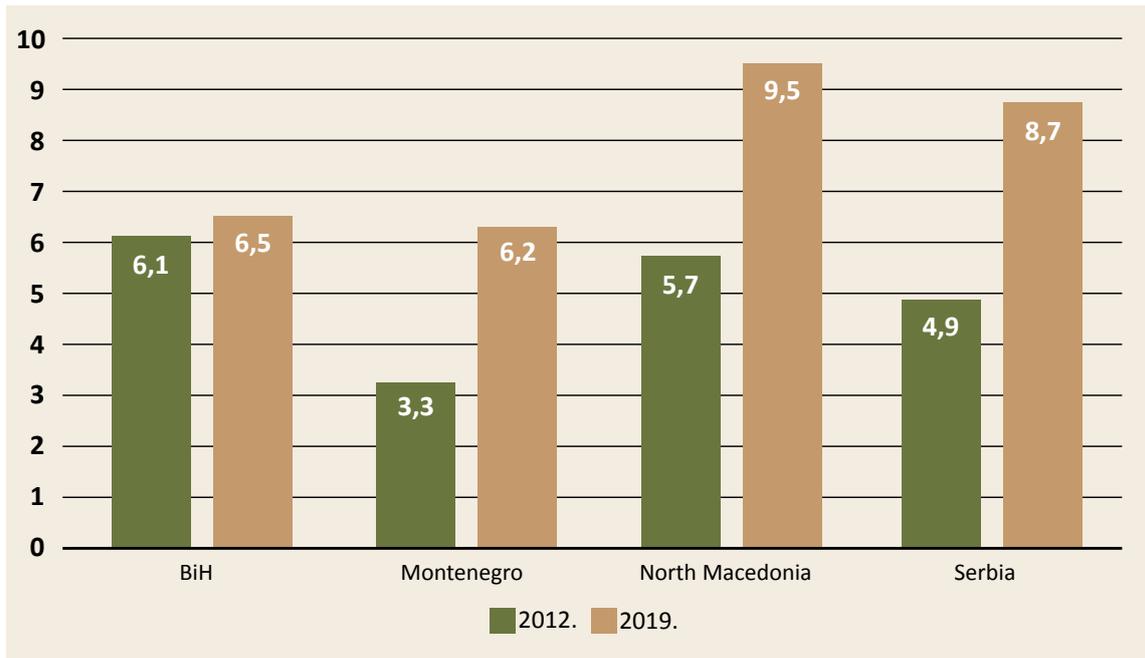


² UNDP Human Development Report – 2020 Gender Inequality Index: [UnitedNationsDevelopmentProgramme/2020_statistical_annex_table_5.pdf](https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/43221)

Representation of uniformed women in the armed forces

Comparative data for 2012 and 2019 show an **increase in the share of women among uniformed personnel in the ministries of defence and the armed forces in all four countries**. In Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia, the share of women almost doubled during the observed period. In 2019, almost every tenth uniformed person in the MoD and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia was a woman. North Macedonia demonstrated the highest share of women professional soldiers in its MoD and Armed Forces from among those in the region. Yet despite these positive trends, it is necessary that efforts continue to recruit women for jobs in the MoD and the AF, and to improve conditions for the career advancement of women and for their retention in service.

Share of uniformed women in MoDs and armed forces, 2012 and 2019, in %



There was also an increase in the share of women in the ranks of soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and officers in the observed period. However, gender inequalities remain clearly visible in the horizontal (military branches) and vertical (ranks) distribution of women and men. According to representation in distinct military branches, it is noticeable that women account for a higher share in the Land Forces (Army) than in any other military branch. Alongside the increase of the share of women in Land Forces units documented in all countries, there was an observed decrease in the share of women in the Air Force and Air Defence units of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia, while in Montenegro and in the Republic of North Macedonia an increase of the share of women was recorded in these units.

When it comes to vertical mobility, compared to 2012, an increase in the share of women in command positions was documented. In particular, women were indicated to take on leadership positions held by non-uniformed personnel in the MoDs more often than any other type of leadership or command position.

The data also indicate an increase in the participation of women in peacekeeping missions (including UN, NATO, and EU missions). In all four states, knowledge about and training on gender equality topics and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security are preconditions for the deployment of employees to peacekeeping missions. In all four states, gender equality is an important aspect of mission planning.

Policies and practices for engaging women for employment and a career in the armed forces

Regarding education for the military profession, the countries of the region differ: in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia there is a system of basic military education at the secondary school level and a military academy in each country, while officers in the militaries of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are educated abroad. For certain specializations, officers of Montenegro are educated in civilian faculties in the country and abroad, depending on the needs of the Armed Forces of Montenegro. In terms of activities and measures taken to engage women for employment as professional soldiers or for a career in the MoDs and the AFs, a noticeable increase in the number and variety of activities, as well as the scope and intensity of their implementation, was documented in the observed period.

The ministries of defence of the four countries place great significance on employment policies and practices. Improving laws and bylaws, enhancing internal employment and human resource policies, synchronizing promotions with job postings, and adapting physical fitness standards to women are only some of the examples of employment practices embraced in actively seeking to achieve equal opportunities for women and men.

All ministries conduct employment analyses and make recommendations for new employment cycles, including recommendations for increasing the employment of women. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, commissions for the admission of new personnel must have women representatives. In all countries, the vetting of candidates includes vetting related to human rights violations, and any persons convicted of domestic violence or gender-based violence are ineligible for recruitment.

Despite advances, clear elements yet remain that require further improvement in order to achieve equitable treatment of women and their equal employment in the ranks of professional soldiers, and to remove structural and cultural barriers standing in the way of women choosing a military career. Taking into account the distinct characteristics of the practices present in the four countries in focus, data for each country are presented separately in the continuation of this regional report.

Career development and working conditions

In the defence systems of all four countries, there are gender-sensitive frameworks for the monitoring and promotion of personnel, including gender-sensitive records and policies related to ensuring equal working conditions. Yet in practice, it is necessary that these policies be consistently implemented, taking into account fully the potentials and needs of women, and providing gender-specific forms of systematic support. Such support is especially necessary since women have begun to enter the defence system as members of the armed forces only in recent decades. In order to achieve full equality, it is necessary that support that is adapted to their needs be provided, given that defence systems have been adapted historically almost exclusively to men, who have traditionally composed the majority of the armed forces. Today, it is unquestionably considered that the equal participation of women in the military contributes to the efficiency of the entire defence system and enables it for the challenges of the 21st century, with the gender perspective as one of the important aspects of security system reform.

According to the information provided by the ministries of defence, the support offered to new recruits during their introduction to their professional duties is significantly impactful. This support is usually provided by competent officers and is accompanied by collegial support in getting acquainted with one's duties. This collegial support is also present and relevant in the introduction of individuals to leadership and command positions. However, a formal mentoring system, often regarded as the most efficient and institutionally appropriate way to support new recruits, has not been established in any of the four countries, and there is no gender-specific mentoring system that would allow women in the military to provide systematic support to their new colleagues, though it has been expressed that similar support is organized in informal practice.

Career development is primarily manifested in various types of training available to women and men, and the patterns of advancement and working conditions are defined in the same way for women and men. From the gender equality perspective, it would be desirable to take into account the additional burdens that women bear in the societies of the region due to their dominant role in the family.

Records on trends in, and the reasons for, leaving the military career, especially in the role of professional soldier, they have been established to a certain degree, but they are not precise enough to enable an adequate understanding of the real reasons of personnel for leaving the military service. Working conditions have been adapted to the needs of women in various aspects, although much room remains for their further improvement in both physical and material aspects (uniforms, physical working conditions, etc.) and in aspects pertaining to support for career development (for instance, a mentoring system, and the like).

Occupational safety in the armed forces of all states included in the research is regulated by civil and military laws. According to all four ministries, there are no gaps between the salaries of women and men, i.e., salaries are equal for jobs of equal value. In some countries certain differences are present in terms of the conditions for exercising the right to a pension.

The inclusion of women in the ranks of professional soldiers must be accompanied by interventions in work infrastructure. Here, investments have been made in providing dormitories, changing rooms, hygienic and sanitary facilities, personal hygiene rooms, and other relevant facilities that are separate for women and men. Military equipment and weapons policies and practices are not different for women and men, while women's and men's uniforms are partially different. In general, there are no differences in field uniforms, but formal uniforms are tailored differently for women, including skirts, shoes, and differences in other clothing details (such as ties, hats, etc.). There are no special uniforms for pregnant women in any of the countries. Decisions on uniforms are generally made in similar ways in the countries studied- and in a quite centralized manner (by the Minister or the President, except in Montenegro, where these decisions are made by a commission). Notably, women's participation in these decisions is not formally prescribed by the relevant regulations.

Work-life balance

In all four countries of the region, the right to pregnancy leave, maternity leave, and parental leave of women military personnel is guaranteed by law. In BiH, Montenegro, and Serbia, the leave of absence for childbirth and child care is stipulated by law for a period of one year and in North Macedonia for nine months. Legal conditions allow fathers a leave for child care from 60 days after the birth of the child and in special circumstances immediately after the birth of the child. This possibility has not been documented as having been adequately applied in practice, and further efforts must be made to stimulate, or even create binding conditions for, fathers to be more intensively involved in the care of new-born or small children (up to one year of age).

Protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment, and violence

In the four countries, complex legal frameworks have been established for protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment and sexual abuse, and violence. These legal frameworks are defined by a number of legal documents, ranging from key civil laws in the country, such as anti-discrimination laws, labour laws, gender equality laws, criminal laws, etc., through special military laws or laws on civil servants, to specific regulations and other bylaws regulating the competencies, procedures, and sanctions for cases of discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment and abuse, or violence in the armed forces. The ministries of defence have confirmed that they apply zero tolerance policies for discrimination and violence. All four defence systems have made a significant positive step forward through their work on the Regional Handbook on Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Ministries of Defence in the Western Balkans. According to data provided by the ministries, in the observed period, there were very few reported cases of discrimination, mobbing, or sexual harassment or abuse, though records pertaining to these cases are not always gender-sensitive.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the Regional Working Group composed of representatives of the four defence systems produced the following recommendation clusters for further improvement in the respective areas:

Improving records – such as monitoring the average time women and men spend at one rank, introducing gender-sensitive records on training where they have not yet been introduced, monitoring trends over multi-year periods instead of situation overviews of single years, improving the monitoring of reasons for leaving the military career, and initiating the monitoring of the share of women among military attachés;

Improving gender equality policies – towards integrating the gender perspective into the operational planning process, introducing gender-sensitive language, integrating the gender perspective into reporting processes (including peacekeeping missions), introducing regular monitoring and evaluation of measures for advancing gender equality, and integrating the gender perspective into education and training programmes;

Improving the representation of women in uniform – including the continuation and expansion of practices for attracting women to choose the military career and examining the decline in the representation of women in certain units in certain states. Despite the efforts invested in career management procedures and practices, the share of women in command and managerial positions held by uniformed personnel is still disappointingly small. While this is primarily the result of their late and relatively recent inclusion and involvement in the armed forces, it requires further monitoring.

Improving working conditions and career development opportunities – in the form of introducing mentoring programmes, examining possible latent discrimination practices in the promotion of both women and men, with special emphasis on the need for the representation of women in vocational training to be increased, raising the awareness of employees and decision makers on equal career development opportunities, improving the infrastructure, etc.

Better work-life balance – encouraging employed men to use both the leave of absence after the birth of a child and child care leave, and introducing measures, wherever possible, to help parents reconcile family and work responsibilities.

Improving protection against discrimination, mobbing, and gender-based violence – continuing the work initiated with the development of the Regional Handbook on Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse, developing relevant standard operating procedures and/or guidelines, examining possibilities for periodic anonymous surveys on experiences of discrimination, abuse, and harassment, raising the awareness of employees and managers on discrimination and gender-based violence, disseminating information about legal protection, and encouraging the reporting of relevant incidents.

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Abbreviations

AF	Armed Forces
AF BiH	Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina
AF MNE	Armed Forces of Montenegro
ARNM	Army of the Republic of North Macedonia
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BI-SC	Bi Strategic Command
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
FREN	Foundation for the Advancement of Economics
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KOD	Training and Doctrine Command
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MNE	Montenegro
NAP	National Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
OF	Officer ranks (commissioned officer)
OR	Non-commissioned officers and soldiers (other ranks)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP NATO	Partnership for Peace NATO
RNM	Republic of North Macedonia
RS	Republic of Serbia
SAF	Serbian Armed Forces
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

1. Introduction

Advancing gender equality in the ministries of defence (MoD) and the armed forces (AF) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia is the goal of a regional project that has been implemented in two phases since 2012 by UNDP SEESAC. As a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), UNDP SEESAC provides support to the ministries of defence in the region to integrate the gender perspective into the MoDs and the AFs policies and practices as one of the key segments of security sector reform, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The goal of this regional project is to bring the Western Balkans closer to complying with their global obligations under the 2030 Agenda through the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16.

The four MoDs achieved significant progress through the first phase of the project *Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans*, carried out from 2012 to 2016: the regional cooperation between gender equality mechanisms of the MoDs and AFs was strengthened and the number of gender-sensitized members of the MoDs and AFs was increased, as were the capacities of the human resources departments in the MoDs and AFs to develop gender responsive policies. In the first phase of the project, the first regional study *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans*³ was completed. The goal of this first study was to collect and present data on the representation of women in the armed forces in the Western Balkans, on the policies and practices of the MoDs and AFs for attracting and recruiting women, for their career development, education, and training, and for their participation in peacekeeping missions, as well as on policies and practices related to achieving gender equality in the armed forces. The study was the result of a joint endeavour of the ministries of defence in the region and, as such, it represented a unique example of this kind of regional cooperation. Based on the study's findings, the MoDs and AFs developed recommendations for advancing the position of women and have been actively working on their implementation in the years since.

At the request of the MoDs and AFs in the Western Balkans and thanks to the financial support of the ministries of foreign affairs of the Kingdom of Norway and the Slovak Republic, UNDP SEESAC initiated the second phase of the project (2019-2021). In the framework of the second phase, the second regional study on *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans* was undertaken.

The most important goal of the study is to present the results from the monitoring of progress related to the position of women in the armed forces included in the project, but also to indicate areas where additional efforts should be invested in order to achieve progress and to identify aspects in which it is necessary to improve data to enable a more precise monitoring of the situation.

The scope of the study is defined by the aspects of geography, time, and topics. The research encompassed four Western Balkans states that participated in the first project cycle (2012-2016): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia. The research examined trends and changes occurring in the period 2012-2019 regarding women employed as uniformed personnel in the ministries of defence and in the armed forces of the states included in the project.

The research methodology was set up according to the model of the previous study and represents a form of institutional research of official practices and processes.⁴ With UNDP SEESAC support, a regional Working Group composed of representatives of the MoDs and AFs in the Western Balkans was established. At a meeting held on February 11, 2020, the Working Group met to establish the methodology and agree on the final version of the questionnaire, which was then approved by all four ministries of defence. The agreed upon modifications of the questionnaire did not inhibit or interfere with the possibility of comparing the recently obtained data with that from the first research cycle. The questionnaire is regarded as "institutional," since it contains questions pertaining to the characteristics, practices, and processes of institutions of the ministries of defence and the armed forces. The content of the questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information from competent officials in the relevant institutions regarding the position of women in the armed forces and not at gaining or presenting women's personal experiences. In the period March 2020-February 2021, the ministries (relevant staff of the ministries) completed the questionnaires. Based on the collected answers, national studies were drafted, which then served as the basis for the identification of additional questions requiring answers. The ministries then provided this necessary additional information so as to fully realize the regional study. The Working Group met again on May 28, 2021 to discuss and analyse the data as well as to agree on recommendations and finalise the study. By participating in the drafting of this study, the ministries unambiguously demonstrated the critical importance of the process of collecting gender-disaggregated data, as well as of relying on data in decision-making and in the creation of guidelines and policies.

This regional study is the result of a unique regional process in which the ministries of defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia have participated jointly and actively. It is essential to bear in mind that the findings presented in this report are the product of a regional analysis and that individual remarks and conclusions do not always apply equally to the armed forces of all the involved states.

3 The first study was carried out in the period October 2012-September 2013. In that period, the Working Group composed of representatives of the MoDs and AFs met three times and the ministries collected data through a questionnaire. The first study was published in 2014.

4 For the first research study the Working group drafted a research questionnaire by adapting and combining the NATO National Report questionnaire (NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, Handbook for Delegates, Version 2010, p. 22. - accessible at https://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/2010/handbook_2010-v2.pdf) and two questionnaires used in studies on the position of women in eight police services in South Eastern Europe (Establishing the Southeast Europe Women Police Officers Network - Research Findings and Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing, SEESAC 2012, p. 33, accessible at <https://www.seesac.org/f/tmp/files/publication/812.pdf>).

2. Gender equality in the countries of the Western Balkans as a context for the improvement of the position of women in the armed forces

The past two decades have been marked by efforts invested by the states in the region to improve the gender equality normative and policy frameworks. This has resulted in the improvement of the position of women and the advancement of gender equality. However, inequalities are still pronounced in all areas important for the achievement of equality in the social position, influence, and welfare of women and men. Briefly presented below are the characteristics of the normative and policy frameworks of the examined states for the advancement of gender equality. They are followed by a corresponding overview of the gender equality situation in different areas of social participation and in the areas of private relations and family care, given that processes of greater inclusion and efforts towards better integration of women in the armed forces in the Western Balkans cannot be entirely understood without considering this wider context.

2.1. Obligations stemming from the international legal framework

The four Western Balkans states included in the project are signatories of numerous international conventions establishing, guaranteeing, and protecting human rights, including women's human rights, as well as of specific conventions protecting the rights of specific social groups or specific rights that enable better participation in certain aspects of society or processes (e.g., in the areas of political and economic participation, the right to property, or rights to other resources, etc.), or protecting against certain harmful processes and violations of human rights (such as protection against gender-based violence and human trafficking, the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, etc.). As an extensive presentation of the international legal framework would not be efficient or feasible for the purposes and scope of this study, it will only present only those key international legal instruments which are most directly relevant for the domestic normative and policy frameworks of the examined countries for the advancement of gender equality and the protection of women.

All four states are signatories of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and are involved in the regular reporting process. Achievements in progress towards goals set by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were presented by all countries in their reports marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration.⁵ All four states have approved and are implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325- Women, Peace and Security. In addition, all four states have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), with BiH, Montenegro, and Serbia having submitted their first reports at the request of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). Developmental policies in these countries are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which one goal of sustainable development (SDG 5) is dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. All countries have submitted their first voluntary reports, in which they reported on progress in achieving SDGs.

⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations#national-level-reviews>

Table 1: Key conventions relevant for the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality

Conventions	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Republic of North Macedonia	Republic of Serbia
CEDAW ⁶	Sixth periodic review submitted in 2018	Second periodic review submitted in 2016	Sixth periodic review submitted in 2017	Fourth periodic review submitted in 2017
Beijing Declaration 25+ ⁷	Report submitted	Report submitted	Report submitted	Report submitted
UNSC Resolution 1325 ⁸	Accepted and in the course of implementation	Accepted and in the course of implementation	Accepted and in the course of implementation	Accepted and in the course of implementation
Istanbul Convention ⁹	Ratified in 2013, first report submitted in 2020	Ratified in 2013, first report submitted in 2017	Ratified in 2017	Ratified in 2013, first report submitted in 2018
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ¹⁰	First voluntary review submitted in 2019	First voluntary review submitted in 2016	First voluntary review submitted in 2020	First voluntary review submitted in 2019

Relevant national reforms have also been guided by important EU accession processes. Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have been granted EU candidate status and BiH is a potential EU candidate. In addition, Montenegro and North Macedonia are members of NATO, while Serbia and BiH are members of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme.

2.2. Obligations established by the national legal and policy frameworks

Domestic legal frameworks in the states included in the research also establish a normative basis for the realisation of gender equality. Gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, are guaranteed by the countries' supreme legal acts – the constitutions.¹¹ In BiH, in addition to the Constitution of BiH, gender equality is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federation of BiH, the Constitution of the Republika Srpska, and the Statute of the Brčko District.

All four states have adopted laws in the area of gender equality,¹² as well as laws on the prohibition of discrimination,¹³ explicitly prohibiting gender-based discrimination. In addition, a range of ancillary legislation and bylaws regulate gender equality and the rights of women in specific areas, such as employment, social protection, protection against violence, etc.

Policies to promote gender equality in the countries in the region include umbrella strategies or action plans for gender equality, specific national action plans for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325, and strategies for the prevention of discrimination, while the Republic of North Macedonia has also approved its *Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia 2018-2023*. In addition, the process of establishing a system of gender responsive budgeting is ongoing in the countries of the region.

6 UN OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cedaw/pages/cedawindex.aspx>

7 UN Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations#national-level-reviews>

8 Information provided by the ministries of defence of BiH, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia.

9 Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/country-monitoring-work>

10 UN SDG knowledge platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates>

11 Gender equality and the prohibition of gender-based discrimination are guaranteed by Art. 2 of the Constitution of BiH (Annex IV of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the *Official Gazette of BiH*, no. 25/2009, Amendment I); Art. 18 and 8 of the Constitution of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of MNE*, no. 1/2007 and 38/2013); Art. 9 of the Constitution of North Macedonia (*Official Gazette of the RM*, no. 52, of 22 November 1991); Art. 15 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the RS*, no. 98/2006).

12 The Gender Equality Law in BiH (*Official Gazette of BiH*, no. 16/03, 102/09, 32/10), the Law on Gender Equality in Montenegro (*Official Gazette of MNE*, no. 46/07, 73/10, 40/11, 35/15), the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of North Macedonia (*Official Gazette of the RM*, no. 66/2006, 117/2008, 6/2012 and 166/2014), the Law on Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the RS*, no. 104/2009).

13 The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of BiH (*Official Gazette of BiH*, no. 59/09), the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of MNE*, no. 46/2010, 40/2011, 18/2014, 42/2017), the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination (*Official Gazette of RM*, no. 50/2010, 44/2014, 101/2019 and 258/2020), the Law on Labour Relations (*Official Gazette of the RM*, no. 62/5, 106/8, 161/8, 114/09, 130/09, 50/10, 52/10, 124/10, 47/11, 11/12 and 39/12), the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the RS*, no. 22/2009).

Table 2: Domestic policies for advancing gender equality

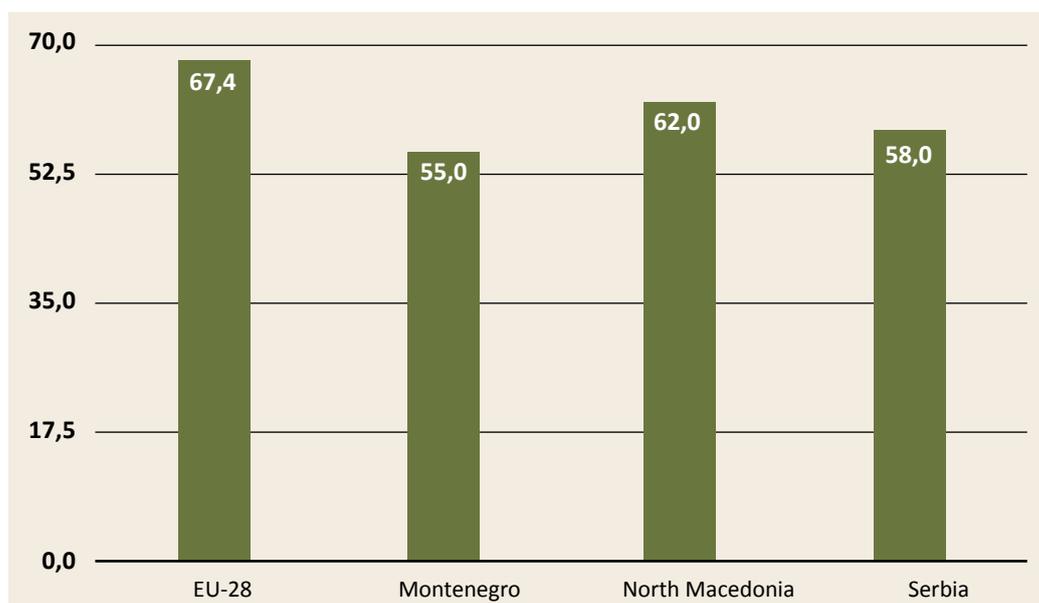
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Republic of North Macedonia	Republic of Serbia
Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2018-2022	Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for the Period 2017-2021	National Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020, National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-2020	National Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2020
Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2018-2022	Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security in Montenegro (2019-2022)	National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2016-2020	Strategy for the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination
		National Action Plan of the Republic of North Macedonia for the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325	National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia (2017-2020)
		National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination 2015-2020	
		National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of North Macedonia 2018-2023	

2.3. Gender equality situation overview and trends

The social context in which efforts are being made to promote gender equality in the defence sector is marked with pronounced gender inequalities in many aspects of public and private life. According to the Gender Equality Index¹⁴ values of the European Institute for Gender Equality, which is the main instrument for monitoring gender equality in the European Union and, as of recently, in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, gender inequalities in these three EU candidate countries are more pronounced than the average for the European Union (Figure 1).

¹⁴ The Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an instrument that monitors gender inequalities within the EU and, more recently, among EU candidate countries. This index measures gender equality on a scale from 1 (total inequality) to 100 (total equality) in six domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health, and in two satellite domains – cross inequalities and violence against women. The Index measures both the level of achievement in a given area and the gender gap. More information at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019>.

Figure 1: Gender Equality Index, Montenegro, 2019; North Macedonia, 2015; Serbia 2018 and EU-28, 2019.



Sources: Monstat (2019), *Gender Equality Index Montenegro 2019*; the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (2019), *Gender Equality Index for North Macedonia, 2019*; the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2018), *Gender Equality Index in the Republic of Serbia, 2016*; EIGE <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019>

The political participation of women is still not at a satisfactory level. Following the 2018 elections, women accounted for only 16.7% of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, 26.5% of the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 18.1% of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska. The representation of women in the cantonal assemblies measured almost one third (32.2%). In the same year, 26.5% of ambassadors and general consuls in the diplomatic-consular offices of BiH were women.¹⁵ The share of women among members of the Parliament of Montenegro was 25%,¹⁶ and among members of the government 26.7%.¹⁷ Women are extremely underrepresented among executives of municipalities, i.e., mayors (2%).¹⁸ In North Macedonia, the share of women in the National Parliament has increased to more than one third, but the share in overall government remains low – only 16%.¹⁹ In Serbia, thanks to the legally prescribed quotas of 40% for the underrepresented gender on the lists for national and local elections, women now occupy 39.2% of seats in the National Assembly of Serbia. Progress has also been made in terms of women's participation in executive bodies at the national level, as women were appointed to 43% of ministerial positions in the Serbian Government after the 2020 elections.

In addition, women do not participate equally in the economy. In the active population (labour force), they participate significantly less than men, and they are employed to a lesser degree and more often unemployed than men (Table 3).

Table 3: Basic labour market indicators for the population aged 15-64 in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and the Republic of Serbia, and for the population aged 15+ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019, in %

Indicator	BiH		Montenegro		North Macedonia		Republic of Serbia	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Activity rate ²⁰	51.7	32.9	73.3	59.1	77.8	55.6	74.9	61.3
Employment rate ²¹	44.6	26.7	62.3	49.7	64.9	46.1	67.1	54.3
Unemployment rate ²²	13.6	18.8	14.7	15.7	16.6	17.1	10.4	11.5

Sources: National statistics institutions/offices, Labour Force Survey (LFS), 2019.

15 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, 2020, available at: https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Mu%20a1karci-i-%20beene-u-BIH_2020.pdf

16 National Assembly of Montenegro, <https://www.skupstina.me/me/poslanice-i-poslanici/lista-poslanica-i-poslanika>

17 Government of Montenegro, https://www.gov.me/organizacija/Sastav_Vlade

18 Monstat, *Women and Men in Montenegro 2020*, p. 107.

19 Reactor (2018), *Information submitted for consideration to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its adoption of a list of issues regarding the Sixth Periodical Report of the Republic of Macedonia under CEDAW*, 71, Pre-Sessional Working Group, 12-16 of March, 2018.

20 The share of the employed and unemployed in the working age population (definition of the Labour Force Survey).

21 The share of the employed population (working for at least one hour for cash or in-kind remuneration in the reference week or had a job from which they were temporarily absent) in the working age population (LFS definition).

22 The share of the unemployed population not working (at the time of the survey), who had sought employment at least once during the previous month and could take up a new job within two weeks if one was offered to them, in the working age population (LFS definition).

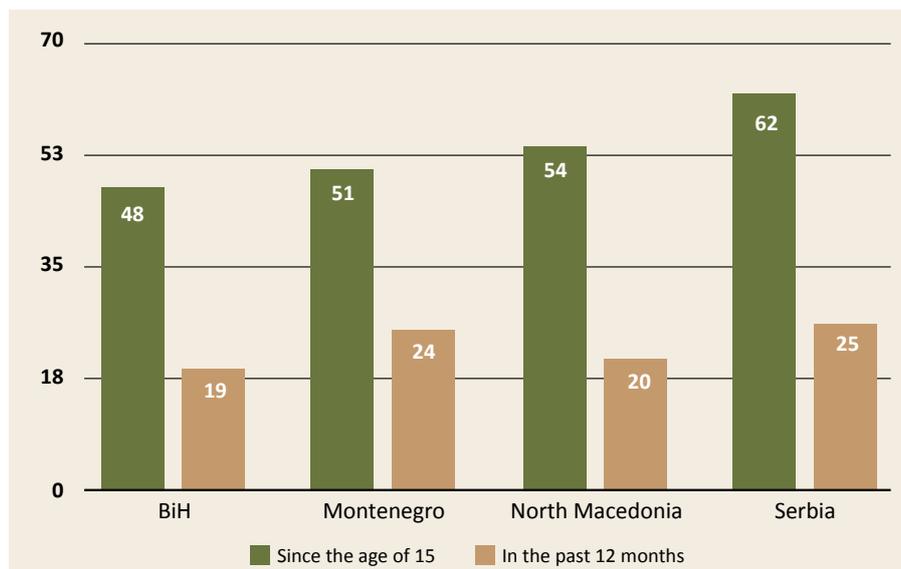
In addition to being less represented in the labour market, employed women are concentrated in services where salaries are on average lower than in multiple sectors where men are concentrated, such as the information and communication technology (ICT) sector and the like.

The first regional survey confirmed that gender inequalities in the labour market are manifested, among other things, in the pay gap.²³ For example, in Montenegro, despite employed women demonstrating better educational characteristics, they earn 16% less than men with the same qualifications (education, years of service, etc.) and would need to work an additional 58 days a year to earn the same salary. In North Macedonia, women earn 18% lower salaries and would need to work an additional 65 days a year to earn a salary equal to men, while in Serbia women earn 11% lower salaries than men and would need to work 40 days more per year to reach a level of salary compensation equal to men (data for BiH are not available). At the same time, women spend more time on unpaid housework and family care. For example, according to a 2015 survey on time use in North Macedonia, employed women with children aged 0-6 spent on average 3.18 hours longer per day in this kind of work than men.²⁴ According to the same survey carried out in 2015 in Serbia, women (regardless of family status or activity) spent on average two and a half hours a day more than men on household work and an hour less on leisure activities.²⁵

The gender gap in employment carries over to the gap in pensions, as women represent a minority among users of old-age pensions and disability pensions and on average receive lower pensions than men.²⁶

Gender-based violence against women is the most extreme form of gender inequality. According to a 2018 OSCE-led survey in the countries in the region, more than half of adult women had experienced some form of gender-based violence since the age of 15.

Figure 2: Prevalence of any form of gender-based violence committed by a partner or a person who is not a partner, in %



Source: OSCE, Well-being and Safety of Women, national reports for single countries²⁷

23 Avlijaš, S, et al. (2013) *Gender Pay Gap in the Western Balkan Countries: Evidence from Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia*, FREN, Belgrade, pp. 13-14.

<https://www.fren.org.rs/sites/default/files/Gender%20pay%20gap%20in%20the%20Western%20balkan%20countries.pdf>

24 Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office (2015), *Time Use Survey 2015*, Skopje, p. 27

<https://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.15.20.pdf>

25 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2015,) *Time Use Survey*, Belgrade.

26 Agency for Statistics BiH (2020), *Women and Men in BiH*, Sarajevo: 65; Monstat (2020), *Women and Men in Montenegro*, Podgorica: 95;

Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2020), *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia*, <https://www.stat.gov.rs/9003>

27 Bosnia and Herzegovina Results Report, available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/5/423470_1.pdf;

Montenegro Results Report, available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/7/424985_1.pdf;

North Macedonia Results Report, available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/5/419264_1.pdf;

Serbia Results Report, available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/4/419750_1.pdf

3. Normative and policy frameworks and mechanisms for gender equality in the armed forces

In addition to the general normative and policy frameworks regulating the area of gender equality, particularly important is the more direct framework regulating gender equality in the armed forces, as well as mechanisms established within the ministries of defence and the armed forces in the countries included in the research.

3.1. Normative basis for the realisation of gender equality in the defence system

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the normative basis for the realisation of gender equality in the defence system primarily consists of the *Law on Defence of BiH* and the *Law on Service in the Armed Forces of BiH*. Additional relevant conceptual acts include the *Gender Equality Policy in the Ministry of Defence and the AF of BiH*, the *Gender Equality Standard Operational Procedures in the AF of BiH* and the *Standard Operational Procedures for Gender Contact Points in the AF of BiH*. Furthermore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina the state-adopted Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” is a framework for the implementation of gender equality and of Resolution 1325. It was the first country in the region to adopt such a plan. Furthermore, through NATO mechanisms, BiH has established as one of its Partner Goals the PG “Women, Peace and Security.” Based on these documents, gender equality is integrated in all policies and programmes in the MoD and the AF of BiH.

In the Republic of Serbia, the normative basis consists of the *Law on the Serbian Armed Forces*, the *Law on Defence*, and the *Labour Law*, which regulates working conditions in all sectors, including in the armed forces. The NAP 1325 establishes the improved safety of women in society in the areas of prevention, participation, protection, and recovery as a primary strategic goal, alongside greater involvement of women in maintaining peace and security at the local community level.

Differences in the countries’ normative frameworks are partly based on two of the countries having the status of a NATO member state, according to which the special acts of the North Atlantic Alliance for the Promotion and Protection of Gender Equality are particularly important for regulating gender equality in the armed forces of these countries (Montenegro and North Macedonia).

Hence, as a NATO member state, Montenegro has established the gender equality normative framework in the defence system in accordance with *NATO Directive 40-1 on integrating UNSC Resolution 1325* and gender perspectives in the NATO command structure, including measures for protection during armed conflict.²⁸ In addition, a range of NATO directives and policies play an important role, including: *NATO Directive Bi-SC 40-1*, adopted in 2009 and amended in 2012 and in 2017, providing clear guidelines and instructions for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 at all levels of the NATO military structure; the *NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security*, first adopted in 2007 and subsequently replaced with new policies in 2011, 2014, and 2018, and accompanied by the Action Plan; and the first *NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, from 2019. In line with the Decision of the Forum for Security Co-operation 02/09 (FSC Decision), periodic voluntary reporting on gender equality is to be conducted within the framework of the *Questionnaire on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security*.

In Montenegro, certain European documents are also significant in the context of EU accession:²⁹ the *Charter for European Security*, 1999; the *European Parliament Resolution 2025 on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution* (2000); and the *2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*.

At the national level, Montenegro’s specific normative framework for regulating gender equality in the defence system, including the prohibition of discrimination and the prevention of and protection against gender-based violence, is defined in accordance with: the *Law on Parliamentary Oversight of the Defence and Security Sector*;³⁰ the *Law on Defence*;³¹ the *Law on the Armed Forces of Monte-*

28 Bi-SC Directive 40-1, NATO, September 2009.

29 OSCE - Decision No. 14/04, Ministerial Council, Sofia, 2004

30 *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 80/2010, available at:

<https://mod.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=269676&rType=2&file=Zakon%20o%20parlamentarnom%20nadzoru%20u%20oblasti%20bezbjednosti%20i%20odbrane.pdf>

31 *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 47/07, 86/09, 88/09, 25/10, 40/11, 14/12, 2/17, available at:

<https://me.propisi.net/zakon-o-odbrani/>

negro;³² the *Law on Internal Affairs*;³³ the *Law on Protection and Rescue*;³⁴ the *Law on Border Control*;³⁵ and the *Law on the National Security Agency*.³⁶

In the Republic of North Macedonia, in addition to the general normative and policy frameworks regulating gender equality, international conventions and domestic laws and policies that specifically regulate the security sector or gender equality and the place of women in the security sector are also important. In this regard, a range of United Nations Security Council resolutions, including *UNSCR 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” (2000)* and subsequent resolutions, are significant. In addition, General Recommendation no. 30 on women in conflict, conflict prevention and post-conflict situations from October 2013 under the CEDAW Convention (CEDAW/C/GC/30, 2013) is also important.

Important documents of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) providing guidance on gender equality in the security and defence system include: the *Decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council No. 14/05, “Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation”* and the *Decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council on the Adoption of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2005)*.

The NATO policies that represent the legal basis for establishing gender equality in North Macedonia include the *NATO Policy of Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* and the *NATO policy on “Women, Peace and Security.”* In addition to the already mentioned general laws regulating gender equality and non-discrimination, laws and bylaws representing the basis for the introduction of gender equality into the Ministry of Defence and the Army include the following: the *Law on Defence*, the *Law on Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*, and the *Law on Administrative Servants*. Relevant policies of the Ministry of Defence include the *Defence Strategy*, the *Strategic Defence Review (2018)*, the *Long-term Defence Capabilities Development Plan 2019-2028*, the *Strategy for Management of Human Resources in the Defence Sector (2019. – 2027)*, the *Strategy for Education and Training*, the *Medium-term Plan for Defence Development 2020-2023*, the *Collective Agreement of the Ministry of Defence*, the *Code of Ethics for Employees in the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*, and the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security.”*

3.2. Gender equality mechanisms

Different gender equality mechanisms have been established in the ministries of defence and the armed forces of the countries in the region.³⁷ These mechanisms differ in form but their functions are very similar, their purpose and function being to coordinate and oversee the process of establishing equal opportunities, to monitor and report on the gender equality situation in the armed forces, to propose improvements, etc.

In 2011, **persons for gender equality** were appointed as the main gender equality mechanism within the MoD and the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2012, **contact persons for gender equality** were appointed throughout the entire structure of the AF BiH at the level of battalions or units of the same or higher rank. The task of these persons is to provide support to superiors in monitoring and analysing the situation, and in reporting on and proposing activities to improve the gender equality situation. In total, this mechanism consists of 138 persons appointed for gender equality. Responsibilities of these persons are defined in the *Standard Operating Procedures for Contact Persons Appointed for Gender Equality*. The duties of these persons, in addition to performing their regular duties, include monitoring, situation analysis, reporting on, and proposing measures for gender equality matters. These persons are required to report quarterly and as needed to the Gender Equality Advisor to the Chief of the Joint Staff.

In **Montenegro**, gender equality mechanisms in the Ministry of Defence and in the Armed Forces of Montenegro include:

The Gender Equality Coordinator in the Ministry of Defence. According to the *Law on Gender Equality*, institutions are obliged to appoint officials to perform duties as the coordinators of activities related to gender equality within their competence, and to participate in the preparation and implementation of the *Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality*. The coordinators shall also work on: the preparation and submission of periodic and annual reports on gender equality; establishing cooperation with other institutions and international organizations; planning, organizing, and implementing activities on gender equality; drafting analyses covering gender equality aspects; regular communication with other mechanisms; providing suggestions for the improvement of gender equality policies implementation, etc.

³² *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 51/2017, 34/20019, available at:

<https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-vojski-crne-gore.html>

³³ *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 44/2012, 36/2013, 1/2015, 87/2018, available at:

<https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-unutrasnjim-poslovima.html>

³⁴ *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 13/2007, 5/2008, 86/2009, 32/2011, 54/2016, available at:

<https://www.paragraf.me/dnevne-vijesti/19072017/19072017-vijest1.html>

³⁵ *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 72/2009, 20/2011, 40/2011, 39/2013, 17/2019, available at:

<https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-granicnoj-kontroli.html>

³⁶ *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 28/05, *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 20/2011, available at:

<http://www.anb.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=194322&rType=2&file=ZAKON%20O%20ANB.pdf>

³⁷ Mechanisms for the protection against discrimination are presented in Chapter 8.

The Gender Advisor to the Chief of the General Staff. This official is to: provide expert advice on gender mainstreaming and the implementation of security dimensions of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, accompanying resolutions, and gender policies through all planning processes; analyse, monitor, and develop directives and guidelines, concepts, procedures, and mechanisms for the effective integration of gender policies into the defence system; advise on gender mainstreaming in policy creation, standards of conduct, recruitment, education, career development, preparation, and participation in missions and operations, military exercises, and other processes; initiate and conduct gender analysis to assess and respond to gender inequalities in order to achieve equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men in the AF of MNE and to achieve gender balance; consider the impact of legal acts, documents, and decisions from the gender equality aspect and how normative solutions and decisions can affect men and women in the AF of MNE; cooperate with and provide support to other mechanisms; advise unit commanders, etc.

Gender Equality Instructors are certified gender equality trainers who provide training for members of the Armed Forces on various gender equality topics.

In **North Macedonia**, internal gender equality mechanisms in the Ministry of Defence and the Army include:

- The Working Group for the Implementation of the Gender Perspective, established by the Decision of the Minister of Defence in 2018;
- The Working Group for Gender Responsive Budgeting, established by the Decision of the Minister of Defence in 2018, in accordance with the *Strategy on Gender Responsive Budgeting*;
- The Interdepartmental Working Group for drafting the Second NAP of the Republic of North Macedonia for the Implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325 (2020-2025), in which the Ministry of Defence has a coordinating role in drafting and implementation;
- The Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, based on the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men;
- The Gender Equality Officer in the Office of the Chief of the General Staff;
- Gender Equality Instructors (NATO certified), who provide gender training in the Ministry and the Army;
- A network of gender representatives composed of a total of 36 women and men.

In the **Republic of Serbia**, the gender equality mechanism in the Ministry of Defence and the SAF consists of “persons of trust” – persons who provide primary collegial assistance, and whose mandate and work are regulated by a special internal act, i.e., the Instruction. The NAP Implementation Advisor represents a mechanism for gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of state administration and local self-government bodies. He/she is tasked with creating the necessary preconditions for the realisation of the NAP goals. In the current period, a woman was appointed to this position by a decision of the Minister of Defence.

In Serbia, the Political Council of the Government for implementing NAP 1325 represents the highest political body and comprises state secretaries, the President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, the Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, and heads of gender equality mechanisms in the Republic of Serbia. The operational body of the Government is tasked with the realisation of the NAP goals, while the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the NAP is a supervisory body appointed by the National Assembly of Serbia and the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, consisting of representatives of parliamentary groups. Analytical groups and research teams are institutional bodies established in individual security system institutions to perform the function of planning and monitoring the implementation of activities, conducting gender analyses, and reporting on the results of NAP implementation.

3.3. Self-assessment of progress on achieving gender equality

The ministries of defence of the countries covered by this research assessed that the normative and policy frameworks described above represent solid bases for the promotion of gender equality in the armed forces. Various steps have been taken to improve regulations on gender equality in the MoDs and the AFs: laws and bylaws have been improved and harmonized with relevant international documents; attention has been dedicated to the introduction of gender sensitive language and gender responsive budgeting; cooperation has been established with key national gender equality mechanisms, etc.

All four ministries of defence have recently declared that significant progress was made toward improving gender equality in the observed period (2012-2019). With the exception of the MoD of BiH, which rated its achievements in the implementation of gender equality policies in the defence system with the highest mark (5), the other ministries rated the achievements as very good (4) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Self-assessment of the internal policy of ministries of defence in the implementation of gender equality, (on a 1-5 scale³⁸)



Source: Questionnaires completed by the ministries of defence.

According to the self-assessment of the Ministry of Defence of **BiH**, gender equality policies and mechanisms are successfully implemented in both the Ministry and the Armed Forces, and the MoD's policy was assessed as completely gender sensitive. According to this assessment, significant progress has been made in the defence system since 2012, with progress evident on the basis of both quantitative indicators and qualitative insights. Interest for serving in defence institutions was reported as having increased among women, while at the same time systemic solutions that enable gender equality have been recognized. Better infrastructural conditions for life and work have been provided for women and men in locations where they reside. Legal norms regulating gender equality are implemented more consistently. However, certain challenges remain. These are most often associated with the need for higher budget allocations to ensure better infrastructural capacities for women and men, which could, along with adequate promotion, further increase women's interest in military service.

According to the assessment of the Ministry of Defence of **Montenegro**, despite significant progress, some challenges still persist and need to be addressed in the forthcoming period. The most important challenges related to the integration of women into the armed forces and the defence system were the needs for increasing referrals to training and education, participation in missions, and the positioning of women in decision-making positions. Therefore, it is, *inter alia*, necessary to further raise the awareness of all employees in the system and strengthen their motivation to support gender equality policies and to take into account the impact of future and existing decisions on men and women.

Significant progress has been made in the integration of women into the professional army of the **Republic of North Macedonia**, and according to the MoD, further action will be focused on:

- Continuing activities aimed at sensitising various categories of employees, with special emphasis on leadership and command positions in the Ministry and the Army, as well as on the teaching staff of the Military Academy, who are directly involved in the education of future Army personnel.
- Affirming equal opportunities for women and men in the process of career guidance, with the support of various forms of education that should encourage an increase in the number of women in leadership and command positions, while respecting the principles of expertise and competence.

³⁸ Assessment values: 1 – the policy of the Ministry is completely gender insensitive, 5 – the policy of the Ministry is completely gender sensitive.

- Integrating the gender perspective into the operational planning process.
- Improving the family support system, especially for staff deployed in missions, as well as taking measures to better reconcile work and private life.
- Normative regulation of the use of gender sensitive language in the Ministry and the Army, in order to strengthen and promote equality between women and men.
- Carrying out activities for the implementation of the Second National Action Plan of the Republic of North Macedonia for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” (2020-2025) – through the implementation of the Operational Implementation Plan of the Ministry of Defence.
- Integrating gender equality into the existing system of reporting and analysis (lessons learned, annual and semi-annual analyses, analyses from peacekeeping missions).
- Monitoring and evaluating the system for gender equality measures and activities.

The MoD of the **Republic of Serbia** also pointed out significant challenges, such as the engagement of all defence system subjects in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and further increasing the number of women in high ranks and in leading positions, where defence policy is created. It was highlighted that the time needed for women professional military personnel to fulfil requirements for career advancement – also a prerequisite for the appointment to key managerial positions – should be taken into account. According to the MoD, in order to further promote gender equality, it is necessary to continue the campaign for the admission and promotion of women in the security sector and to improve the education of women and men employed in the security sector on the importance of the greater participation of women in dealing with issues pertaining to peace, gender equality, and security. Finally, it was deemed necessary to increase the representation of women in professional development and education by encouraging decision-makers to identify and instruct qualified women and by encouraging women to apply.

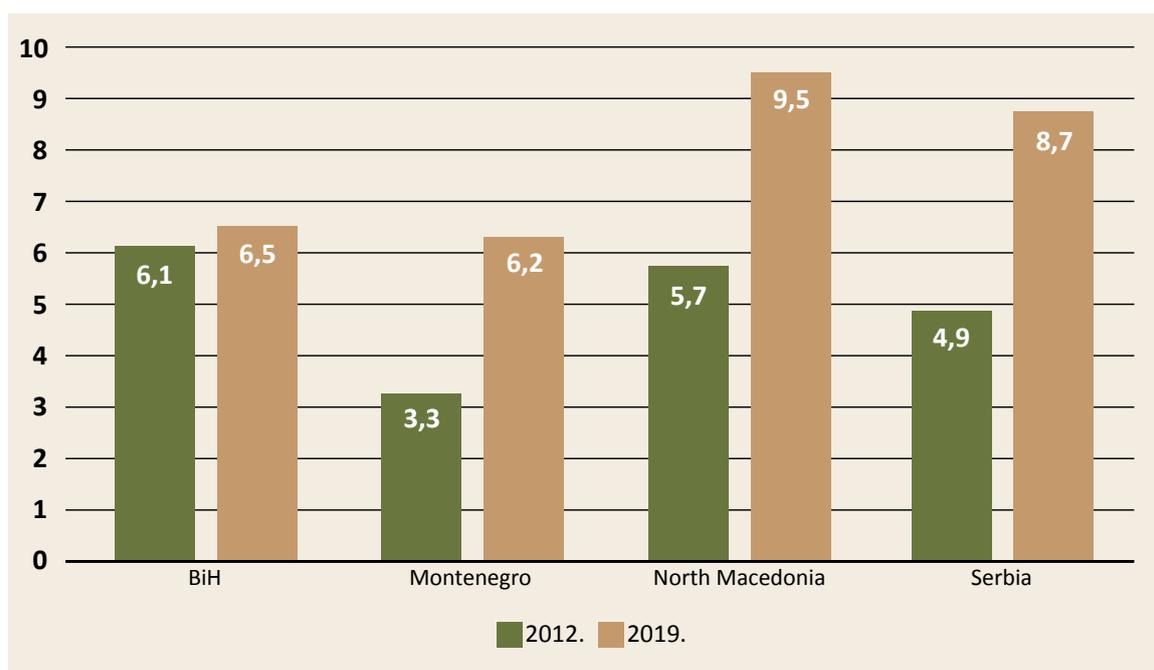
4. Representation of women in uniform in the armed forces

The share of women professional soldiers in the armed forces is one of the key indicators of their likelihood to choose such a career, to join the active service, and to integrate, i.e., to exercise their rights arising from such service on equal footing with their male colleagues. The following chapters present the participation of women in uniform, i.e., those representing uniformed personnel (civilians are not included), in order to understand the trends of change compared to the 2012 regional study³⁹ and to highlight aspects where further efforts are needed to increase women's participation.

4.1. Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces

Comparing data gathered for this study with corresponding data for 2012 indicates that the share of women among uniformed personnel in the ministries of defence and the armed forces has increased in all four countries. In Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, the share of women almost doubled during the observed period, while by 2019, almost every tenth uniformed person in the MoD and the Army of North Macedonia was a woman. North Macedonia was indicated as the country with the greatest participation of women professional soldiers in the MoDs and the armed forces in the region. However, in the context of these positive trends, the relatively small percentage of women in uniform in the ministries and armed forces in all countries of the region should not be overlooked. Further efforts are required to attract and recruit women to jobs in the MoDs and the AFs, as well as to improve the conditions for career advancement and retention in military service.

Figure 4: Total share of women in the uniformed personnel of the MoDs and the AFs, 2012 and 2019, in %



Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia.

In regarding the ministries of defence and the armed forces separately, it is clear that the share of women has increased in both institutions, with a more prominent increase in the share of women in the ministries in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, and a somewhat higher increase in the armed forces in BiH. (Table 4).

Table 4: Share of women in the uniformed personnel of the MoDs and the AFs, 2012 and 2019, in %

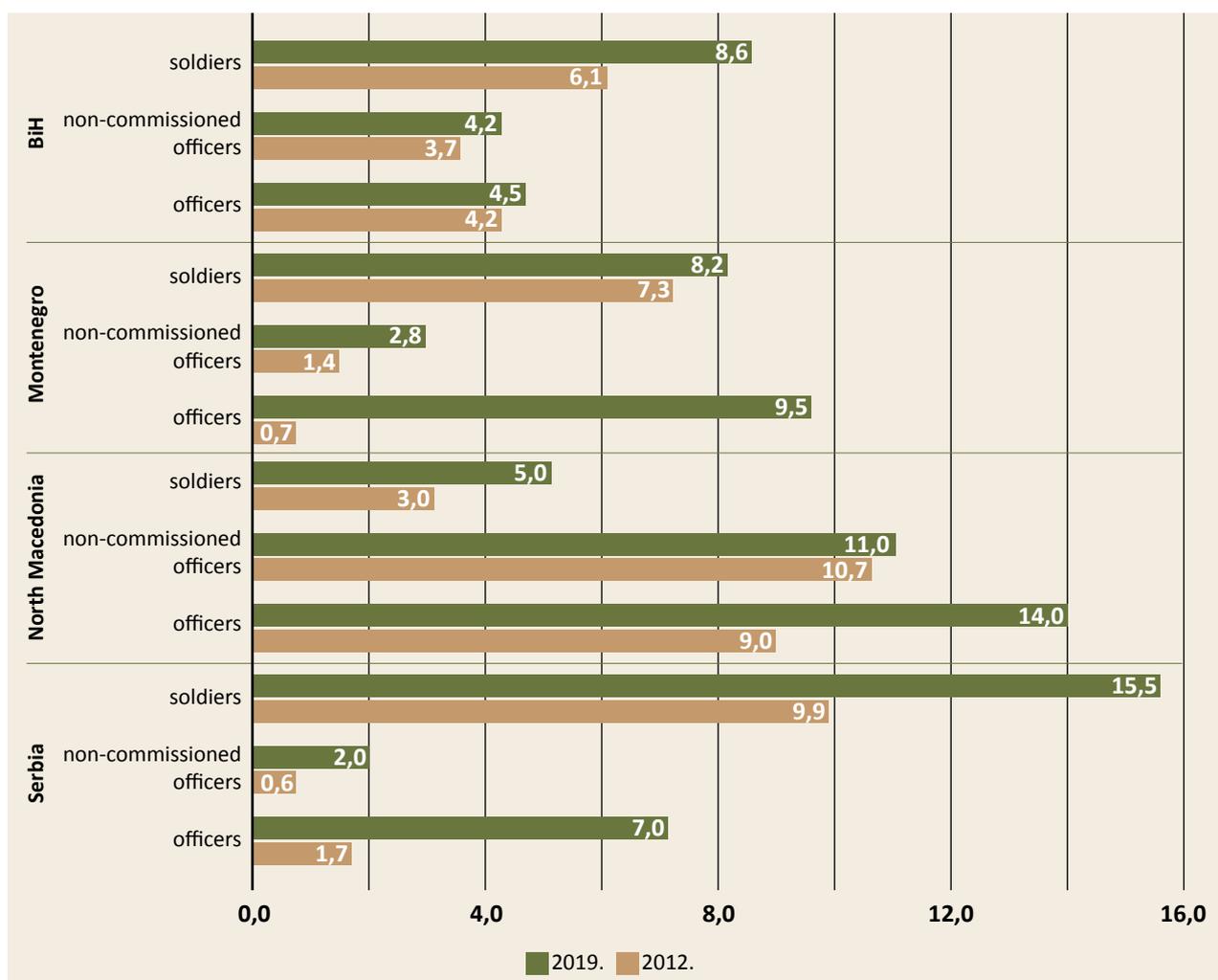
	Bosnia and Herzegovina		Montenegro		North Macedonia		Serbia	
	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019
MoDs	4.5	5.2	0	5.9	1.6	9.0	1.0	6.2
AFs	5.0	6.5	3.4	6.2	5.7	9.5	5.3	9.0

Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia

39 SEESAC (2014), *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans*.

It is important to note that the share of women has also increased among the ranks of soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and officers. The biggest changes were recorded in the increased share of women among officers in Montenegro and North Macedonia. It is noticeable in all countries that the share of women among NCOs is smaller than among officers. One possible reason for this may be the recruitment pattern. Namely, officers and soldiers are directly recruited from the ranks of civilians, i.e., through employment and not through promotion. It is therefore potentially more feasible in these contexts to intervene with policies to encourage the employment of women, as NCOs are not recruited directly. In addition, it has been observed that in some ministries the transition from one category to another is not carried out as often as employment, so opportunities to include more women in non-commissioned officer personnel are less frequent.

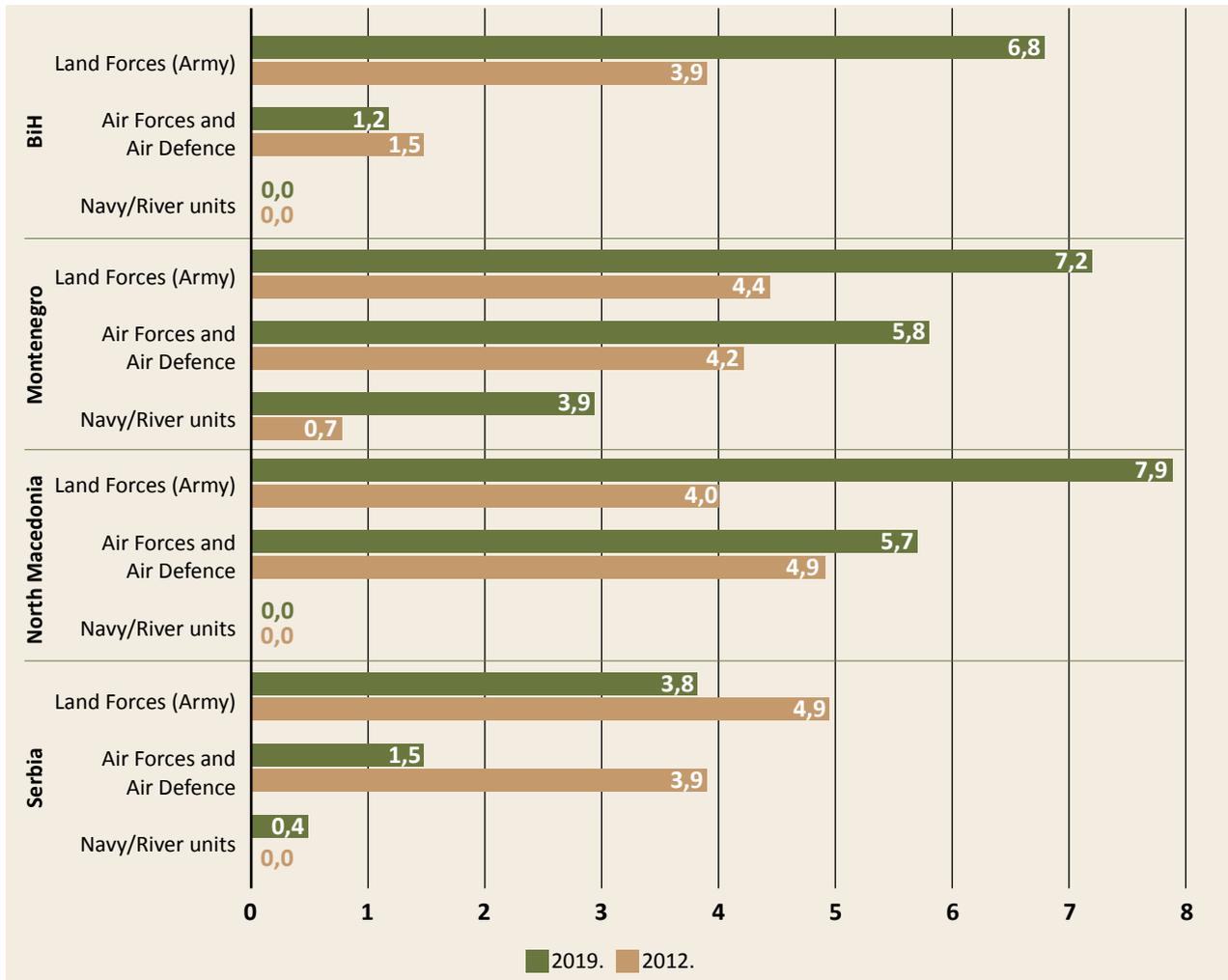
Figure 5: Share of uniformed women among officers, NCOs, and soldiers, 2012 and 2019, in %



Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia

Gender inequalities are visible in both the horizontal (military branches) and vertical (ranks) distribution of women and men. When it comes to military branches, women represented a higher share in the Land Forces (Army) than in other military branches. In contrast to the increase of the share of women in the Land Forces units of all countries, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republic of Serbia a decrease in the share of women in the Air Force and Air Defence units was observed, while in Montenegro and in the Republic of North Macedonia an increase of the share of women was recorded in these units (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Share of women in various units, 2012 and 2019, in %



Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia.

The representation of women in different ranks within units of different branches of the armed forces is presented in greater detail in the tables provided in Annex 1 of this report. The data indicate that there are no women in the highest personnel ranks (OF 6 and higher) in any branch of the army in any of the four countries. In these tables, the following trends are apparent:

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- From 2012-2019, there was an increase in the share of women in all ranks of the Land Forces (except among the highest officer ranks- OF-6 and higher);
- The increase in the share of women was higher in lower officer ranks (OF-1 to OF-2) than in higher ones (OF-3 to OF-5);
- While there was a large increase in the share of women among Air Force and Air Defence soldiers (ranks OR-1 to OR-4), from 5.7 % in 2012 to 25% in 2019, there was a slight decrease in the share of women among officer ranks OF-1 to OF-2 in this branch.

Montenegro:

- From 2012-2019, there was an increase in the share of women in all ranks (except among the highest officer ranks) of the Land Forces and Navy;
- Inconsistent trends were recorded in the Air Force and Air Defence branch, i.e., there was an increase in the share of women in lower officer ranks (OF-1 to OF-2), stagnation in non-commissioned officer ranks (OR-5 to OR-9), and a decrease in the share of soldier ranks (OR-1 to OR-4);
- The largest share of women was recorded in the lower officer ranks (OF-1 to OF-2) of the Ministry of Defence, in which by 2019 a quarter of the personnel were women, as well as among MoD employees in the non-commissioned officer ranks (OR-5 to OR-9), where women made up one fifth of personnel by this same time.
- Overall, in the MoD and in all branches of the Armed Forces of Montenegro, in 2019, the highest representation of women, 17.9%, was recorded in lower officer ranks (OF-1 to OF-2), and the lowest representation, 0.8%, in officer ranks (OF-3 to OF-5).

North Macedonia:

- From 2012-2019, there was an increase in the representation of women in all ranks of the Land Forces (except among the highest officers- OF-6 and higher);
- There was a significant increase in the share of women in lower officer positions, i.e., from 4.9% (2012) to 23% (OF-1 to OF-2) (2019) in the Army and in the Air Force and Air Defence branch from 2.2% (2012) to 16.1% (2019). At the same time, there was a slight decrease in the representation of women in officer ranks OF-3 to OF-5 and a more pronounced decrease in the representation among non-commissioned officers and soldiers within these units.

Serbia:

- From 2012-2019, there was a slight increase in the share of women in all non-commissioned officer and officer ranks in the Land Forces and the Air Force and Air Defence branch (except among the highest ranks of OF-6 and higher), but a simultaneous decline among soldiers in the units of both branches, which may indicate a trend of decline in women entering the armed forces, alongside the simultaneous advancement of those contingents of women who had previously joined the ranks of professional soldiers;
- The highest increase was recorded in the share of women among soldiers (ranks OR-1 to OR-4) in the Ministry of Defence, where the share of women exceeded one third (36.3%) by 2019.

4.2. Representation in command and leadership positions

An important indicator of the integration of women in the MoDs and the armed forces are the data on their representation in command and leadership positions. Compared to 2012, the data from 2019 indicated an increase in the share of women in command positions; in 2012 in BiH, 1.8% of these positions were held by women, in North Macedonia 2.9%, in Serbia 1.1%, and in Montenegro there were no women in these positions.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ SEESAC (2014), *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in Western Balkans*, p. 26.

The data indicate a noticeable pattern of women holding managerial positions held by non-uniformed persons in the ministries of defence more often than any other managerial or command positions. In 2019, the share of women in leadership positions held by uniformed personnel ranged from 0.5% in Serbia to 16.0% in North Macedonia. Observing the command positions held by professional military personnel, the share of women ranged between 1.8% in Serbia and 9% in Montenegro (Table 5).

Table 5: Representation of women in command and managerial positions in MoDs and AFs, 2019, in %

		Ministry of Defence	Armed Forces	Total, MoDs and AFs
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
% of women in command positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	/	3.7	3.7
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	/	20.0	20.0
% of women in managerial positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	7.7	0.1	2.8
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	22.0	0	22.0
Montenegro				
% of women in command positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	/	9.0	9.0
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	/	/	/
% of women in managerial positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	2.3	0	1.4
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	36.4	3.4	23.3
North Macedonia				
% of women in command positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	/	7.0	7.0
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	/	/	/
% of women in managerial positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	/	16.0	16.0
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	47.0	/	47.0
Serbia				
% of women in command positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	2.4	0.6	1.8
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	2.4	/	2.4
% of women in managerial positions	Command positions among professional military personnel (uniformed)	0.5	0	0.5
	Command positions among non-uniformed personnel	23.9	0.1	24.0

Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia.

In addition, it can be noticed that in BiH in 2019 the share of women in command and managerial positions held by uniformed personnel in the Armed Forces was below the level of their total participation in the AF (6.5% - from Table 4). The situation was reversed with regard to managerial positions held by uniformed personnel in the MoD, where the share of women in command and managerial positions was above the level of the total participation of women professional soldiers among employees in the MoD (5.2% - from Table 4). In Montenegro, the share of women in command positions in the Armed Forces in 2019 was above the level of their total participation in the AF (6.2% - from Table 4), but their share of command positions of uniformed personnel in the MoD was below their total participation among uniformed personnel in the MoD (5.9% - from Table 4). In North Macedonia, the share of women among command positions held by uniformed personnel in 2019 was slightly below the level of their representation in

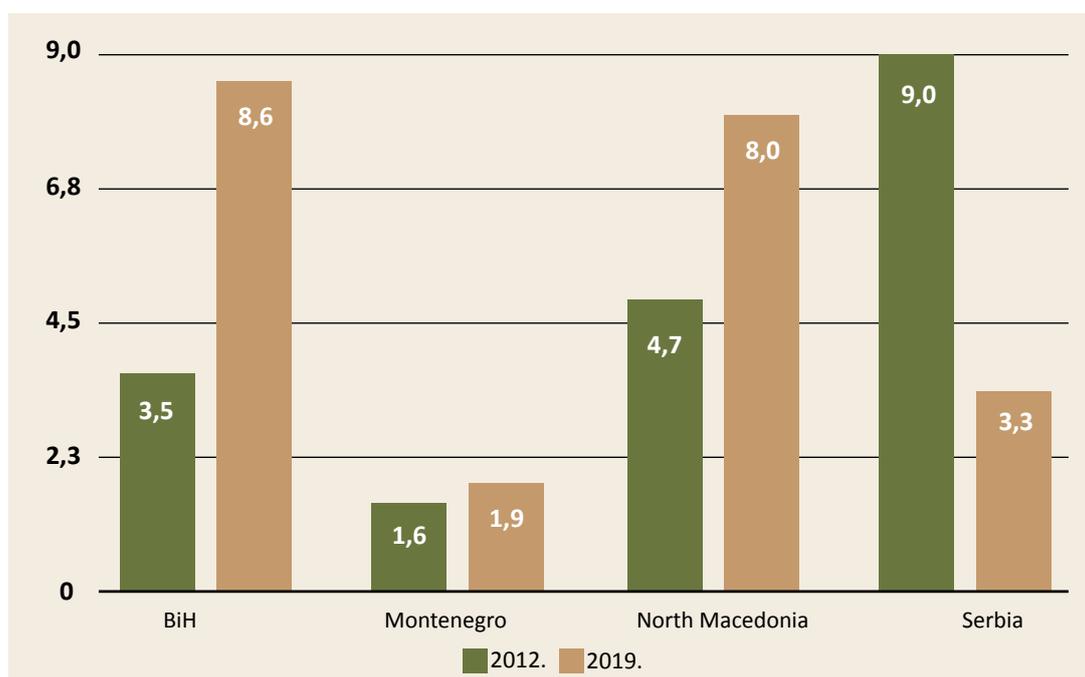
the Army of North Macedonia (9.5%- from Table 4), but their representation in managerial positions of uniformed personnel in the MoD was above their participation among professional soldiers employed in the Ministry (9.0%- from Table 4). In Serbia, the share of women in command and managerial positions held by uniformed personnel in both the Armed Forces of the Republic of Serbia and in the MoD was below their participation among uniformed personnel in these two institutions (9.0% in the SAF and 6.2% in the MoD, 2019- from Table 4).

In 2019, there were noticeable differences in the representation of women in leadership positions held by uniformed personnel compared to positions held by non-uniformed personnel. The representation among the former is lower, with the likely reason being that women only relatively recently entered military service as professional soldiers in the countries studied. As a result, there are still not enough women in the ranks at certain command and managerial positions. Even if there were no formal barriers, there may be latent discrimination or inadequate career guidance practices on the path to command and leadership positions that could reduce the chances of women in uniform to reach command and leadership positions.

4.3. Participation in peacekeeping missions

Participation in peacekeeping missions (including UN, NATO, and EU missions) is an additional aspect of women's integration into the armed forces. According to the data presented in the figure below, from 2012 to 2019 there was a significant increase in the share of women among military personnel engaged in peacekeeping missions by the MoD of BiH and the MoD of North Macedonia, a slight increase in their engagement in missions by the MoD of Montenegro, and a significant decrease in their engagement in missions organized by Serbia. Compared to the total representation of women in the professional armed forces, it can be concluded that in 2019 women in Montenegro and Serbia were underrepresented in peacekeeping missions. However, it should be borne in mind that the presented share of women in military missions is based only on a one-year situation overview and that annual fluctuations can be large. Thus, for example, the report of the Analytical Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Serbia stated that in 2020 women accounted for 13.8% of the forces deployed in peacekeeping missions by the MoD and the SAF.

Figure 7: Share of women among military personnel engaged in peacekeeping missions, in %



Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia.

In all four countries, possessing adequate knowledge about gender equality and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is a prerequisite for the deployment of employees in peacekeeping missions, while gender equality is an important aspect of mission planning in all countries.

In BiH, it is mandated that reports on gender equality are submitted during peacekeeping missions where the AF BiH are engaged. Based on these reports, lessons learned are analysed and needs for improving gender equality during peacekeeping missions are considered.

In Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, gender equality is not addressed as a separate topic in reports submitted to the MoD after participation in peacekeeping missions. In Montenegro, there is a positive practice of creating greater visibility for wom-

en participating in these missions, so as to further empower these women and to motivate other women to consider participating in these military activities.⁴¹

Although in North Macedonia and Serbia it is not mandated that special reports on gender equality be submitted after the completion of a mission, analyses in relation to gender equality are conducted and lessons learned are shared and considered.

LESSONS LEARNED ON GENDER EQUALITY IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

The necessity to engage women in important positions in NATO and UN military missions, in order to contribute to the efficiency of military operations and implementation of mission mandates, was recognized through the deployment of a woman member of the AF BiH to the position of Staff officer of the UN mission MINUSMA in Mali. Experiences from the meetings with local leaders and women from local communities of different ethnic groups show an impact on the implementation of the mandate. The voice of women in the community and their voice of peace have always had a strong echo in every ethnic group, given that in Mali the roles are still determined by traditional responsibilities and jobs. Men are the ones who speak publicly and loudly, while women are largely quietly but consistently influencing their attitudes. Communicating the messages of peace with women from local communities, “we completely understood each other”, because we spoke the same language, working together to preserve peace and the stability necessary for the improvements in their communities, families and children. Our male colleagues could not have such an open communication with women from local communities, and they were very often left without important information for the assessment and planning of operations.

Information of the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina

One of the lessons learned was the need to deploy women members of the Army in the mission in Afghanistan, where the task was to secure the ISAF base and the main gate in that base. The need to search the persons entering the base, among them also women from the local population, required the direct involvement of women members of the Army in the work at the main gate. This necessity contributed to the women members of the Army being present in all deployed formations.

Information of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia

Another example is from the UNIFIL peace operation in Lebanon, where Serbian Armed Forces participated, when a woman was appointed as a physician in an infantry company. Namely, in the framework of CIMIC project, visits to villages have been carried out for the purpose of medical protection of civilian population living near the base of the peacekeeping forces. When a female physician was hired for that position, a larger number of women was noticeable applying for health care than when a male medical doctor had been hired. According to the Ministry of Defence, due to the engagement of a women physician the attitude of the local population towards members of the Serbian Armed Forces engaged in the peacekeeping operation is much better, i.e. the forces on the ground are better accepted, thus increasing the security of members of the Serbian Armed Forces.

Information of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia

⁴¹ <https://mod.gov.me/vijesti/229687/Porucnica-fregate-Sara-Rakocevic-upucena-u-pomorsku-misiju-EU-Navfor-Atalanta.html>; <https://www.facebook.com/ministarstvoobranecg/posts/2807268386173945>; https://twitter.com/defence_mne/status/1247163046872649729?lang=en

5. Policies and practices of attracting women to choose a career and employment in the armed forces

Key points in the process of integrating women into the armed forces are education and attracting women to a career in the service of the armed forces, as professional soldiers or in other duties, as well as the corresponding employment procedures and practices.

5.1. Education for the military profession

Countries in the region differ significantly in terms of education for the military profession. There are basically two patterns. According to the first, there is a system of basic secondary-school level military education and the military academy in the country (North Macedonia and Serbia). According to the second, officers are educated abroad (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro), while through scholarships qualifying students may be educated both in the country and abroad at civilian faculties (Montenegro). These different education systems are briefly described below.

Four types of institutional training are provided in the **AF BiH** to systemically train military personnel and civilians, and prepare units for the execution of missions:

- Basic military training,
- Career development,
- Functional training, and
- Training support in units.

Given that in BiH there is no military academy, such education is provided at military academies in other countries, in accordance with bilateral cooperation plans. Military academy admission criteria for female and male candidates are the same, except for physical fitness tests, where the standards for women and men differ. Namely, one version of the physical fitness tests is adapted for women, with different standards applying to women and men for fulfilling the necessary physical requirements for admission to military academies. These different standards in physical fitness were introduced to level the conditions for women and men and to ensure gender equality in terms of physical fitness. The generation who had enrolled at military academies in the school year 2014/2015 graduated successfully in 2019, with all those enrolled (45), including 5 women (11.1%), graduating. Of the top students in the generation (the highest 10%) that graduated in 2019, there were one woman and two men. Time should be taken into account in regarding these data, as the first woman in BiH to enrol at a military academy did so only in 2005, while in 2012 there was still only one woman in the entire class.

Montenegro does not have its own military education system; officers are mainly educated at foreign military academies, in the capacity of cadets, to become the future officers of the Armed Forces of Montenegro. The acquisition of an education at command and staff schools, as well as at military colleges abroad, is a prerequisite for an officer to advance in her/his military career. In addition, for certain specializations in the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence provides student scholarships at civilian faculties in the country and abroad to train qualifying students for service in the AF as officers or as civilians.

In **North Macedonia**, due to the specific tasks and responsibilities of defence staff, continuous education and training throughout their careers is regarded as essentially important. This is precisely why the defence education and training system, as well as relevant strategic documents, provide a holistic approach to career development through formal and non-formal education. To achieve the first, most basic, officer rank and to develop initially in the military career, formal education is carried out within higher education institutions (both military and civilian) in the country and abroad. During such education, military personnel are trained to perform their duties by acquiring knowledge and developing key skills, abilities, and values necessary to perform missions and tasks in the field of defence.

The General Mihailo Apostolski Military Academy is an independent higher education institution established by law and an associate member of the Goce Delchev State University in Shtip. It educates and trains cadets, candidates for officers, and officers, in accordance with the credit transfer system. The Military Academy implements education in the first, second (specialization and master's degree), and third (doctoral) cycle of studies, as well as provides advanced professional development courses (lifelong learning). Upon completion of the first cycle of studies, cadets acquire 240 ECTS credits and a recognized university degree.

According to strategic documents, such as the Long-Term Plan for Defence Development, and the annual plans and needs expressed by the Army, activities for the popularization of and admission to the Military Academy are carried out respecting the principles of inclusiveness and non-discrimination. The Military Academy admission criteria are the same for women and men, except for the physical fitness criteria, which have been developed and are implemented in line with the biological characteristics of women and men.

In the academic year 2014/2015, out of 26 persons admitted to the Military Academy, 27% were women. The entire class graduated from the Military Academy, while the top 10% was comprised of two men and one woman.

At the Military Academy, there are also courses that include topics and contents from the field of gender equality and non-discrimination. In the Sociology course, with the integration of the gender perspective, special attention is paid to social inequalities, stratification, and mobility. In the Military Psychology course, gender aspects are addressed through topics related to morale, ethics, organizational culture, equality, conflict resolution, non-discrimination, human rights, non-violence, and participation in peacekeeping missions. Cadets are involved in the preparation of presentations, papers, and graduation theses, as well as in research at the Military Academy, with topics in the field of gender perspectives and the like. In the Military History course, the contents feature prominent women and men in international and national history, with special emphasis on women symbols of feminism and economic and political power. In this context, students encounter and learn about women who, with their courage and sacrifice, represent symbols of the struggle for the respect of civil rights, as well as for the equal participation of women in military operations (particularly in the Second World War). This course also covers topics related to the struggle for equal rights for women throughout history.

The Human Resources Sector is responsible for managing the defence training and education system. All defence sector employees have the opportunity to obtain various forms of non-formal education and training. Continuous in-service education and training is a system of gradual upgrading of employees' competencies, knowledge, and skills aimed at quality performance of defence tasks and missions, and at professional performance of functional duties.

The Serbian Armed Forces educate their personnel at the secondary-school level at two institutions, the Military High School and the Secondary Vocational Military School, and at the graduate and postgraduate level at the Military Academy. Graduates of the Secondary Vocational Military School become non-commissioned officers of a specific service. The Military Academy offers nine accredited undergraduate study programmes, six master's degree programmes, and five doctoral study programmes. The Military Academy admission criteria are somewhat different for women and men. Namely, the testing of physical fitness differs by gender, while all other criteria are the same. Candidates must take math tests and undergo psychological and health assessments. The physical abilities of young men and women are tested in four disciplines. In three disciplines, the tasks are the same, while in the fourth, boys do push-ups while girls do pull-ups. The norms, however, are different for young men and women, which, according to the MoD, is justified given the build and average physical strength of young men and women.

In 2009, 240 students enrolled at the Military Academy in Serbia, including 49 women (20.4%), while in 2019, 100 students enrolled, including 14 women. This indicates a reduced interest in attending the Military Academy in general, and among the female population in particular. In 2019, 100 students graduated, among them 15 young women (15.0%). In the top 10% of the 2019 graduating class were two women and 13 men. Similar to the share of women in the forces engaged in peacekeeping missions, high fluctuations are also present in this aspect. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind trends over time rather than focus too heavily on data for individual years. In this regard, the report of the Analytical Group for Monitoring NAP 1325 in Serbia states that in the academic year 2020/2021, 38% of persons enrolled at the Military Academy undergraduate studies were women. In the same year, 57% of those enrolled in the first grade of the Military High School were women and 46% of those enrolled in the Secondary Vocational Military School.

Gender equality topics in the education system exist as elements of compulsory courses or are featured in other content. Although there are no precise individual courses on gender equality among military education courses, content related to gender and gender equality has been introduced to certain social science courses in both undergraduate and specialization studies. Hence, the undergraduate course Sociology and Military Ethics includes content on family, social differences, and inequalities. In the courses Law on Defence and International Humanitarian Law, content related to the protection of women in war and conflict scenarios is taught, as is content on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other relevant resolutions. The Human Resource Management course instructs students on gender aspects in selection, education, and development. In addition, career development includes training and education for women in the defence system, as well as the advancement of women in the defence system and women's leadership.

The MoD estimates that additional work is needed to create improved content on gender and gender topics that would be included in the curricula of individual courses (small project proposals,⁴² **organizing meetings to discuss the content of courses, etc.**).

5.2. Attracting women to choose a career in the armed forces

In terms of activities and measures taken to attract women to choose a career as professional soldiers and/or employment in the MoDs and the AFs, there has been a noticeable increase in the number and variety of activities and the scope and intensity of their implementation. However, it should be borne in mind that promotional measures have limited influence, and that a number of other factors influence the extent to which women are more likely to pursue a career in the military profession and/or apply to serve in the armed forces. Some of these factors are related to employment conditions. In this regard, potential or present employees inherently compare employment conditions in the military profession to those in other sectors, such as salaries, social rights, and benefits (health, disability, and pension insurance, the minimum length of service required to exercise pension rights, the right to paid sick leave and annual leave, shift work, possibilities for flexible working hours, various support measures for parents with small children, pay grades, the

⁴² In the second phase of the project Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans, the Ministries of Defence were invited to propose small projects that could contribute to achieving gender equality in their institutions through: strengthening existing gender equality mechanisms, increasing capacities for the analysis and use of gender disaggregated data in human resource policy development, building institutional capacities to prevent and address cases of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, and revising military education programmes to include the gender perspective. From 2019 to 2021, the Ministries of Defence nominated 34 small projects, which they have been actively implementing with the support of UNDP SEESAC.

difficulty of working conditions, risks, etc.). Other influential factors include the availability and quality of employment opportunities, the socio-economic conditions in the households where potential or current employees live, etc. In addition, cultural factors influencing women's choices, including career-related ones, should not be neglected, such as norms and values related to gender roles, social pressures related to acceptable professions and careers for men and women, and the slow pace of change of these factors in the region.

The **MoD and the AF BiH** utilize various promotional materials displaying photographs of women in the armed forces and using gender-sensitive language. Telephone numbers are distributed to candidates so that they can find out more about jobs in the armed forces, as well as telephone numbers or website addresses where information specific to women is available, including on the benefits and challenges of working in the armed forces. Other attempts to reach potential candidates are realized through TV shows, publications of the MoD and the AF of BiH, and through "open days," in which the military vocation and the life and work of members of the Armed Forces are presented to young people, including the duties of the military vocation, weapons, and the like. According to the assessment of the Ministry of Defence, a good response to these materials and activities has been recorded so far among both young women and men. Information is presented in media with a predominantly female audience and distributed in places commonly visited by women. With the aim of a continuous military service promotion process, the MoD of BiH has signed agreements with the Ministries of Education of BiH on the promotion of the military vocation. In line with these agreements, universities and schools are visited as target groups for the promotion of military service. In addition, visits to relevant lower-level institutions and employment offices are also carried out.

In order to systematically attract women to the **MoD and the Armed Forces of Montenegro**, the Ministry of Defence has issued the *Guidelines for Attracting and Retaining Women in the Armed Forces of Montenegro*, intended for the military command staff, for organizational units dealing with human resources, planning and development, education and training, operations, and public relations, and for all structures within the Ministry of Defence and the AF with competences linked to the recruitment, admission, selection, and professional development of AF personnel. One of the most important mechanisms for attracting more women are the annual plans for recruiting personnel to meet the needs of the AF MNE, where the female population is a special target group, towards which specific promotional messages are defined and activities conceived.

Various campaigns are regularly implemented to increase the motivation of young women to choose the military career. One such campaign is conducted during the promotion of and call for applicants to be professional soldiers, for the selection of cadets and scholarship winners, and for voluntary military service and participation in projects. Promotional messages refer to equal access to military service, the equal ability of women and men to perform all military duties, career development for women in line with the principles of equal opportunities, etc. Activities specifically related to the female population are: the publication of reports and interviews with camp participants,⁴³ women cadets, and women professional military personnel, as well as involving women participants in peacekeeping missions. Promotional messages are featured on TV, in print media and women's magazines, and on social networks. A special information desk dedicated to women is provided during fairs for the promotion of the military profession. Gender-sensitive language is used in all activities aimed at promoting the military profession. Women members of the AF MNE also directly engage in the promotional activities.

In various promotional activities, photos of women serving in the AF MNE are displayed and telephone numbers or addresses of internet sites where candidates can obtain more detailed information about jobs in the AF MNE are distributed, including information intended specifically for women. Women members of the AF are equally engaged in video materials that promote the AF, education at foreign military academies, admission to the AF, and the military's significance and role in society in general. For the needs of the fairs, a brochure pertaining to women entitled *Join... be a part of us, be active, shape your future* was developed and printed. In addition, a web application was created to establish direct communication with target groups, including women.

In addition to disseminating information about careers in the AF MNE in the media and through the education system, information is also distributed through specially organized forums. Such information forums are organized by the Ministry of Defence and held in all the municipalities of Montenegro. Information is also disseminated at fairs, in shopping malls, and through various presentations for students organized by the Ministry. Dissemination of information is also carried out through lectures and panels organized by other actors within the "open days" of the AF MNE, while internal mechanisms are employed to popularize the military profession and distribute information about published competitions. This is achieved primarily through sending notification emails to all employees in the Ministry of Defence and the AF of MNE. In addition, it is suggested to participants in various projects to disseminate information about military career opportunities to their peers, as a form of passive marketing, etc.

The "open days" of the Armed Forces of Montenegro represent a tradition practiced for years by the MoD and the AF of MNE. It is organized in various units of the AF, with the main goal of informing the public about the role and importance of the Armed Forces, including secondary-school students enrolled in their final grade and university students, who receive information about military career opportunities. Participants and attendees include children from kindergartens, primary and secondary school students, and students from faculties. In addition to excursions/field trips for pupils and students, activities like a technical-tactical meeting, a cruise on the school boat Jadran, and other similar activities are organized. Women from the AF MNE regularly participate in these activities.

⁴³ The summer military camp is a project of the Ministry, which has been organized for years with the aim of raising the awareness of the high school population regarding the AF and its role and importance in society, as well as of providing more information about various military career opportunities. More information about this project can be found at:

https://mod.gov.me/rubrike/OPROBAJ_SE_KAO_VOJNIK_-_Ljetnji_Vojni_kamp_za_mlad

The Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia implement a number of affirmative measures to attract women personnel to the defence system, in accordance with the *Action Plan on the Popularization of the Military Profession to Attract Personnel to Serve in the Army*:

- In competitions for the enrolment of cadets at the Military Academy and competitions for the admission of professional soldiers, there is a special paragraph that encourages girls and women to join the Army;
- Encouraging girls and women through short success story videos featuring women members of the Army;
- Encouraging girls and women through media campaigns (social networks and the Ministry's website), news outlets, guest appearances by women members of the armed forces on television shows, etc.

Activities for the popularization of the military profession are implemented by teams from the Ministry and the Army, respecting the gender principle, i.e., in each team there is a woman member of the Army. Personal stories and statements about work engagements in the Army and missions abroad are presented through videos to enable a vivid portrayal of an attractive profession with new challenges.

On its website, the Ministry of Defence features a page "Apply, be a part of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia," dedicated to the popularization of the military profession. The page is active and regularly updated with new information on competitions, application documents, requirements, and selection criteria. In addition, videos popularizing the military profession and informing potential candidates about announced competitions for the recruitment of new staff are distributed through social networks, where the Ministry of Defence and the Army are actively present, such as on Facebook and Twitter.

Short videos are regularly presented containing interviews, statements, and messages by various members of the Army – military personnel of different ranks, women military personnel of different ethnicities, and military personnel participating in missions outside the Republic of North Macedonia- as are video presentations on the conditions for living and studying at the Military Academy, and on voluntary military service in the Army.

Printed materials, such as leaflets, posters, and brochures, with information contributing to the popularization of the military profession are also distributed. The Army is also present at annual employment fairs, where the military profession is promoted at special stands with promotional materials. Initiatives for the popularization of the military profession include the dissemination through employment agencies of the brochure "Informing the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia on the manner and procedure of voluntary military service in the Army," which is primarily intended for young people aged 18-25. In a broader context, the popularization of the military profession is carried out as a part of certain "community-wide events," where, in addition to the presentation of the armed forces, an information stand is set up to attract young people to the Army and printed promotional materials are distributed. Promotional activities of the Army during the April 4th NATO Day, as well as activities implemented within large military exercises, are organized in some of the most visited places in several cities in the country.

Several promotional activities are carried out in the framework of the events to mark Army Day. A Military Academy promotion stand is set up, where interested candidates can obtain information through brochures, as well as orally, about admission to the Academy, the education it offers, and the advantages of the military profession. Throughout the year, several "open days" are organized, in which members of the Army and the Military Academy meet with citizens. In this way, citizens can visit barracks and units, and get acquainted with the environment, working conditions, and everyday duties of the armed forces, enabling them to imagine what a working day of members of the armed forces looks like in practice.

Both the MoD and the Armed Forces of the **Republic of Serbia** implement various measures with the aim of increasing the number of women in the Serbian Armed Forces. These measures include the promotion of working in the AF through the media, on TV, and through documentary and public information programmes. When preparing promotional materials, care is taken: to include women in photographs representing the SAF; to distribute a phone number or an internet presentation where candidates can be informed in more detail about jobs in the SAF; to ensure that competitions for the admission of new personnel are gender sensitive, etc. In addition, special attention is dedicated to information provided through the media with a primarily female audience, through the education system, and through social media.

In the Serbian Armed Forces, "open days" are implemented in a planned and organized manner, at the territorial or garrison level. At the relevant barracks – responsible for garrison activities in larger places, displays of armaments, equipment, uniforms, personnel, etc., are organized, generally on a weekend day (typically Saturdays). Officers, both men and women, accompany the technical devices and alongside these items present their duties in the army to the citizens and answer various questions. Frequently asked questions include those on employment, working conditions, salaries, training, promotion, etc. The goal of such open days is to bring the Serbian Armed Forces closer to the local population, to overcome any prejudices about the military profession, such as its difficulty or the belief that the AF are "closed" to the public, while promoting affirmations and calls for employment in the SAF.

Similar to these open days, the SAF actively participate in employment fairs in order to motivate citizens to apply for available positions in the SAF. Promotional material is distributed at fairs, while admission to the Serbian Armed Forces is conducted through public competitions, which are posted on the Ministry of Defence website, with detailed information on general and special requirements, status and education requirements, and documents to be submitted for a particular job.

5.3. Employment practices in defence institutions and gender equality

Employment practices are one of the key points in the process of integrating women into the armed forces. If these practices are characterized by elements of direct or indirect discrimination, they can lead to constant lower selection of women, despite intensive promotional activities and measures. Even when these practices are not characterized by any elements of overt or covert discrimination, they can be inefficient from the point of view of balancing outcomes in the structure of the employees if they are not strengthened by affirmative action measures for the employment of less represented groups (e.g., women).

Based on the information provided by the ministries of defence of the four states, employment policies and practices are given great priority. Improving laws and bylaws, internal employment, and human resources policies, synchronising promotional activities with job postings, and adapting standards of physical fitness to women are just some of the elements of employment practices that seek to achieve equal opportunities for women and men.

The ministries conduct regular employment analyses and based on these make recommendations for new employment cycles, including recommendations for increasing female employment. In some states (e.g., BiH), new personnel admission commissions must have women among their members. In all countries, the vetting of candidates includes vetting related to human rights violations, and those convicted of domestic violence and/or gender-based violence are prohibited from recruitment.

However, there are elements that still require additional improvements in order to further encourage the employment of women in the ranks of professional soldiers and remove structural and cultural barriers that stand in the way of women pursuing a military career in larger numbers. Taking into account the particular practices in the four countries, information for each country is presented below.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Employment

In line with the *Plan and Dynamics of the Release of Personnel* and the *Plan of the Admission of Personnel*, which are based on vacancies in formation positions, decisions on the needs for admission to military service are made by the Minister of Defence of BiH upon the proposal of the Chief of the Joint Staff of the AF BiH. A person who meets the general admission requirements and the special requirements prescribed by the competition, in accordance with the *Law on Service* and the *Rules of Procedure on Admission into Military Service*, may be admitted to military service. In accordance with these rules of procedure, the admission procedure includes the admission, review, and evaluation of candidates' applications, testing, and health examinations, security vetting, the training of candidates, and the signing of the Contract of Admission into Military Service. The entire process takes six months regarding candidates for soldiers and non-commissioned officers, and 14 months for officers. Criteria for admission into military service differ for women and men in terms of the physical fitness test, since different standards are defined, with physical fitness tests adapted to female candidates. The security vetting procedure includes verification of all the data which candidates have stated in the *Verification Questionnaire*, as well as cooperation with all relevant agencies and institutions in collecting security-relevant information necessary for drafting the final *Verification Report*. Candidates cannot be engaged in the AF BiH if they have any history of human rights violations, including domestic violence or sexual violence.

Employment is carried out in accordance with the Gender Equality Policy in the MoD and the AF BiH, which states "*achieving real gender equality defined by the Gender Equality Law of BiH*" as one of its goals. Nevertheless, there are no quotas for the representation of women in the armed forces, and the annual targets defining the planned recruitment of personnel do not delineate the admission of new staff based on gender. The targets are established in accordance with the Admission Needs Plan based on vacancies in formation positions. Regardless of the share of women not being defined as a quantified target that needs to be achieved, measures are implemented with the aim of increasing the number of women in the AF BiH, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Monitoring of employment practices and gender sensitisation of selection commissions

In order to monitor employment, human resource management analysis is conducted annually with the aim of pointing out positive and negative circumstances in the field of human resources management. Based on this analysis, recommended measures, actions, and procedures for future action are developed to achieve the best possible results in this field. Admission to military service is one of the important aspects of these analyses. Based on the analyses conducted in the period 2017-2019, it was deemed that the commissions for admission into military service worked in accordance with the laws and bylaws that regulate this area.

Steps have also been taken to sensitise members of personnel commissions to gender equality. Members of commissions for the selection and admission of candidates into military service are appointed by a decision of the Minister of Defence and are obliged to work in accordance with the laws and bylaws that regulate this area. Candidates are selected based on achievement lists. All members of the recruitment commissions must have attended gender equality courses. In addition, the *Rules of Procedure on Admission into Military Service* prescribes that selection commissions are composed of both women and men.

Montenegro

Employment

In Montenegro, there is a clearly defined strategic approach regarding the employment of women in the armed forces. The 2018 *Strategic Defence Review of Montenegro* states that the Ministry of Defence will continue providing equal opportunities for women and men in employment and military careers, as well as continuous support to women in education and the development of their careers, with openness and access for all, including leadership positions. The *Long-Term Defence Development Plan 2019-2028* establishes an increase in the number of women in command positions, missions, and operations as one of the first level priorities, and in the programme area "Recruitment," it is stated that active promotion of the military profession should bring the army as close as possible to the young female population. In July 2016, the Ministry of Defence adopted the *Human Resource Management Strategy in the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces of Montenegro*, which defines the gender equality policy and sets strategic goals in this regard, particularly related to increasing the representation of women in the AF, in command positions, and in missions. The Strategy is implemented through annual action plans that include both gender equality policy and objectives set in this area, and envisage the adoption of an internal annual gender equality plan in the Ministry and the AF.

The *Law on the Armed Forces of Montenegro* stipulates that gender-balanced representation should be taken into account when recruiting for service in the AF MNE. Assessment methodologies for recruitment, cadet education, and student scholarships prescribe that in the case of two candidates of different sex having the same number of points, the female candidate shall have priority in the selection process.

Based on the *Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Admission of Persons into Service in the Armed Forces of Montenegro and in the Reserves of the AF, and the Manner of the Selection of Cadets*, the General Staff proposes the initiation of the admission procedure, in accordance with recruitment plans. The public call for applications contains general requirements, which are at the same time those defined by law, and also the special requirements determined for each formation position, i.e., job. The general requirements are that candidates: should be Montenegrin citizens and not have citizenship of another state; not be younger than 18 years; meet the requirements in terms of health and psychological ability to serve in the AF; meet the criteria in terms of physical fitness, in accordance with the standards set by the Ministry; be appropriately educated; have not been sentenced to unconditional imprisonment for a term exceeding six months, i.e., that they have not been convicted of a criminal offense against the constitutional order and security of Montenegro, against humanity and other values protected by international law, or against life and body, freedom and human and civil rights, sexual freedom, marriage and family, human health, protection at work, the general safety of people and property, legal procedures, official duties, justice, the public order, the honour and reputation of the Armed Forces of Montenegro, property, and state bodies; and have not been prosecuted *ex officio* for a criminal offense; as well as: that no final judgment of the courts prohibits them from performing a certain activity or duty; that in the last three years prior to admission into the Armed Forces they have not terminated their service in a state body or a legal entity due to a serious breach of official duty; and that there are no security obstacles for admission to service in the Armed Forces.⁴⁴

In addition to other documentation, candidates shall submit a certificate from the competent authority that no criminal proceedings are being conducted against them. A candidate cannot be engaged in the AF MNE if he/she has any history of human rights violations, such as domestic violence or sexual violence. This is primarily defined by the Law on the AF MNE, which is operationalized by the Rules of Procedure.

Criteria for admission into military service differ for women and men in the aspect related to the examination of physical aptitude. Admission commissions conduct selection procedures in accordance with methodologies that ensure a transparent and objective process, which allows for the full application of the merit system. A ranking list of candidates is assembled, including all relevant criteria, education scores, test grades, and interviews. The part of the ranking list pertaining to test performance is also made available to the candidates. This process enables admission commissions to more efficiently assess the quality of registered candidates, and to assess its efficiency, while the candidate selection system is subject to internal analysis. In the period 2017-2019, one such analysis of the selection process was conducted. The findings indicated that those candidates who had met the requirements of the public call for applications and who had successfully passed all the tests were accepted. In addition, a small number of application withdrawals during the selection process were documented, as was the considerable success of accepted candidates in education and training.

Monitoring of employment practices and gender sensitisation of selection commissions

The MoD of Montenegro considers it necessary to further improve the selection process elements in order to ensure that selection procedures and processes not only reflect the highest standards of transparent procedures and the application of criteria in selecting the most successful candidates, but also assure the consistent integration of gender equality principles in all elements of the selection process. This entails that the commission members engaged in the recruiting of new personnel are educated on gender principles, as well as that commissions have a gender-balanced composition. Currently, however, not all members of the commissions have been trained in gender equality. In addition, there are no current internal regulations that mandate equal representation of women and men in the commissions for the admission of new candidates. These are aspects that require further efforts in the forthcoming period.

⁴⁴ The Law on the Armed Forces, Art. 47.

The Republic of North Macedonia

Employment

The Integration of the gender perspective into strategic documents is an important foundation for the admission of women into the armed forces. The Defence Strategy emphasizes the inclusion of the gender equality principle in all phases of defence policy and planning.

Certain policies contained in the Strategy for Human Resource Management in Defence represent the basis for the admission of women and their career development. The policy of attracting personnel to service in defence structures provides guidelines for establishing the models for the recruitment and admission of personnel, the promotion and popularization of defence professions in society, and targeted recruitment efforts for vital defence specialties.

The policy on the structure of the defence personnel provides guidelines for: the identification of the needs for defence personnel; structuring the necessary skills and competencies according to hierarchy and interdependence; the identification of needs in the development of skills and competencies (input parameters in the education and training system); and determining the needs for recruitment and staffing.

The strategic approach of the Military Academy in this area is based on the Long-Term Defence Development Plan and other strategic documents of the Ministry of Defence. The activities of the Military Academy in terms of the promotion and popularization of the military profession and the selection and admission of women to study at the Military Academy are carried out in line with the principle of inclusiveness and non-discrimination.

The recruitment of new personnel – professional soldiers – for the Army takes place in accordance with the established system of *planning, programming, budgeting, and execution*. The total number of women and men professional soldiers to be admitted to the Army is planned annually, according to branches and services. Based on the expressed needs of the General Staff, the MoD announces a public competition for the selection and admission of candidates for professional soldiers.

This public competition for the selection and admission of candidates for fixed-term employment, with a contract lasting 4 (four) years, with the possibility of several extensions, to a maximum of 45 years of age, is announced in accordance with the law.

Admission requirements are the same for women and men and are prescribed by the *Law on Service in the Army of the RNM*. The requirements stipulate that candidates must be citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, be of legal age, and meet the requirements for health and physical aptitude. Special requirements stipulate that candidates should have completed secondary school education and should not be older than 25 on the day of the expiry of the deadline for applying to the competition for the admission of professional soldiers.

The public competition is published on the MoD website and in at least two daily newspapers, one of which must be a newspaper published in Macedonian and one a newspaper in any language spoken by at least 20% of citizens who speak an official language other than Macedonian.

Pursuant to the *Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Conducting the Recruitment of Candidates for Officers, NCOs, Professional Soldiers, and Civilians for Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*, recruitment phases for new personnel include:

- The verification of the information provided by the candidates as true;
- A physical fitness test, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Maintaining and Testing the Physical Ability of Active Military Personnel Serving in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- A health fitness test, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure on the Criteria for Assessing the Special Health and Physical Fitness of Active Military Personnel for Service in the ARNM;
- An interview – candidates who have successfully passed the medical examinations and physical fitness test and who meet the legal conditions are invited to an interview by the Commission appointed by the Minister of Defence.

If during the security vetting procedure it is confirmed that a person has violated legal regulations, including human rights violations, the person cannot obtain a security certificate, which means that the person cannot be admitted to the Army.

The physical fitness test is administered by the Commission for Testing of Physical Aptitude, established by the Decision of the Minister of Defence, which works in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Maintaining and Testing the Physical Ability of Active Military Personnel Serving in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*. The testing of medical aptitude and the psychological assessment for determining fitness for military service is performed by the Military Medical Commission of the Ministry of Defence, formed by a Decision of the Minister of Defence, which works in accordance with the Rules of Procedure on the Criteria for Assessing the Special Medical and Physical Ability of Military Personnel in the Army of the Republic of Macedonia.

Candidates who are not accepted receive a written notification from the Commission for Conducting the Selection and Admission Procedure, explaining the reasons for their not being accepted. They then have the right to appeal to the State Commission for Decision Making in Second Instances in Administrative Procedures and Labour Disputes.

The impartiality of the recruitment process is achieved through, in addition to the Commission for Admission Procedure established by the Decision of the Minister of Defence, the inclusion of participants from organisational units of the Ministry, the Military Medical Centre, and the General Staff of the Army in the procedure, in line with their competences.

Criteria for admission to military service are the same for women and men, except for gender-specific standards for physical fitness, where the prescribed values for women are adapted accordingly and are different than those for men. According to the MoD, in the selection of candidates the adequate and equitable representation of members of ethnic communities and the development of the gender perspective are taken into account, while respecting the principles of expertise and competence. The entire process typically takes two to three months.

Monitoring of employment practices and gender sensitisation of selection commissions

The MoD and the Army conduct internal analysis of the recruitment processes in accordance with the system for planning, programming, budgeting, and execution, while internal analyses are also conducted at the Military Academy, where cadets are selected and admitted.

The Republic of Serbia

Employment

Recruitment procedures in Serbia are similar to those in the other countries in the study. Candidates must pass security vetting, psychological assessment, and an English language test. The vetting of candidates also implies that persons with any history of human rights violations, including domestic violence and sexual violence, cannot be engaged in the SAF.

Monitoring employment practices and gender sensitisation of selection commissions

Commissions for the admission of new personnel are not obliged to have both women and men among their members and the members are not obliged to have attended gender equality courses. The commission ranks the candidates based on the established criteria and the highest-ranked candidates are accepted regardless of gender. According to the MoD, the key effects of policies to attract women are reflected in their increased participation in education and training for the military profession, resulting, therefore, in their correspondingly greater participation among employees. No internal or external analysis of the efficiency of the selection system measures has been conducted to date.

6. Career development and working conditions

Opportunities for women to advance to higher ranks or leadership positions, as well as other working conditions, influence the job satisfaction and career development of women in the armed forces, while contributing to their overall impression of the armed forces as an employer, all of which can impact the attractiveness of the military profession to women. The findings of this study indicate that in the defence systems of the four countries there are systems for monitoring and promoting personnel that are gender sensitive in principle, but do not go beyond gender sensitive records and the ensuring of equal conditions. In other words, there are no practices that take into account the specific potentials and needs of women or provide gender-specific forms of systematic support. Career development is realized primarily through various types of training, available to women and men, with patterns of career advancement and working conditions defined equally for women and men. These policies fail to take into account the additional burdens that women have in the region's societies due to their dominant role in family care. Records of trends in and the reasons for leaving the professional soldier career have been established, but they are not precise enough to enable a clear picture or adequate understanding of the real reasons for service members leaving the military service. Working conditions have been adapted to the needs of women in various aspects, though there is much room for their further improvement, both in physical and material aspects (uniforms, physical working conditions) and in aspects related to support for career development (e.g., a mentoring system, etc.).

6.1. Monitoring and promotion of personnel

In the MoD and AF of BiH, there is a system for the monitoring, professional development, and career advancement of personnel. According to the MoD, the professional development and career management of professional military personnel is defined, planned, organized, and implemented in order to ensure that transparent professional development and efficient career management are realized as prescribed, in line with the needs of the service, and with regulations, professional experience, and abilities. The career development system is defined by the *Rules of Procedure on Professional Development and Career Management*. According to the MoD, a quality formal and legal basis and career management system that includes gender equality has been established, and an increase in the number of women in higher ranks should be realized in the forthcoming period with the development of the careers of women members of the defence system.

To monitor the movement of personnel, a monitoring mechanism for personnel trends and performance has been established. This mechanism uses the electronic database ORACLE, which is kept by the MoD and AF of BiH and which contains performance lists where the relevant scores of professional military personnel are recorded according to the prescribed criteria.

The MoD and Armed Forces of Montenegro, based on the *Law on the Armed Forces of Montenegro*, prescribes that the promotion of military personnel is to be carried out in accordance with the law and the needs of the service, while the needs for promotion are determined by the Military Personnel Promotion Plan. This law also defines the requirements for the promotion of professional military personnel to higher ranks, including, among others: appropriate assessment; the absence of security obstacles; the absence of imprisonment for a criminal offence in the prescribed period of time; the absence of disciplinary offenses; time spent in the current rank; knowledge of the English language according to the NATO standard STANAG 6001; and appointment(s) to a formation position of a higher rank. More detailed requirements are stipulated for promotion in officer and non-commissioned officer ranks. The selection of officers and non-commissioned officers for regular promotion is carried out once a year based on the conditions prescribed by this Law and according to the Plan for the Promotion of Military Personnel and other criteria related to professional and work qualities, taking into account the grades, level of education, and training of candidates, the opinion of superiors, work experience, career development plans, and other information, in accordance with the methodology for conducting the procedure of the regular promotion of officers and NCOs adopted by the Ministry. The selection of officers and NCOs for regular promotion is carried out by a commission appointed by the Minister. The manner of selection of officers and NCOs for regular promotion is prescribed by the Ministry. Officers and NCOs may be promoted in an extraordinary procedure by special selection if, in addition to fulfilling certain requirements, they have: carried out an act of exceptional importance for the protection of human life and health or of exceptional importance for the protection of natural and other assets; or achieved outstanding results or shown exceptional work ability. The procedure for extraordinary promotion by special selection is initiated by the Chief of the General Staff, and the manner of extraordinary promotion is prescribed by the Ministry.

In the MoD and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, within the formation of the Army, a system for the monitoring, professional development, and promotion of personnel is established. The system was established and functions in accordance with relevant legal acts and it consists of several phases and components implemented within the annual work of the Command and the units in the Army.

In the MoD and the ARNM, the system for the monitoring, professional development, and promotion of personnel is in accordance with the Law on Service in the Army and the adopted relevant normative acts. It is implemented in accordance with the Work Plan in the General Staff, commands, and units of the Army. It consists of the following processes:

The first process involves the monitoring and evaluation of members of the Army. It is an annual process in which work results for the period since the last phase of promotion are monitored and reviewed, and concluded by the signing of the "official assessment."

The second process begins with the appointment of commissions for promotion at the Army level, with candidates selected on the basis of their professional, expert, and character traits. Based on their review of the files of the officers who meet the requirements for promotion to a certain rank, the commissions compile a proposal of the ranking list of candidates for promotion to a higher rank in the branches and services of the Army. All officers are evaluated and ranked through this sub-process. Reports containing the findings of this assessment are submitted to persons responsible for promotion (the Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff).

The third process is the work process of the personnel council appointed in military units and institutions in the rank of battalions and higher. When appointing the council, adequate and equitable representation of persons belonging to all communities should be taken into account. The main function of this advisory body is to consider human resource aspects relevant for active military and civilian personnel (appointment, assignment, representation, service suspension/termination due to training and professional development, transfer, etc.), while the findings on these issues are submitted to the competent officer.

According to information provided by the MoD, one of the postulates contained in the *Human Resources Management Strategy* is equality. All human resources management processes are defined in line with this postulate to provide equal opportunities for career development, professional development, selection, appointment, and promotion in the defence hierarchy, as well as equitable ethnic and gender representation, in accordance with socially accepted norms and standards, bearing in mind the achieved results and necessary competencies.

In both **the MoD of Serbia and the Serbian Armed Forces**, there is a system for the monitoring, professional development, and advancement of personnel. Persons serving in the SAF are regularly assessed and duties for which a person exhibits an affinity are considered. Work is monitored, and, according to the MoD, duties are not divided based on gender. At present, however, there is no mechanism to monitor employee trends according to gender. There are no gender-disaggregated records on persons who withdraw from training.

6.2. Professional development

Introduction to service and duties

According to the information provided by the ministries of defence of the countries in the region, an important and influential factor at the beginning of the military career is the support provided to new recruits during their introduction to duties. A formal mentoring system has not been established in any of the four countries, which also signifies the absence of gender-specific mentoring that would enable women members of the armed forces to provide systematic support to their newly admitted female colleagues. However, similar support is reported as being provided through informal practices. The competent officers are typically the ones to provide such support, while also relevant is collegial support in getting familiar with duties. Collegial support is also present during the introduction of individuals to managerial and command positions.

Training and professional development

In the armed forces of the four countries, continuous professional training of various types plays an important role in the career development of professional AF members.

According to the **MoD and AF of BiH**, the professional development and advancement provided to women in their careers is carried out the same way as with men. All bylaws regulating the field of career development, including the *Rules of Procedure on the Education and Training of Professional Military Personnel* and the *Rules of Procedure on Professional Development and Career Management*, prescribe the equal treatment of all persons. However, as previously mentioned, it should be borne in mind that equal treatment does not necessarily lead to equal outcomes in a context in which women have only recently entered the professional military field and face various challenges in integrating into a male-dominated profession and organization.

According to the ministries of defence, women and men have equal access to training and professional development, and gender-disaggregated records are kept on women's and men's participation in the trainings for professional military personnel.

In the AF BiH, training covers various gender equality topics, such as basic training on gender equality, training on gender-based violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, and gender-based discrimination, on topics in the field of international conventions and women's rights, such as CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, on topics in the field of international conventions and women's rights in conflict situations, and on peacekeeping, refugee situations, and similar circumstances. Such training has been implemented in the framework of the basic military training for admission to professional military service for soldiers, NCOs, and officers, for both women and men, as a part of pre-service training and training for the development of women and men to take on leadership roles in units and commands of the AF. Professional development in the field of gender equality has been conducted since 2008 through various courses, seminars, workshops, conferences, and study visits. In the period 2017–2019, 2,265 employed military personnel attended training on gender equality, 37.9% of which were women. This indicates that women's participation in gender equality training significantly surpasses their level of representation in the professional army, which on the one hand could be seen as a positive indicator of their interest in gender equality and their rights as a contributing factor to their empowerment, while on the other hand could also be viewed as a negative indicator of the lower interest of men in this topic and the belief that gender equality is primarily a women's issue.

In the **Armed Forces of Montenegro**, persons employed as professional soldiers attend various types of training defined by the *Training Plan and Programme*, according to certain groups/categories; namely, basic military training at the Training Centre and professional-specialist training in the units in which they are deployed, which is also related to their future work. The professional development of personnel for command positions is carried out at foreign military educational institutions, while relevant personnel also attend faculties in Montenegro for the needs of programme management. Training related to the qualification of persons in the AF is conducted in the country, at the Training Centre, and abroad. Other types of training are also provided in the country, using internal mechanisms, or through external institutions abroad, thanks to bilateral cooperation and support from international institutions. Education, training, and professional development, as well as the criteria for referral to training and professional development, are identical for women and men.

According to the MoD, women and men have equal access to training and professional development and they equally participate in it. However, it was clarified that this primarily means that in legal terms there are no obstacles for women and men to participate equally in training and that they have equal access to career development. In the MoD there is a database of all employee participation in training and professional development. According to data provided by the MoD, among the employees in the AF MNE who participated in training in 2019, 7% were women and 93% men. These training activities included topics related to gender equality, gender-based violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, and gender-based discrimination, as well as to international conventions and women's rights in conflict situations and peacekeeping, refugee situations, and similar circumstances. Specific training for managerial skills is also available to employees, regardless of command/leadership level. This training also covers human rights, but it is not a necessary condition for performing a managerial function. While training for employees on maintaining a harassment-free workplace exists, such training is not specifically mandated for managerial/command staff.

Training in the field of gender equality has been provided since 2014, covering topics such as *NATO Directive BI SCI 40-1* and *UNSC Resolution 1325*, gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations, and gender equality with special reference to sexual violence and violence against women. Training is provided by certified gender instructors, trained under the accredited programme of the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, Sweden.

In **North Macedonia**, the following training centres operate in the framework of the MoD and the Army:

- The Dr Joseph Cruzel Training Centre is responsible for the implementation of specialized training in several areas, with the goal of improving the skills and abilities of various categories of defence personnel.
- The Regional Centre for Public Relations – an accredited NATO partner centre for education and training and an established regional centre incorporated in the structure of the Ministry, provides national and international courses on public relations.
- The Pilot Training Centre.

The Training and Doctrine Command (KOD) is a part of the organizational and formation structure of the Army, tasked with organizing, coordinating, and providing the individual training of soldiers, cadets, NCOs, and officers from active duty and reserve personnel, while supporting the collective training of command soldiers and Army units and the development of doctrines and lessons learned in the Army.

Within the KOD there are: the Centre for Individual Training, the Cadets Training Centre, the Training Support Centre (Krivolak, Streliste, training on water and in winter conditions), the Foreign Language Centre, the Centre for the Breeding and Training of Dogs, the Centre for the Development of Doctrines, Regulations, Instructions, and Lessons Learned, and the Simulations Centre.

The Medical Training Department functions in the framework of the Army Logistical Base.

The criteria for referral to education, professional development, and training do not differ for women and men and the training is equally available to women and men.

During their career, employees are envisioned to undergo a process of independent learning, which represents a vital component of independent development and implies: individual learning, research, reviewing of professional literature, and gaining practical experience. This is of key importance for the achievement of individual qualifications necessary for the development of defence personnel.

Since 2013, training has also covered basic training on gender equality, gender-based violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, and gender-based discrimination, including relevant international conventions, women's rights in conflict situations and peacekeeping, refugee situations, and similar circumstances. This training is implemented by certified gender equality trainers as well as external gender equality experts. Women and men have equal opportunities for professional development, and relevant gender-disaggregated data are recorded.

During the period 2017-2019, 413 military personnel members participated in training on gender equality, 36.6% of which were women.

According to information of the Ministry of Defence of the **Republic of Serbia**, women and men have equal access to training and professional development for the purpose of career development. Also, in the process of the selection of candidates for training in the

field of civil-military cooperation, special emphasis is put on the participation of as many female members as possible, which is highlighted in the call for the proposal of candidates. Additional training includes topics on gender equality, gender-based violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, and gender-based discrimination, as well as on international conventions and women's rights in general, but not on specific international conventions dealing with conflict situations and peacekeeping, refugee situations, and similar circumstances, including women's rights in these situations.

The intensification of training delivery in the field of gender equality was particularly emphasized with the adoption of the *National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia (2010-2015)*. The training content prescribed by this document is implemented in line with the organizational units' training assessments, while the choice of concrete topics and implementation methodologies is in accordance with the Training Manual on Gender Equality in the Ministry of Defence and Serbian Armed Forces, published with the support of UNDP SEESAC within the framework of the project "Support for Gender Mainstreaming in the Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans."⁴⁵ In 2019, 15% of employed women and men attended gender equality training.

In the MoD of Serbia and the SAF, professional development for managerial skills is also available for both managerial and command staff at all hierarchy levels. During the career of members of the military, professional guidance is provided by competent officers (according to command or staff duties) and the selection is made based on competent officers' assessments. Relevant training is attended by all persons, according to their needs and training assessment. Managers and command staff are obliged to complete human rights training on maintaining a harassment-free workplace. This training is also available to other employees.

Table 6: Percentage of women among persons who attended additional training, 2012 and 2019

State	2012	2019
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5,5	9,4
Montenegro	*	7,0
Republic of North Macedonia	13,4	13,0
Republic of Serbia	19,0	22,0

* No data.

Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia, MoD of the Republic of Serbia.

Career advancement

According to the statements of the ministries, promotion requirements for higher ranks and command and managerial positions are identical for women and men. The MoD BiH pointed out that the promotion criteria defined by the *Rules of Procedure on Professional Development and Career Management* are the same for women and men, and that the *Rules of Procedure on the Professional Development and Career Management of Professional Military Personnel* also opens opportunities for additional incentives for the promotion of members of the underrepresented sex.⁴⁶

In the Armed Forces of Montenegro, based on the *Law on the Armed Forces of Montenegro*, the career development of professional military personnel represents a process of the gradual acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities which serve as the basis for appointment to a formation position, i.e., duty, and to other or higher duties, and for promotion to a higher rank. The career development of a person is planned, organized, and implemented based on the assessment the relevant criteria, such as military-professional competence, achieved work results, independence and creativity in work, command or managerial ability, attitude towards subordinates and superiors, and physical aptitude. It also depends on the person's rank, education, training, time spent in service, age, and other circumstances relevant for service performance in the AF. The drafting of a bylaw to regulate the manner of conducting career development is currently underway. The Long-Term Defence Development Plan stipulates that the career guidance system shall be based primarily on the needs of the service and includes clear and transparent paths of employees' career development, aiming to achieve the desired professional structure. The system's criteria pertain to the identification of employees' potentials and abilities, work results, assessment of their professional development, knowledge about all career development opportunities, and monitoring. The **Personnel Information System** provides support for making decisions in regard to the professional and career development of staff.

⁴⁵ The manual was approved in the House of the Army of Serbia on September 15, 2016.

⁴⁶ Rules of Procedure on the Professional Development and Career Management of Professional Military Personnel (*Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina*), Art. 26, para.11: "(11) Upon determination of gender inequality in the MoD and AF of BiH, in accordance with the Law on Gender Equality in BiH, the Minister of Defence shall make a decision supplementing the provisions of paragraph (4) of this Article in the interim period. During the period established by this Decision, a special measure will be adopted that, if among the five, or among the seven most successful candidates prescribed in paragraph (4) of this Article, there is not at least one representative of each gender, a sixth or eighth candidate is to be added to the list. The aforementioned sixth or eighth candidate, added to the ranking list in this case, is to be the most successful candidate on the list from the less represented gender in the AF BiH, provided that the candidate fulfils all requirements prescribed by the law and the Rules of Procedure."

According to information by the Ministry of Defence of the **Republic of North Macedonia**, equal career development and advancement opportunities for women and men are regulated by the *Law on Labour Relations (Official Gazette of the RM no. 62/5, 106/8, 161/8, 114/09, 130/09, 50/10, 52/10, 124/10, 47/11, 11/12 and 39/12)* and the *Law on Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia (Official Gazette no. 77/12, 29/14, 33/15, 71/16, and Official Gazette no. 101/19 and 14/20)*. As examples of equal opportunities for advancement in service, it was reported that in 2019 a women colonel was appointed as Adjutant to the President of the Republic of North Macedonia and that women were appointed to command and commander duties in the Army, as well as to managerial positions in the MoD.

According to the statements of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, women and men are treated equally when it comes to career development and advancement. There is no difference in the advancement criteria for women and men. In other words, it is highlighted that women shall advance equally to men, provided they fulfil the requirements.

Change of career from civil to military and vice versa

Individuals can also develop their careers by transferring from the status of civilians to military personnel and vice versa. In **BiH**, such transfer is regulated by the Rules of Procedure on Admission and the procedure can be organized through a public or internal competition. In the period 2017-2019, there were no such transfers from civilian to professional military service, but four members of the professional military were admitted to the category of civilians (two men and two women). The reason for transfer to the civil service was to achieve the status of permanent employment without time limits in the category of civilians, which is in contrast to the conditions of professional military personnel, who due to age and in accordance with the Law on Service in the AF BiH must leave the AF at an earlier age.

The Ministry of Defence of Montenegro allows civilians to transfer to professional military service under certain conditions. Namely, a civilian serving in the AF can be introduced to the ranks of professional military personnel if he/she has the appropriate education, if he/she has completed the training for officers, NCOs, or soldiers, and if the staffing needs of the Army require it. The transfer of a civilian serving in the AF to serving as a member of the professional military personnel is done through an internal competition in the Ministry, published on the bulletin board and website. The decision to initiate an internal competition is made by the Minister, based on the proposal of the Chief of the General Staff. The selection process is conducted by a commission appointed by the Minister, and the aptitude tests are performed in accordance with the methodology for conducting the selection process of candidates for the transfer of a civilian to professional military personnel. In addition to recruitment through a public competition, exceptionally, a civil servant and appointee employed in the Ministry may be recruited for service in the AF and appointed to an appropriate formation position or other military position based on an internal competition. In both cases, a civilian/civil servant is to be admitted into the initial ranks, except in outstanding cases when the needs of the AF needs require it. During the period 2017-2019, four women and two men transferred from civilian to professional military status. The share of those introduced to the ranks among the total number of civilians employed during the three-year period was 2.41%.

The Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia enables the transfer of civilians to professional military service, in accordance with provisions of the *Law on Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*, as well as the *Rules of Procedure on the Admission of Candidates for Officers, NCOs, Professional Soldiers, and Civilian Personnel to Service in the Army of the Republic of Macedonia*. The procedure is public and open, and is conducted through an internal/public competition by the commission appointed by the Minister of Defence.

The procedure takes place in four phases:

- The verification of the application form information submitted by the candidates as true;
- The testing of physical fitness, carried out in line with the *Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Testing of the Physical Aptitude of Active Military Personnel for Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*;
- The verification of health aptitude, carried out in line with the *Rules of Procedure on the Criteria for the Assessment of the Special Health and Physical Aptitude of Military Personnel for Service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*.

Candidates who successfully pass the health and physical tests and fulfil the legal conditions are interviewed. The interviews are carried out by a commission appointed by the Minister of Defence.

During the period 2017-2019, 17 women and 601 men transferred from civil to military service.

6.3. Working conditions

Trade union associations

Occupational safety in the armed forces of all four countries involved in this research is regulated by civil and military laws. In terms of trade union organization, in BiH trade union association is not envisaged for professional military personnel serving in the AF BiH, but civilians serving in the AF BiH may engage in such associations. There are two relevant trade union organizations in the AF of Montenegro: the *Trade Union of the Armed Forces of Montenegro* and the *Trade Union of the Defence and the Armed Forces of Montenegro*. The AF MNE Trade Union is organized and operates within the Federation of Trade Unions of Montenegro and has the right to collective

bargaining and concluding collective agreement at a certain level, participation in resolving collective labour disputes, and other rights prescribed by a special law for authorized trade union organization. The Trade Union can participate in the work of the Social Council through representative trade union headquarters. The Trade Union of the Defence and Armed Forces of Montenegro is organized and operates within the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro. The share of women among members of Trade Union of the Armed Forces of Montenegro is 20.16%, and 28.57% among members of the board of directors. There is a Committee for Gender Equality in the Federation of Trade Unions of Montenegro, and members of the AF MNE Trade Union are also involved in its work. There are currently no specific women's organizations or associations in the AF MNE. Employees of the Army of North Macedonia have the right to organize trade unions in accordance with the Law on Defence. According to the MoD of the Republic of North Macedonia, women and men shall participate equally in trade unions. There are no special women's associations in the Army or any such associations of women professional soldiers. In the Serbian Armed Forces, women and men also have equal rights to organize trade unions, though there are no special women's interest organizations.

Salaries and retirement eligibility

According to all four ministries, there is no gap in the salaries of women and men, i.e., salaries are equal for jobs of equal value. There are certain differences in some countries in terms of requirements for exercising the right to a pension. In Montenegro, pension and insurance eligibility based on service in the AF is qualified by up to 35 years in effective duration of active status in the social security system and 55 years of age (this applies to officers and contracted officers, NCOs, and contracted NCOs). For these categories of employees, pension and insurance eligibility based on service in the AF is qualified by up to 40 years of active status in the social security system and 55 years of age. Persons who have served in the AF shall exercise the rights stemming from retirement and disability insurance in accordance with the *Law on Retirement and Disability Insurance*. Persons serving, or who have served, in the AF acquire the right to a pension when they: reach 67 years of age and have at least 15 years of pensionable service; or have 40 years in effective duration of active status in the social security system; or 30 years in effective duration of active status in the social security system, out of which at least 20 years were effectively spent in jobs where the length of service is calculated with increased duration. Exceptionally from the conditions of 67 years of age and at least 15 years of relevant service, the right to an old-age pension, since 2019, is granted to persons who reach 66 years of age for men, and 61 years and six months for woman in cases of individuals who have acquired 40 years in effective duration of active status in the social security system. An insured woman acquires the right to an old age pension when she reaches 56 years and six months of age and 36 years and six months of insurance coverage.

In the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, men and women can acquire the right to a pension on several grounds – under the *Law on Service in the Army*, the *Law on Labour Relations*, and the *Law on Retirement and Disability Insurance*. There is a difference only on the specified grounds that if employees in the Army acquire the right to a pension in line with the Law on Retirement and Disability Insurance, in addition to the required number of years of pensionable service, which is the same for women and men, there is a difference in age, which is 64 years of age for men and 62 for women.

According to the Law on Service in the Army, it is envisaged that the employment of active military and civilian personnel terminates *ex lege* upon exercising the right to a pension, i.e., upon completion of 40 years of pensionable service and reaching 55 years of age (for men and women). According to the exception from paragraph 1 of this Article, if changes are brought about by an act on the formation of the Army, i.e., an act of the Ministry of Defence on systematization that causes the abolition of a unit, command, staff position, or the abolition of a formation position, resulting in a situation in which for the following 60 days there is no possibility for the relevant active military and civilian personnel to be appointed to duty to another formation or job position, then their employment is to be terminated through the exercising of the right to a pension with at least 25 years of pensionable service, of which at least 15 must be years of service in the Army. According to the Law on Labour Relations, the employer shall terminate an employee's employment contract when the employee reaches 64 years of age and has at least 15 years of pensionable service.

In the Republic of Serbia, women also retire earlier, while reforms are being implemented to equalize the conditions for exercising the right to retirement.

Unlike the other systems covered above, in BiH the conditions for acquiring the right to a pension are the same for women and men.⁴⁷ The right to a pension can be exercised either when a member of the military personnel in the social security system reaches the age of 55 with at least 30 years of pensionable service, or when he/she reaches 40 years of pensionable service, regardless of his/her age.

Infrastructure and equipment conditions

According to the information provided by the ministries, the inclusion of women in the ranks of professional soldiers has been accompanied by interventions in the work infrastructure. Investments have been made in providing dormitories, changing rooms, hygienic and sanitary facilities, and other personal hygiene rooms that are separate for women and men. Military equipment and weapons do not differ for women and men, while regarding women's and men's uniforms, they are partially different. There are generally no differences in field uniforms, but formal outfits are tailored differently for women, including skirts, women's shoes, and differences in other clothing details (such as ties, hats, etc.). There are no special uniforms for pregnant women in any of the four countries. The decision-making on uniforms is quite similar, i.e., it is carried out in a rather centralised manner⁴⁸ and without the participation of women mandated (except

47 This is defined by the Law on Service in the AF.

48 In BiH the decision is made by the Minister of Defence; in Montenegro by the eight-member commission formed by the Ministry of Defence, without the mandatory participation of women (no women have participated so far); in North Macedonia by the President; while in Serbia by the Minister of Defence, who makes the decision based on the proposal of the Dressing Council.

in North Macedonia, where women also participate in the expert commission, although this is not an obligation defined by regulations). In BiH, the decision is made by the Minister of Defence. In North Macedonia, the President decides by issuing a Decree on the Uniform in the Army of North Macedonia, based on the proposal of the relevant expert commission. The Chief of the General Staff of the Army of North Macedonia defines the appearance, design, dimensions, and technical specifications in accordance with the *Instruction for quality assurance and the control of uniform and marking products in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*.

In Serbia, the Minister of Defence decides based on the proposal of the Dressing Council.⁴⁹ In Montenegro the decisions are made by an eight-member commission formed by the Ministry of Defence, without the mandatory participation of women (no women have participated so far). Bearing in mind the previous findings of the first study on these aspects, the situation is changing at an unsatisfactorily slow pace, at least in regard to the adaptation of uniforms.

6.4. Engagement and disengagement rates

Rates of engagement and disengagement in the armed forces are important indicators of the integration of women and men. The relinquishing of the military career can happen at a very early stage, such as during basic education and training, but also in the later stages of the career. Information on these aspects can also indicate problems that need to be addressed by different policies. For example, the dropping out of recruits from education may indicate problems related to, on the one hand, expectations or, on the other hand, characteristics of the educational programme. The leaving of recruits in the first years of military service could be indicative of inadequate introduction mechanisms, while at later stages of important problems in working conditions. Gender aspects are here very important, given that in each of these phases they can point to obstacles faced specifically by women and conditions that do not suit their potentials and needs. According to the ministries, those who leave are interviewed, but the real reasons behind the general categories, such as “personal reasons” or “upon personal request,” cannot be seen from the records kept on reasons for leaving. According to the ministries, there have been no discernible gender differences in the patterns and reasons for persons leaving the military career. In order to maintain quality personnel, the armed forces apply various measures to prevent the leaving of employees, such as support in career development, fair remuneration systems, monitoring the salaries policy and other benefits, addressing employees’ housing problems, and the like. More precise data on the leaving of military training and the professional military career by recruits and employees are presented below.

When it comes to dropping out of training, no records are kept in Serbia. In North Macedonia in the previous five years, there were no reported instances of persons dropping out of training for admission to the armed forces or the military academy. In Montenegro one woman and one man were documented as having left the training. According to the records of the MoD of BiH, in the preceding five years, 32 men and one woman (3%) had dropped out of basic training and 20 men and 4 women (17%) had dropped out of the military academy.

However, when it comes to leaving military service, different tendencies are discernible in the three countries for which data were available (Table 7).

Table 7: Disengagement rates during the past 5 years, disaggregated by gender and years of employment

	Number		Number	Total
	Women	Men		% of women among those withdrawing from military service
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
First year of service	4	38	42	9.52
2nd – 5th year of service	30	508	538	5.6
5th – 10th year of service	44	553	597	7.4
Over ten years of service	32	785	817	3.9
Montenegro				
First year of service	2	0	2	100
2nd – 5th year of service	1	12	13	7.7
5th – 10th year of service	1	8	9	11.1
Over ten years of service	5	8	13	38.5
The Republic of North Macedonia				
First year of service	1	0	1	100
2nd – 5th year of service	3	0	3	100
5th – 10th year of service	7	0	7	100
Over ten years of service	36	645	681	0.05

Source: MoD of BiH, MoD of Montenegro, MoD of North Macedonia

⁴⁹ The Dressing Council is a body composed of representatives of the MoD and SAF organizational units, in the framework of the MoD’s Directorate for General Logistics of the Sector for Material Resources.

The largest number of persons who left their military careers in the past five years was registered in BiH (a total of 1,994 persons), among which were 110 women (5.5%). Among women who left the military career, the largest numbers were documented in the category of employees with 5-10 years of service, while for men, among those with over ten years of service. A prominent reason among persons who had served for over ten years in the AF BiH was retirement, while “personal reasons” was a commonly indicated reason among categories of employees with less time spent in the military service. As personal reasons are not recorded more specifically, but as a single category, it is not possible to further investigate them in concrete terms, or to discern whether there are differences, and if so in which aspects, between women and men who leave military training or the professional military career. According to the MoDs, policies aimed at ensuring retention of the highest quality personnel in the AF are aimed at ensuring that all members of the AF are treated “with full respect of the principles of transparency, fairness, and equal opportunities.”

In Montenegro, 37 employees left the military service in the final five years of the observed period and almost a quarter of them were women, which was almost four times their representation in the military service (6.2%). This above-average representation among those leaving military service could indicate that women have slightly higher dissatisfaction regarding the profession or certain conditions or situations present in it when compared to men, especially bearing in mind that the share of women among those who left the service was the highest among persons who had been employed for more than 10 years, excluding women who left in the first year of service. Given the small size of the numbers, however, reliable conclusions cannot be drawn.

Montenegro’s Long-term Defence Development Plan 2019-2028 (DPRO) envisages that the planning and implementation of feasible activities in the forthcoming period will be continued in the areas of: improving working conditions and the working environment, quality of life, and housing solutions for employees; providing psychological support to employees and participants in missions and operations and their families; improving the organizational climate and interpersonal relationships among employees; and supporting women. The document envisages the advancement of measures to improve personal support for employees as one of the top priorities.

One of the goals of the Human Resource Management Strategy in the Ministry of Defence and AF of MNE is to create and maintain competitive programmes and activities to ensure a higher standard and quality of life for its employees. To achieve this goal, the Strategy defines the Policy for Improving Personal Support and Quality of Life. This policy implies the implementation of appropriate measures to improve the quality of work and the work environment, as well as the employees’ quality of life. In addition to the previously mentioned DPRO measures, emphasis has been placed on designing adequate motivational measures in accordance with work performance, creating a favourable work atmosphere through: respect for ethical principles in relationships between employees; providing equal conditions for education, training, and advancement; and insuring employees’ life and health.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, a total of 692 employees left the service during the same period, 6.8% of which were women, with the majority of these women having had more than ten years of service. The retention policy in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, contained in the Strategy of Human Resources Management in Defence, defines, *inter alia*, the principles, measures, and activities for the establishment of a system of salaries, rewards, and penalties. In addition to establishing compensation for effort made and duties served, these elements also serve as the primary motivation incentives. In accordance with the Law on Service in the Army, in Art. 28 on “Awards,” military and civilian personnel may be awarded decorations, plaques, badges, awards, and commendations for outstanding achievements in the service. In this regard, the Rules of Procedure on Awarding Plaques, Badges, Awards, and Commendations to Military and Civilian Personnel Serving in the Army and the Rules of Procedure on the Manner of Awarding Monetary Prizes to Active Military and Civilian Service Personnel in the Army are in effect. These rules of procedures regulate the awarding of prizes and recognitions by the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff of the Army. For exceptional results, Army units are awarded the Order of Military Merit, while individuals – military personnel - may be awarded the Medal for Courage by the President of the Republic of North Macedonia.

7. Life-work balance

In all four countries in the region, the right to pregnancy leave, maternity leave, and parental leave is guaranteed by law.⁵⁰ Although legal conditions allow fathers to use parental leave upon 60 days after the birth of the child and in special conditions immediately after the birth of the child, they do not create sufficient motivating or effective (binding) conditions for fathers to be more involved in the care of new-borns or young children (up to one year of age). The legal conditions and the use of the right to parental leave for child care in the armed forces of the countries in the region are presented below.

In BiH, the right to pregnancy leave and maternity leave is regulated by the applicable laws of BiH, particularly Art. 36 of the *Labour Law in BiH Institutions*. Based on the findings of a certified medical doctor, a woman may initiate maternity leave 28 days prior to childbirth and can take maternity leave following childbirth, which cannot be shorter than 42 days following the event (Art. 36). The parents of the child may agree that the prescribed leave, or a part of the childcare leave, after the expiration of 60 days from the birth of the child, shall be taken by the father of the child instead of the mother (Art. 37). Prior to this time limit, maternity leave can be used by the child's father only in the event of the death of the child's mother, if the mother abandons the child, or if the mother is prevented from exercising this right for justified reasons. Otherwise, the father is entitled to seven days of paid leave after his wife's childbirth (Art. 37). After having used maternity leave, a woman who works full time has the right to be absent from work once a day for one hour to breastfeed the child, based on the findings of a certified medical doctor (Art. 39).

In 2019, in the Ministry of Defence and the AF of BiH the right to maternity leave was exercised by six women and one man – a civilian serving in the AF BiH. Currently, there are no specific measures for harmonizing professional and family life for women and men who have children and work in the MoD and the AF of BiH. For the time being, flexible working hours are not an available option for employees in the MoD and the AF of BiH. There is a possibility, in accordance with the provisions of Art. 38 and 43 of the Labour Law in BiH Institutions, in the context of extended needs, and in provisions of Art. 47 of the Law on Civil Service, for the provision of child care. There are no institutional kindergartens within the MoD and AF of BiH. In this aspect, it was stated during the research carried out for this study that it would be necessary to first document the situation and then propose appropriate measures.

In Montenegro, an employed woman may initiate maternity leave 45 days prior to giving birth, and mandatorily must take such leave 28 days prior to giving birth. If a woman starts working upon 45 days from the birth of the child, in addition to the mandated regular daily break for all workers, the woman has the right to use an additional 90-minute break for breastfeeding, in agreement with the employer. During maternity leave, the parent is entitled to salary compensation in the amount of the salary he/she would earn when working, in accordance with the law and collective agreement. After the expiration of maternity or parental leave, the employer is obliged to provide the employee's return to the same job position or to a suitable job with the same or higher salary. Parental leave for child care is a right that can be used by only one of the parents. It can be used for up to 365 days from the day of the child's birth. If one parent stops using parental leave, the other parent has the right to use the remainder of the leave. Based on the findings and recommendation of a competent medical doctor, a woman may be temporarily assigned to other jobs during pregnancy and while breastfeeding if this is in the interest of preserving her health or the health of her child. If the employer is not able to assign her to another job, the employee is entitled to a leave of absence, with salary compensation in accordance with the collective agreement, which cannot be less than the compensation that the employee would receive if she were at her job. During such temporary assignment to another position, the employed woman is entitled to the earnings of the job position where she had worked before the assignment. It is prohibited for an employed woman during pregnancy or a woman who has a child under the age of three to work more than full time or at night. Exceptionally, an employed woman who has a child older than two years of age may work during night time only if she agrees to such work in a written statement. In 2019, parental leave was used by seven women and three men in the AF, and by eight women in the Ministry of Defence. There are no flexible work arrangements for parents in the Ministry of Defence and AF of MNE, i.e., employees cannot opt for flexible working hours or part-time work. At present, there are no institutional kindergartens within the Ministry of Defence and AF of MNE.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, women employed in the Army have the right to a continuous nine-month paid leave of absence during pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood, and 15-month leave if they give birth to twins. During pregnancy and through one year after childbirth, it is forbidden for the female employee to perform work that entails increased risks for her health or the health of the child. If a women worker performs work that could adversely affect her health during pregnancy or the health of the child, determined in accordance with the provisions of the Law, the employer is obliged to provide her with another appropriate job position and a corresponding salary equitable to her original job, if this arrangement is indicated as more favourable for her.

It is prohibited that a female employee work overtime or at night during pregnancy or with a child up to one year of age, except with her written consent. Employees who take pregnancy leave, maternity or parental leave, or child care or protection of the child leave, are entitled to salary compensation. A female employee who is breastfeeding a child and works full time is entitled to a paid break during working hours, in the duration of one and a half hours a day, which includes the standard daily break. After the cessation of pregnancy

⁵⁰ In BiH, the right to pregnancy leave and maternity leave are regulated by the applicable laws, such as the Labour Law, in BiH Institutions and the corresponding laws of relevant entities. In Montenegro, these rights are defined by civil laws, primarily by the Labour Law and the Law on Social and Child Protection. The situation with these rights is the same in the Republic of North Macedonia, where they are regulated by the Law on Labour Relations, and in the Republic of Serbia, where they are regulated by the Labour Law.

leave, or maternity and parental leave, the worker is entitled to unpaid parental leave for the care of the child of up to three months before the child reaches three years of age of the child. This may be taken in a maximum of three lots. A woman employee who uses her right to maternity leave can return to work before the expiration of the leave if she desires so, but not before 45 days from the day of the birth of the child (compulsory leave). If she decides to return to work, in addition to the right to her normal salary, she is also entitled to compensation for maternity and parental leave, in the amount of 50% of the determined amount of compensation for leave. The law guarantees the right of the employee to return to the same job position after the end of maternity leave, and if this is not possible, to an appropriate job, in accordance with the conditions. Time spent on maternity and parental leave is not factored into the time required to be spent in a particular rank before being promoted to a higher rank.

If the female worker as the mother of the child does not use the right to parental leave, this right can be used by the father or an adoptive parent of the child. In cases of a child with developmental problems and/or special educational needs, if both parents are employed, one of the parents of the child (the same right belongs to a single parent) has the right to work part-time (based on the findings of the competent medical commission, if the child is not in institutional care). In 2019, only two men and 43 women exercised their right to parental leave in the MoD and the Army.

Flexible working hours⁵¹ are enabled by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, but this is applied only in the MoD and not in the Army. Institutional kindergartens for employees' children have not been established within the MoD or the Army. There are also no specific policies for dual service couples.

In the Republic of Serbia, employed women are entitled to a leave of absence due to pregnancy and childbirth (maternity leave), as well as a leave of absence for child care, for a total of 365 days (and in the case of a third child, up to two years). Based on the findings of the competent health authority, maternity leave may be initiated as early 45 days prior to the expected birth of the child, while mandatorily 28 days prior to the time set for childbirth. Maternity leave lasts three months from the date of childbirth. After the expiry of maternity leave, a woman has the right to a leave of absence for child care for up to 365 days from the day of the commencement of maternity leave. The child's father can use the right to "maternity" leave only in cases when the mother abandons the child, dies, or is prevented from exercising this right due to other justified reasons (serving a prison term, serious illness, and the like). The father of the child may exercise this right even if the mother is not employed. The child's father may also take child care leave. In cases of both maternity leave and child care leave, the mother and father are entitled to salary compensation. During pregnancy and breastfeeding, the women employee, as the mother of the child, is forbidden from working in positions that, according to the health authority, are harmful to the mother's and child's health, and in particular in positions that require lifting loads or where there is harmful radiation or exposure to extreme temperatures and vibrations. It is prohibited for pregnant and breastfeeding employees to work overtime and at night. In the MoD of Serbia and the SAF, certain measures are applied that enable women and men to better reconcile professional and family life. Namely, their places of service are harmonized to the greatest degree possible, as are annual leaves, while child care needs are also taken into account when both parents are employed, etc. However, measures such as flexible working hours are not provided or regulated in the MoD and the SAF, and no institutional kindergartens exist within the MoD and the SAF. Records on the exact number of men who exercised the right to parental leave in 2019 are not available, but according to the MoD, the number is negligible.

51 With the beginning of working hours between 7:30h and 8:30h and the end between 15:30h and 16:30h.

8. Protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment and abuse

The armed forces of the four countries have established complex legal frameworks for protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse. These legal frameworks are defined by numerous legal documents (presented in greater detail in Annex 2 of this report), ranging from key civil laws in the country, such as anti-discrimination laws, labour laws, gender equality laws, criminal laws, and the like, through special laws on the army or laws on civil servants, to specific regulations and other bylaws regulating the competencies, procedures, and sanctions regarding cases of discrimination, mobbing, or sexual harassment and abuse in the armed forces. In principle, the ministries of defence apply policies of zero tolerance for discrimination and violence and the formal and legal aspects of the procedures were addressed in great detail in the carrying out of the research for this study (also presented in Annex 2). The *Handbook on Combating Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse*, which is a convenient tool available to ministries, has been published in order to improve this area.

According to data provided by the ministries, in the past period there were very few reported cases of discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment, or abuse in the Ministries of Defence or AF.

In BiH, a zero-tolerance policy is established in addition to the legal framework and procedures for action in cases of sexual harassment. In addition, disciplinary and criminal sanctions are enforced depending on the gravity of the offense and the consequences of the potential sexual harassment. The Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina has begun implementing the Conclusion of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was adopted at the session held on October 15, 2019. In accordance with the Conclusion, the *Decision on the policy of zero tolerance for acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment* was adopted together with the *Decision on the appointment of a counsellor for the prevention of gender-based harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace*.

In 2019, there were no reported cases of gender discrimination in the MoD and the AF of MNE, while according to the records of the Ministry of Defence for the period 2015-2020 there were two complaints for mobbing (one filed by a woman and one by a man). These were dealt with as legal cases due to the failure of the mediation procedure, through which the facts could not be established. The complaints did not relate to gender-based harassment.

In 2019, in the MoD and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia there were no disciplinary proceedings and no sanctions imposed for gender-based discrimination. Three cases of mobbing were reported (one woman and two men), while one woman reported sexual harassment. The cases were reported to an authorized person for protection against workplace harassment in the MoD. One case was resolved by counselling, in one case the complaint was submitted to a mediator but guilt was not proven, one case was time-barred, and one case was pending at the time of this study's creation. The MoD and the Army keep gender-disaggregated records on perpetrators and victims of sexual harassment and on perpetrators and victims of mobbing.

In 2019, in the MoD of Serbia and the SAF, eight complaints were filed for mobbing by a person of the opposite sex. According to the Ministry, procedures were initiated for all submitted complaints, in accordance with the law, service regulations, and internal acts. However, at present there are no statistics on the gender of perpetrators and victims of sexual harassment or perpetrators and victims of mobbing. There were no other forms of harassment reported (e.g., on the grounds of age, disability, etc.).

The ministries apply various measures to encourage the reporting of discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment or abuse. During 2019 and 2020, the MoD of BiH conducted a survey on the position of women in the MoD and the AF of BiH, which also included questions on experiences of discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse. Based on the results, it was determined that there is a difference between the younger and older members of the AF BiH. Younger members were indicated as being more aware, open, and willing to speak out on all issues of gender equality and harassment on any grounds, which was considered at least partly due to the MoD's work on this issue. According to the MoD, victims are encouraged to report all forms of discrimination and violence, and persons in AF leadership positions have an important role in preventing gender-based discrimination and violence. This includes recognizing and publicly condemning expressions of gender and other stereotypes and prejudices, monitoring interpersonal relationships situations, implementing measures to combat discriminatory behaviour based on gender and other stereotypes and prejudices, and encouraging victims to report discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse.

The MoD BiH encourages victims to report discrimination and abuse through the "Incident Hotline." This is an electronic communication channel where employees and other persons can report any irregularities they may notice in the work of the MoD and the AF of BiH. The line was established in 2013 by a Decision of the Minister of Defence of BiH. Reporting is anonymous and represents an obligation for all state institutions, in line with the Anti-Corruption Strategy in BiH, which requires the establishment of open communication channels for anonymous and non-anonymous reports of irregularities. The line is the result of efforts to establish effective control mechanisms that will guarantee an adequate response to any irregularities in the work of the MoD and the AF of BiH, as well as of other institutions. Data submitted via this line cannot be removed or corrected. The complaints and evidence of abuse received through and entered into this system are processed by the General Inspectorate of the MoD of BiH. The MoD and the AF of BiH encourage all employees and members of the AF BiH, business partners, and citizens to indicate and report via the "Incident Hotline" system any irregularities they may notice.

Procedures for the protection of persons who report harassment are accessible and transparent. The application “My Inspector” was launched in mid-2019. The purpose of this application is to provide assistance to members of the AF BiH in reviewing current regulations in the field of ethics and professionalism, as well as other normative and legal standards applicable in the MoD and the AF of BiH. This application, available on the website of the MoD of BiH, simplifies access to inspectors in the MoD and AF of BiH systems, and to information about the competencies and functions of the General Inspectorate of the MoD of BiH.

According to the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro, reporting harassment cases is encouraged and incentivized. Towards this purpose, boxes for anonymous complaints have been set up on the Ministry’s premises. In addition, organizing training on protection from harassment or mobbing is an important information mechanism, encouraging employees to report such cases. Efforts are underway to make harassment procedures more accessible and transparent. Currently, such procedures are prescribed by laws and published on the relevant state bodies’ websites and in the Catalogue of Regulations, available to all state bodies’ employees. Employees also learn about them during training. In 2020, in the framework of the Induction Programme for New Employees in the Ministry of Defence, the topic of mobbing was introduced, including its definition and types of mobbing, as well as ways of processing and acting on the basis of outcomes and indications of what does and does not constitute mobbing.

The Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia do not tolerate harassment in the workplace. In this regard, the *Guide for protection against harassment in the workplace in the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia* was created and has been promoted in barracks throughout the country. It contains clear messages about zero tolerance for harassment and encourages reporting of harassment in the workplace. Each employee has the right to protection from harassment in the workplace. At the same time, employees are clearly and unequivocally encouraged to seek advice and assistance and inform themselves in a timely manner about unacceptable forms of behaviour that constitute harassment. The Guide directs each employee to behave properly, honestly, and professionally and in a way that respects dignity, integrity, and reputation at the individual and institutional level.

According to the MoD, procedures for the protection of persons who report harassment are transparent and available on the official MoD website. Special “Stop harassment” pages have been created, where employees can obtain more detailed information on the manners, measures, and procedures for preventing and protecting against harassment. The obligations of and procedures for all categories of employees in the MoD and the Army are also emphasized. The relevant presentations enable employees access to information on the legal framework for protection against harassment and support mechanisms, and allow them to download the relevant form and submit a complaint.

Employee familiarization with reporting procedures is carried out through the presenting of the *Instruction for protection against harassment in the workplace in the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia* and the *Guide for protection against harassment in the Ministry and the Army*, both of which are promoted in the Ministry and the Army. The guide is distributed to all units in the Army and all employees in the Army and the MoD are familiar with it. In addition, training related to this topic has been continuously implemented.

The MoD of the Republic of Serbia also encourages victims to report harassment through “persons of trust” and psychologists, who together represent the internal complaint mechanism. Employees are informed about procedures for reporting sexual harassment, mobbing, and other types of harassment through regular dissemination of information about gender equality mechanisms established in the MoD and the SAF. Relevant data is published on bulletin boards and in military media on the work of the MoD Gender Commissioner and persons of trust in the MoD of Serbia and SAF organizational units. In addition, in line with the *Law on the Prevention of Harassment at Work*⁵² and the *Rules of conduct of employers and employees concerning the prevention of and protection from harassment at work*,⁵³ every employee, in entering into a job position, is mandatorily notified about, in writing, and signs the *Notification on the prohibition of harassment at work, and the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of the employee and the employer regarding the prohibition of harassment*. On the same occasion, in addition to a detailed explanation of the procedure for initiating protection proceedings, employees are provided with information on persons in a given organizational unit of the MoD of Serbia and the SAF who are on the list of mediators in proceedings for protection against harassment at work.

According to the assessment of the MoD of the Republic of Serbia, it is necessary to further improve protection against harassment, i.e., to encourage the reporting of such cases. To that end, it was also deemed necessary to take measures to strengthen gender equality mechanisms and ensure their greater transparency and accessibility to persons in the defence system, as well as to introduce mandatory gender equality training in the MoD of Serbia and the SAF.

Employees in the armed forces of BiH, Montenegro, and the Republic of Serbia also sign a code of conduct, while employees in the MoD and the Army of North Macedonia are presented with the code of conduct, but they do not sign it.

52 *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, no. 36/2010.

53 *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, no. 62/2010.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Increasing the participation of women in the armed forces of the Western Balkan countries is taking place in the context of broader efforts to improve gender equality. The results of these broader efforts indicate relatively slow progress, with pronounced gender inequalities still persisting in the countries covered by this research. According to a number of indicators, the situation is less favourable than the average situation in the European Union, membership within the four states aspire to. In general, the previous period was marked by certain progress, primarily in the establishing of legal frameworks in line with international commitments undertaken by the signing of key conventions for the advancement of women and gender equality, and the building of relevant national mechanisms and policies, among which the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security plays an important role. Closely linked are policies for the greater involvement of women and their better integration into the armed forces. However, the implementation of laws and policies is not sufficiently effective in practice, and, as a result, the advances recorded in various areas of gender equality can be assessed as relatively slow.

The progress of the four countries towards gender equality and the integration of women into the armed forces should be regarded bearing this complex situation and broader context in mind. In comparing the 2019 research findings with those of the initial research from 2012, notable progress is visible in the representation of women in the armed forces in several key aspects:

- The legal framework that creates the preconditions for the promotion of gender equality in the armed forces was improved, including the development and amendment of a large number of bylaws, regulations, decisions, and codes regulating various aspects of inclusion and conditions for women serving in the military profession and in the armed forces;
- The share of women professional soldiers among employees in the ministries of defence and in the armed forces increased;
- The share of women among officers also increased.

However, some less favourable trends were also observed:

- A decrease in the share of women in certain military branches of some of the countries, such as the Air Force and Air Defence branch, and a decrease of the share of women among soldiers in the Land Forces (in Serbia);
- Despite efforts invested in the procedures and practices of career management, women are still represented as only a very small percentage in the command and managerial positions held by uniformed personnel, which is largely a consequence of their recent inclusion in the armed forces, and requires further monitoring; women have not yet reached the highest officer positions in any of the countries included in the project (OF-6 and higher);
- The low representation of women in Montenegrin forces engaged in peacekeeping missions; a significant decline in the share of women in peacekeeping missions in which the Serbian Armed Forces units participated in certain years.

The research findings indicate that in all four countries numerous measures and activities are implemented to attract and recruit women to the armed forces. These measures and activities are defined as priorities of current education policies for the military profession and employment, as well as various plans. They include a varied and wide-ranging set of information activities and campaigns, the promotion of women in the army, efforts to bring the army closer to the local population, and the like. However, it should be borne in mind that the effects of these activities depend on a number of other structural and cultural factors in the broader environment, such as employment opportunities and the prospects of achieving stable careers in other sectors, as well as lingering norms and expectations that women should stick to more traditional career choices, particularly in more patriarchal environments, among others. The set of factors influencing the effects of policies and determining the attractiveness of these careers is also linked to working conditions and career development in the armed forces, job difficulty, working hours, salary grades, advancement opportunities, etc.

In regard to these latter aspects, the research findings indicate that in their employment policies, the ministries indeed dedicate attention to achieving adequate working conditions and career development opportunities for women through gender-sensitive human resource management policies. However, such gender sensitivity is visible primarily in the progress made in developing and implementing gender-disaggregated records, although there are still aspects where precise or gender-disaggregated data are not available in some countries. Furthermore, the understanding of equal working conditions in all the ministries is based extensively on the establishment of formal and legal conditions of equality for women and men, which risks and can result in these ministries not paying sufficient attention to the specific needs and constraints that women may face in practice, despite such formally equal opportunities. Therefore, existing support mechanisms for the inclusion of newly recruited women in the armed forces, which lack a systematic mentoring system, may be insufficient for their rapid inclusion into duties. Women's progress in this context could be slowed by weaker achievements due to parenting and family responsibilities, situations which are not easily captured or visible in numerical indicators. There are also various hurdles associated with the likely possibility of women facing such psycho-social inhibiting factors as lower self-esteem, especially as they constitute a minority while endeavouring to pursue a career in a typically "male profession," as well as barriers related to social expectations and gender role norms that could put pressure on women not to join key career development activities, such as trainings

taking place outside of the place of residence, business trips, participation in missions, etc. One of the less clear aspects is why personnel choose to leave the military career – more precise tracking and analysis of the reasons behind such a decision could provide more information about the problems that women encounter in the armed forces on their path to, and in, a military career.

In addition, although notable efforts have been made to adapt physical working conditions to women, primarily in terms of infrastructure, the information obtained through this research indicates that women are not sufficiently involved in defining certain aspects of work, such as uniform design, etc. Life-work balance policies indicate that the established basic legal conditions are in force regarding the right to pregnancy leave, maternity leave or child care leave, and appointment to adequate job positions for the protection of pregnant women or their secured return to the previous job position, but that no specific policies have been created that go beyond these standard measures. Flexible working hours in such a context are present only in the MoD of the Republic of North Macedonia, and even here they are very limited. No special or institutional kindergartens are available for children of the personnel employed in the armed forces, with some countries lacking precise records on the number of employed men who used their parental leave in the observed period, while in those countries keeping such records this number is very small.

The legal framework for protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment and abuse has been developed in the institutions of the armed forces of all four countries, and basic procedures have been established. The number of reported cases is very low, but the implications of this are ambiguous, as this could be a positive indicator reflecting successful policies and practice in this area, or a negative indicator of the lack of willingness to report such incidents, while the records of such reports are often not gender-disaggregated. Ministries are taking various measures to encourage the reporting of discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment and abuse, but judging by the number of complaints these measures have had limited results so far.

Recommendations

Improvement of records:

- Introduce the monitoring of the average time that women and men spend in one rank, i.e., the average time spent in the previous rank, disaggregated by rank, and the average time spent in the current rank, disaggregated by rank.
- Introduce gender sensitive records on trainings in the MoDs where such records have not been introduced.
- With the aim of more precise monitoring of trends in the representation of women, particularly regarding those aspects which have demonstrated high fluctuation between certain years (e.g., deployment in peacekeeping missions, education, etc.), trends or averages should be tracked and examined in periods of successive years, rather than summarized in situational overviews of single years.
- It is necessary to introduce more precise monitoring of the reasons of personnel for leaving the military and professional soldier career in order to enable the development and implementation of measures for improving the organizational climate and further advancing human resources management processes.

Improvement of gender equality policies

- Greater integration of the gender perspective into the operational planning process.
- Improvement of gender equality policies, including the systematic introduction of gender sensitive language that can create an environment where women no longer feel like “guests in a male profession.”
- Greater integration of the gender perspective into reporting processes, including reporting on missions.
- Introduction of regular monitoring and evaluation of the implemented gender equality measures and activities.
- Greater integration of the gender perspective into the military education and armed forces training curricula of the Western Balkans countries.

Improvement of the representation of women in uniform

- It is necessary to continue with intensive and diverse practices of attracting and recruiting women into the military career, with uniformed women having an active role.
- The reasons for the decrease of representation of women in the Air Force and Air Defence units in certain armed forces should be further examined, and appropriate measures, including promotion, should be taken.
- It is necessary to further examine and understand the lower representation of women in managerial positions held by uniformed persons than in such positions held by non-uniformed persons in the context of the relatively recent entry into service of women professional soldiers, resulting in the current insufficient number of women in the appropriate ranks required for certain command and managerial positions. At the same time, it is also important to monitor and appropriately address, where necessary, the situation so as to ensure that on women’s paths to command and managerial positions there is no latent discrimination or career guidance practices that might reduce the chances of uniformed women to reach command and leadership positions.

Improvement of working conditions and career development opportunities

- While the same forms of career support exist for women and men, given that women have only relatively recently joined the ranks of the military profession, and that they face a professional and organizational environment that has been until recently adapted exclusively to men, it is likely that specific mentoring support programmes for women would produce stronger effects, enhancing their integration while creating and improving possibilities for career development and advancement.
- Considering that the share of women in managerial positions amongst uniformed personnel is lower than their share in managerial positions amongst non-uniformed personnel, it is necessary to conduct research that would determine if there are obstacles in practice, for men and women, in career development and towards command and managerial posts.
- Increasing the representation of women in professional trainings and education should be accomplished by encouraging decision-makers to identify and refer qualified women to relevant positions as well as by encouraging these women to apply for such posts.
- It is necessary to continuously work on raising the awareness of employees and decision-makers in regard to equal opportunities for career development.
- It is necessary to further improve the relevant infrastructure, particularly in certain countries where it has been highlighted that certain physical conditions are not adequate in terms of gender aspects, i.e., it is necessary to allocate funds and invest in separate dormitories, hygiene and sanitary facilities, and the like.
- Efforts must continue on raising the awareness of all employees in the armed forces system in regard to gender equality and on increasing their motivation to support and implement gender equality policies in their daily work.
- Command and managerial personnel should be systematically trained on gender equality, protection against gender-based discrimination, and enabling a violence-free work environment, including gender-based violence.
- It is necessary to examine in more detail the reasons of personnel for leaving the military career, and in the context of this disengagement occurring in training and along different periods in the duration of service, establish whether there any gender-specific reasons are present and, if so, what they are.
- The family support system should be improved, particularly for personnel deployed in missions, and measures for better life-work balance implemented.

Improvement of life-work balance

- As an important institution in and of the state, the armed forces should, through their own example, contribute to positive changes in family care responsibility distribution and adopt and implement measures that would encourage male employees to use their parental leave after the birth of child, as well as leave for child care.
- It is necessary to survey employees with small children about possible measures towards reaching a better balance between professional and family responsibilities, whenever and wherever the mission and duties allow it, and define measures accordingly. Such an approach would make it easier for parents to reconcile these responsibilities in a gender equitable manner.

Improvement of protection against discrimination, mobbing, and gender-based violence

- It is necessary to draft standard operating procedures and guides for the prohibition of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse in the armed forces, following the examples of good practices of other countries that have responded appropriately and successfully to these issues.
- It is necessary to examine the possibilities for the periodic implementation of anonymous surveys about the prevalence of discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment and abuse in order to establish how often these cases are actually reported, to better understand any obstacles in reporting such experiences, and to develop better protection measures.
- It is necessary to raise the awareness of all employees about gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence so that they are able to recognize such incidents in all their forms.
- It is necessary to continuously inform and engage in outreach about the legal protections and procedures available in cases of exposure to discrimination or gender-based violence, so as to encourage employees to report such cases.

Annex 1: Representation of women in the armed forces' units and ranks, 2012 and 2019, in %

Table 8: Share of uniformed women in the MoD and the AF of BiH in various units and ranks, 2012 and 2019, in %

	% of women in uniform											
	Total		In ranks OF-6 and higher (officers)		In ranks from OF-3 to OF-5 (officers)		In ranks from OF-1 to OF-2 (officers)		In ranks from OR-5 to OR-9 (non-commissioned officers)		In ranks from OR-1 to OR-4 (soldiers)	
	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019
Army (Land Forces)	3.9	6.8	-	-	1.2	1.9	1.5	7.3	2.0	4.5	5.5	9.1
Air Force and Air Defence	1.5	1.2	-	-	-	-	1.3	1.2	-	0.6	5.7	25.0
Total, in all branches of the AF	6.1	6.6	-	-	2.2	1.7	3.6	6.8	4.3	0.9	6.1	9.2
In the MoD	1.1	1.2	-	-	1.1	1.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total, in both the MoD and AF	6.1	6.5	-	-	1.5	1.7	3.6	6.8	4.3	0.9	6.1	9.2

Source: Ministry of Defence, BiH.

Table 9: Share of uniformed women in the MoD and the AF of MNE in various units and ranks, 2012 and 2019, in %

	% of women in uniform											
	Total		In ranks OF-6 and higher (officers)		In ranks from OF-3 to OF-5 (officers)		In ranks from OF-1 to OF-2 (officers)		In ranks from OR-5 to OR-9 (non-commissioned officers)		In ranks from OR-1 to OR-4 (soldiers)	
	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019
Army (Land Forces)	4.4	7.2	0	0	0	1.3	4.8	20.5	1.6	3.5	7.7	8.1
Air Force and Air Defence	4.2	5.8	0	0	0	0	0	16.0	3.3	3.3	11.8	7.5
Navy	0.7	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	5.9	0.5	1.1	4.0	9.3
Total, in all branches of the AF	3.4	6.2	*	0	*	0.9	*	17.7	*	2.7	*	8.2
In the MoD	0	5.9	0	0	0	0	*	25.0	*	20.0	*	0
Total, in both the MoD and AF	3.3	6.2	*	0	*	0.8	*	17.9	*	2.8	*	8.2

Source: Ministry of Defence of Montenegro

* Data not available

Table 10: Share of uniformed women in the MoD and the Army of North Macedonia in various units and ranks, 2012 and 2019, in %

	% of women in uniform											
	Total		In ranks OF-6 and higher (officers)		In ranks from OF-3 to OF-5 (officers)		In ranks from OF-1 to OF-2 (officers)		In ranks from OR-5 to OR-9 (non-commissioned officers)		In ranks from OR-1 to OR-4 (soldiers)	
	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019
Army (Land Forces)	4.0	7.9	0	0	1.2	10.9	4.9	23.0	6.0	11.8	3.1	4.9
Air Force and Air Defence	4.9	5.7	0	0	2.7	1.6	2.2	16.1	10.2	7.8	1.2	1.1
Total, in all branches of the AF	5.6	9.5	0	0	8.4	10.7	9.6	22.2	10.7	11.4	3	4.8
In the MoD	1.5	8.7	0	0	-	5.9	-	10.0	-	27.7	-	0
Total, in both the MoD and AF	5.7	9.4	0	0	8.4	9.5	9.6	21.7	10.7	11.5	2.9	4.9

Source: Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia.

Table 11: Share of uniformed women in the MoD of Serbia and the SAF in various units and ranks, 2012 and 2019, in %

	% of women in uniform											
	Total		In ranks OF-6 and higher (officers)		In ranks from OF-3 to OF-5 (officers)		In ranks from OF-1 to OF-2 (officers)		In ranks from OR-5 to OR-9 (non-commissioned officers)		In ranks from OR-1 to OR-4 (soldiers)	
	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019	2012	2019
Army (Land Forces)	4.9	3.9	0	0	0	2.1	2.2	4.5	0.2	3.4	6.5	4.5
Air Force and Air Defence	3.9	1.5	0	0	0	0.7	1.4	1.7	1.0	1.9	9.2	1.6
River Units	*	0.4	*	0	*	0	*	0.9	*	0.4	*	0.3
Other military units	*	2.3	*	0	*	0.2	*	0.8	*	2.2	*	1.8
Total, in all branches of the AF	*	9.0	*	0	*	0.1	*	14.5	*	2.1	*	15.2
In the MoD	1.0	6.2	0	0	0.3	0.6	1.7	28.8	0.5	0.5	3.2	36.3
Total, in both the MoD and AF	4.8	8.7	0	0	0.2	0.3	3.5	16.2	0.5	2.0	0.6	15.5

Source: Ministry of Defence of Serbia

* Data not available

Annex 2: Protection against gender-based discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment and abuse

The Working Group appointed by the MoDs and the AFs of the four countries, through their joint efforts, developed the *Handbook on Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Ministries of Defence in the Western Balkans*, which explains in detail the concepts of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse, and mobbing, describes the international legal framework and the normative frameworks in the four countries, describes response mechanisms in cases of discrimination, etc., and illustrates good practices in all four countries. The key elements of the protection framework that the MoDs of the four countries presented in the 2019 survey questionnaires for the purposes of this report are presented below.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In regard to and in responding to protection against discrimination, including gender discrimination, in the Armed Forces of BiH, upon a complaint about possible discrimination, a procedure is initiated to establish the facts and the existence of disciplinary responsibility in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure on Military Discipline and the Disciplinary Procedure for Professional Military Personnel*.⁵⁴ The system of reporting violations of military discipline in the AF is established through the chain of command and the General Inspectorate. For civil servants relevant processes are carried out in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure on the Disciplinary Responsibility of Civil Servants in BiH institutions*⁵⁵, while for employees and civilians serving in the AF BiH in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure on the Disciplinary Responsibility of Employees in BiH Institutions*.⁵⁶ Upon the notification of a violation, according to the established jurisdiction, a decision to initiate disciplinary proceeding is made by the relevant personnel.

Protection against sexual harassment is established on the basis of the *Decision on the policy of zero tolerance for acts of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment*⁵⁷ and the *Decision on the appointment of a counsellor for the prevention of gender-based harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace*.⁵⁸ The policy of zero tolerance for mobbing and sexual harassment is based on the *Law on Gender Equality in BiH*,⁵⁹ the *Code of Ethics for Civil Servants in BiH Institutions*⁶⁰, and the *Code of Ethics for Military Personnel, Cadets, and Candidates for Training in the MoD and AF BiH*.⁶¹ However, in the MoD and AF of BiH there is no special internal mechanism to monitor, prevent, and control mobbing and sexual harassment, such as an ombudsperson, mediator, or the like. Sexual harassment and mobbing complaints can be submitted to the competent person at the command post, to a superior, to a contact person for gender equality at the respective location, to an ethics advisor, to the General Inspectorate of the MoD of BiH, to inspectors of the AF BiH, and to the Parliamentary Military Commissioner of BiH. Employees can also refer to these persons if they want to report a case of harassment they are aware of.

Employees in the MoD and AF BiH sign the *Code of Ethics for Military Personnel, Cadets, and Candidates for Training in the MoD and AF of BiH*, by which they attest to the following text: "I am entirely acquainted with the provisions of the Code of Ethics on the Conduct of Military Personnel, Cadets, and Candidates for Training in the MoD and AF of BiH. I am aware and believe that military service is not only a profession but also a way of life, and that in every segment of life I must promote the principles of legality, professionalism, loyalty, and humanity, and with this statement I hereby commit, and with my handwritten signature certify, that I will respect these principles through my own professional service, and in life in general. I am aware that violating the Code of Ethics may result not only in moral but also in disciplinary measures, and I declare that I am ready to face these consequences if I stray from the above principles." The signed Code is enclosed in the personal file of each member, cadet, and candidate-in-training of the AF BiH.

Montenegro

In Montenegro, the legal framework is defined at several levels and by different legal acts: the *Law on Civil Servants and Appointees*,⁶² the *Law on the Armed Forces of Montenegro*, the *Law on the Prohibition of Harassment at Work*,⁶³ the *Law on the Prohibition of Dis-*

⁵⁴ Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 96/10

⁵⁵ Official Gazette RS, No. 25/15

⁵⁶ Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 81/07

⁵⁷ Ministry of Defence of BiH: <http://www.mod.gov.ba/afoto2016/Odluka%20%20o%20nultoj%20toleranciji.pdf>

⁵⁸ Ombudsperson: <http://www.ozp.gov.ba/upload/Odluka%20o%20imenovanju%20savjetnice%20za%20prevenciju%20uznemiravanja%20temeljem%20spola%20i%20seksualnog%20uznemiravanja%20na%20radnom%20mjestu.pdf>

⁵⁹ Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no. 16/03, 102/09.

⁶⁰ Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 49/13

⁶¹ Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 88/05

⁶² Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 2/2018, 34/2019, available at:

https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon_o_drzavnim_sluzbenicima_i_namjestenicima.html

⁶³ Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 30/2012, 54/2016, available at:

<http://www.uip.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=274393&rType=2&file=Zakon%20o%20zabrani%20zlostavljanja%20na%20radu.pdf>

crimination,⁶⁴ the *Criminal Code of Montenegro*, and the *Labour Law*. In the MoD and AF of MNE there are mechanisms for dealing with discrimination complaints. The procedure for initiating disciplinary proceedings for minor and serious breaches of official duty adheres to the rules and standards established by the *Code of Ethics for Civil Servants and Appointees*, which prohibits discrimination on any grounds. In cases of the violation of ethical standards and rules of conduct established by the Code of Ethics, citizens and employees can file a complaint to the head of the relevant state authority, who is obliged to examine the complaint allegations and respond to the applicant in writing, within 15 days. Serious breaches of official duty include violent, inappropriate, or offensive behaviour, or the expression of any form of intolerance towards the head of a state authority, civil servants, appointees, or external parties.

The procedure for deliberating on disciplinary measures in the AF MNE (disciplinary offenses include, *inter alia*, any conduct that violates the dignity of persons serving in the AF, and in particular sexual abuse or harassment or behaviour that is discriminatory on the basis of sex, race, skin colour, religion or nationality, or other personal characteristics) commences with the decision to initiate disciplinary proceedings, issued by a person authorized by the Minister (disciplinary prosecutor), based on the proposal of the Chief of the General Staff. The same law prescribes that the disciplinary procedure be conducted by a military disciplinary commission, appointed by the Minister of Defence. Upon conducting the procedure and establishing the facts, the commission proposes a decision to the Chief of the General Staff, who, based on the decision to initiate disciplinary proceedings, renders a final decision based on the evaluation of evidence presented during the procedure and the proposed decision of the military disciplinary commission. Pursuant to the assessed level of the severity of the disciplinary offense, the person who committed the offense is subject to disciplinary sanctions. A person against whom a disciplinary sanction has been imposed has the right to appeal within eight days from the day the decision was issued. Following an appeal, the decision is made by the Minister of Defence. An administrative dispute may be initiated against this decision. The Department for Inspection Supervision of the Ministry also performs internal control against all forms of unethical and illegal behaviour of employees in the Ministry and the AF, including monitoring any measures taken in cases of mobbing. In case of mobbing, employees can contact the relevant mediator or the employer if no such mediator is appointed. An employee who is not satisfied with the outcome of the procedure may initiate the procedure for protection against mobbing in the Agency for the Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes or in the competent court. In case of sexual harassment, employees can turn directly to their superior(s), employer, the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, and the court.

Republic of North Macedonia

Pursuant to the *Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination*⁶⁵, a person who considers that he/she has suffered discrimination should submit a complaint to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, in writing or orally. This Law also regulates judicial protection, i.e., a person who considers that her/his right has been violated due to discrimination may file a lawsuit with the competent court.

In accordance with the *Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*⁶⁶, a person whose right to equal treatment has been violated on the basis of sex may file a complaint with:

- a legal representative at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in charge of conducting the procedure for determining unequal treatment of women and men; or
- the Ombudsman, who, within his/her competencies, works to secure the realisation of equal opportunities through legal protection of equal opportunities for women and men, particularly in instances of an individual's rights being reported as violated or restricted by state administration, by other institutional bodies, or by legal and natural persons entrusted with public authority.

The *Law on Labour Relations*⁶⁷ contains provisions based on which women and men must be provided with equal opportunities and equal treatment. The equal treatment principle implies the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination.

In accordance with the *Collective Agreement of the Ministry of Defence*⁶⁸, the trade union, through its representative, has the obligation to initiate proceedings and propose measures to protect the rights of employees against discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and mobbing. The *Guidelines for Protection against Harassment at Work in the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*⁶⁹ and the 2019 *Guide for Protection against Harassment in the Workplace*, which includes discrimination that could result from harassment, have established the following reporting and protection mechanisms: gender representatives, immediate superiors, authorized person(s) for protection against harassment, and the Minister of Defence.

In the MoD and the Army, there is an internal policy of zero tolerance for mobbing and sexual harassment. Persons who believe that they are victims of mobbing or sexual harassment can contact their immediate superior, officers, gender representatives, or the Minister of Defence. They can also contact a trade union representative in accordance with the MoD Collective Agreement. Complaints can

64 *Official Gazette of Montenegro*, no. 46/2010, 40/2011, 18/2014, 42/2017, available at: <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-zabrani-diskriminacije.html>

65 *Official Gazette of RSM*, No. 258/20

66 *Official Gazette of RSM*, No. 166/14

67 *Official Gazette of RSM*, No. 74/15

68 *Official Gazette of RSM*, No. 108/2013

69 Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia: https://mod.gov.mk/storage/2021/06/2019.12_Upatstvo-za-zastita-od-voznemiruvanje.pdf

be submitted to authorized persons by phone, by sending an e-mail to stopvoznemiruvanje@mod.gov.mk, or by notifying the MoD and the Army in writing. All contact details and the complaint form are available on the official MoD website on the page *Stop harassment*.

The *Law on Protection from Harassment in the Workplace*⁷⁰ also regulates the procedure for the employee and employer, as well as the preventive procedure. Namely, a person who considers that she/he is exposed to harassment at work should write to the person he believes to be harassing her/him, indicating that her/his behaviour is inadequate, unacceptable, and undesirable and to warn her/him that she/he will seek legal protection if such behaviour does not stop. Pre-trial proceedings are not mandatory and are not a condition for initiating court proceedings. An employee who believes that he/she is exposed to harassment may file a lawsuit before the competent court, following a prior written warning of the perpetrator of harassment.

The request is to be submitted to the responsible person of the employer, i.e., the authorized person. The request can be submitted in person or by a third party, in writing, with the consent of the harassed person. The request can be submitted no later than 6 months after the day when the behaviour representing harassment was last committed. Upon receipt of the request, the employer, i.e., the responsible person, is obliged to immediately, within eight days at the latest, propose mediation to the parties as a way of resolving the dispute, including the choosing of a person from the list of mediators (the MoD has designated persons who serve as mediators and the list is available on the official website of the MoD). The parties to the dispute have the opportunity to agree on the manner of conducting the procedure. If they do not reach an agreement, the procedure is conducted in a way the mediator assesses as most adequate, in accordance with the specific dispute and the interests of the parties, as well as the principle of urgency. The deadline for completing the mediation procedure is 15 days, during which the mediator may conduct joint or separate interviews with the parties, and, if necessary, with the persons proposed as witnesses. The mediator compiles a report on each of these activities. Within three days following a successful mediation procedure, the mediator draws up an agreement, which is signed by both parties. It contains recommendations for the cessation of harassment, as well as recommendations for the employer in terms of removing the conditions for harassment. If the parties do not reach an agreement, then the mediation proceedings end in failure. If the mediation procedure is thusly unsuccessful, a written notice is prepared within three days and submitted to both parties and the employer. Should the parties withdraw from further proceedings, the mediator is obliged to issue a conclusion on the suspension of the proceedings within three days. If the employee who considers himself/herself to be exposed to harassment at work is not satisfied with the outcome of the procedure for protection against harassment, she/he can file a lawsuit in the competent court.

In accordance with the *Instruction for protection against harassment at work in the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia*⁷¹, a third party may report harassment (to assist the harassed person) to an authorized person, with the prior consent of the harassed person.

In accordance with the *Code of Ethics for Employees of the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia*, any person engaging in employment with the MoD and in the Army for the first time must be acquainted with the provisions of the Code of Ethics, but does not sign it.

Republic of Serbia

Legislation pertaining to the Serbian Armed Forces (the Law on the Serbian Armed Forces, the Law on Defence, etc.) contain regulations concerning the prohibition of discrimination. A person who believes that he/she has been discriminated against, including gender-based discrimination, may contact a gender equality counsellor, a person of trust, or the head of the organizational unit. Once a case of discrimination is established, disciplinary proceedings are initiated against the person who has been accused of committing discrimination.

In the MoD and the SAF, there is a policy of zero tolerance for mobbing and sexual harassment. There is an internal policy to prevent mobbing and sexual harassment. In case of mobbing or sexual harassment, employees can turn to their immediate superior. In either case, a person who perceives that he/she has been exposed to mobbing or sexual harassment may contact the head of the organizational unit or the person in charge of safety and health at work. If the head of the organizational unit is the person accused of mobbing, the person seeking protection and justice may submit a request to initiate the mediation procedure directly to that manager.

Employees of the MoD of Serbia and the SAF sign an ethical code of conduct. This code, the Code of Honour of the Members of the SAF, is published in the official military gazette and it regulates the general moral principles of the military profession, its basic values, and norms of conduct for members of the SAF.

⁷⁰ Official Gazette of RSM, No. 79/13 and 147/15

⁷¹ Ministry of Defence of North Macedonia: <https://mod.gov.mk/inc/uploads/2021/06/Eticki-kodeks-na-vrabotenite-vo-MO-i-ARM.pdf>

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