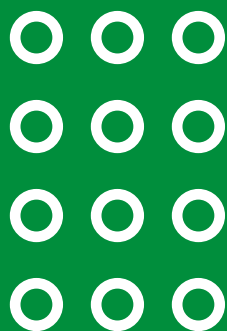


REPORT ON GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT

in the Ministry of Defence and
the Army of the
Republic of North Macedonia



May 2025





Republic of North Macedonia

Ministry of Defence



REPORT ON GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT

in the Ministry of Defence and the Army
of the Republic of North Macedonia

May 2025

Authors

Heather Huhtanen
Daniela Antonovska
Neda Chalovska Dimovska
Marija Jankuloska

Members of the Working Group of the Ministry of Defence

Julijana Stojanova
Colonel Antonela Stankovska Budimir
Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandra Donevska
Lieutenant Colonel Tome Peev
Minevere Leskovica
Marija Jankova
Captain Zorica Zdravkovska Nikolova
Sergeant Aleksandra Kuzmanoska
Major Jakup Emini
Lenche Belchovska
Biljana Jovanovska
Tatjana Atanasovska
Julijana Risteski
Emilija Todorovska

Institutional Experts

Colonel Biljana Blazhevskaja, Adjutant of the President of North Macedonia
Biljana Stevkova, Coordinator for Equal Opportunities in the MoD

Members of the MoD Working Group for the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan

Irena Stankovska
Gabriela Kalkova
Dr. Biljana Karovska Andonovska
Biljana Stevkova
Minevere Leskovica
Tatjana Atanasovska
Vlatko Rafeski
Lieutenant Colonel Strasho Stojchevski
Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandra Donevska
Captain Zorica Zdravkovska Nikolova
Julijana Risteski
Lieutenant Colonel Riste Petrovski
Lieutenant Colonel Sinisha Lozanoski
Vladimir Trpkovski
Marija Jankova

This publication has been prepared under the DCAF-implemented Program *Intelligence and Security Sector Reform in North Macedonia 2021-2026*. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of DCAF donors.

CONTENT

Introduction.....	7
Glossary	8
Gender Self-assessment (GSA)	10
Methodological Framework.....	10
Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents in the Research	11
Key Findings from the Gender Self-Assessment.....	13
Legal and Policy Framework.....	13
Gender Structure and Practice at the Ministry and at the Army.....	14
Representation of Men and Women at the Ministry and the Army	15
Support and Understanding of the Concept of Gender Equality at the Ministry/Army	16
Perceptions of Equality and Fairness	17
Perceptions of the Suitability of Men and Women for Certain Job and Official Positions in the Ministry and the Army.....	19
Perceptions and Attitudes on Equal and Fair Employment, Selection, Assignment, Placement, Professional Development, and Promotion	21
Perceptions on the Selection and Deployment of Men and Women in International Missions.....	22
Protection against Harassment and Response to Harassment	24
Policy Development and Institutional Changes: Paternal Leave	26
Equipment, Uniforms, and Infrastructure.....	27
Conclusion.....	29
Strategic Priorities and Recommendations	31
Priority #1: Structure and Capacity Building for Gender Equality	31
Institutional Policies and Mechanisms	31
Education, Training, and Professional Development	31
Practice.....	31
Priority #2: Increasing Proportional Gender Representation in the Ministry of Defence and the Army.....	32
Institutional Policies and Mechanisms	32
Practice.....	33
Priority #3: Prevention and Protection from Workplace Harassment	33
A) Prevention	33
Protection	34
Response.....	34
Priority #4: Balancing Professional and Private Life	35
Institutional Policies and Mechanisms	35
Practice.....	36
Priority #5: Infrastructure and Equipment	36
Action plan.....	38

INTRODUCTION

The Gender Self-Assessment Report (hereinafter referred to as the GSA) is the result of the commitment of the Ministry of Defence (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry) and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter referred to as the Army) to advance gender equality at the institutional level by assessing the extent to which organizational culture, policies, practices, infrastructure, and equipment contribute to gender equality and the integration of gender perspectives into daily operations. More specifically, the GSA aimed to determine whether the structure, processes, and institutional culture of the Ministry and the Army enable men and women to have equal rights, conditions, opportunities, and responsibilities to fully realize their potential, equally contribute to, and benefit from the working environment.

The entire process was formalized through a Cooperation Agreement signed between the Ministry and DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. The GSA was implemented within the framework of DCAF's *Intelligence and Security Sector Reform Programme in North Macedonia (2021–2026)*.

To achieve the GSA's objectives, a Working Group (hereinafter referred to as WG) was established, composed of administrative officers from the Ministry, as well as military and civilian personnel from the Ministry and the Army. This group coordinated, monitored, and supported the entire gender self-assessment process. The WG was composed of the following representatives:

1. **Julijana Stojanova**, Assistant Head of the Human Resources Sector (Coordinator of the WG for GSA);
2. **Colonel Antonela Stankovska Budimir**, Coordinator for the Second NAP of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (Deputy Coordinator of the WG for GSA);
3. **Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandra Donevska**, Army (Deputy Coordinator of the WG for GSA);
4. **Lieutenant Colonel Tome Peev**, Army (Member, and Deputy Coordinator of the WG for GSA in the absence of Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandra Donevska);
5. **Minevere Leskovica**, Head of Unit in the Human Resources Sector;
6. **Marija Jankova**, Junior Gender Associate, Minister's Support Sector (Member and Secretary of the WG);
7. **Captain Zorica Zdravkovska Nikolova**, Army (Member of the WG);
8. **Sergeant Aleksandra Kuzmanoska**, Army (Member of the WG);
9. **Major Jakup Emini**, Army (Member of the WG);
10. **Lenche Belchovska**, Civilian in the Army (Member of the WG);
11. **Biljana Jovanovska**, Advisor in the Policy and Planning Sector (Member of the WG);
12. **Tatjana Atanasovska**, Advisor in the Human Resources Sector (Member of the WG);
13. **Julijana Risteski**, Psychologist, Civilian in the Army (Member of the WG);
14. **Emilija Todorovska**, Psychologist, Civilian in the Army (Member of the WG).

Biljana Stevkova, Head of Unit and Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, and **Colonel Biljana Blazheska**, Aide-de-Camp to the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, also actively participated in the process as institutional experts.

The execution of the process was further supported through the engagement of independent external experts. Their role encompassed providing expertise, assistance, and support in the data collection process, as well as in the subsequent analysis and consolidation of findings, and the preparation of the Report in collaboration with the Working Group.

The Report, in addition to providing an analytical overview of the state of barriers and opportunities in the four research areas (policies, practice, infrastructure/equipment, and organizational culture), also offers

recommendations for improvements in all of these areas. Alongside the Gender Self-Assessment Report, a Gender Action Plan was developed as the second final product of the entire process. The Gender Action Plan provides clear guidance for further action in the area, through implementation of concrete steps and activities.

The GSA process (which lasted from September 2022 to March 2024) unfolded in four phases, in line with the Operational Dynamic Plan, which was developed to systematize the process, anticipate the timeline, and allocate the human resources needed for the successful execution of the process. Data collection took place from May to October 2023, while the review and validation of the GSA Report and the drafting of the Gender Action Plan were carried out from January to March 2024.

The GSA Report and the Gender Action Plan are intended to complement ongoing efforts to enhance institutional effectiveness and efficiency by utilizing the full capacity of all personnel - both women and men, of different ranks, ages, ethnicities, and positions. Among other things, the GSA was designed to result in clear indicators and provide directions for improving the implementation of strategies and plans for gender equality and inclusion, identifying and addressing training and equipment needs, and building public trust in the institution.

It is important to note that during the implementation of the overall gender self-assessment process at the national level, there was significant focus on the topic of gender and gender equality¹.

This included public discussions with a negative connotation regarding gender and gender equality in the context of the new Gender Equality Law proposal. Such ongoing developments during the implementation of the GSA were evidently reflected in the responses of some participants in the surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Therefore, it must be emphasized that the GSA represents a snapshot in time, that is the current state of affairs within the Ministry and the Army against the backdrop of the ongoing public discourse on gender equality.

It is also worth mentioning that during the implementation of the GSA activities, work was being carried out on the new Collective Agreement of the Ministry (published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 36/24 on February 14, 2024) and the new Law on Employees in the Ministry of Defence (published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 53/24 on March 4, 2024). These legal documents, which were adopted during the preparation of this Report, represent an additional legal framework that advances the gender aspects of work in the defence sector. For these reasons, the terminology used in the processing of data in this Report was based on the current Law on Administrative Officers.

¹ The Republic of North Macedonia is committed to advancing gender equality, including within the security sector, in accordance with the principles of the UN, EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO, and national standards and policies. The **National Gender Equality Index for North Macedonia (2022)** stands at 64.5 out of a maximum of 100 points, representing a progress of 2.5 points compared to the 2019 index. North Macedonia ranks 14th out of 31 countries. According to the conclusions of the Index, progress is slow but visible in the domains of Work, Money, Knowledge, and Power, which is attributed to increased employment rates among women, improved access to financial resources, and a rise in the percentage of individuals with higher education. Source https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2023/Gender-Index-2022_MK-web.pdf.

GLOSSARY²

AFFIRMATIVE MEASURES (POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION) refer to temporary policies and measures aimed at promoting equal opportunities for individuals belonging to traditionally disadvantaged groups in areas such as employment, education, and social protection. In the context of gender equality, these measures are designed to ensure balanced representation and factual equality for women in areas of society where they have been historically underrepresented or marginalized.

IMPLICIT BIAS refer to automatic and unconscious processes of assigning stereotypes and/or linking negative or positive attitudes to a particular group or to an individual associated with that group, based on gender, age, ethnicity, and other socio-demographic characteristics.

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH is used to study, understand, and address the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other characteristics/identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, education...) and how these intersections contribute to individual experiences of discrimination. In general, intersectionality is an approach that examines the interaction of social identities and the related systems of oppression, dominance, or discrimination.

SEX refers to the biological, physiological, and anatomical differences between individuals. This includes differences in sex and reproductive organs, male and female chromosomes, and hormonal levels. The terms male (XY), female (XX), and intersex³ refer to sex. Sex is fixed and unchangeable (except in the context of medical intervention).

GENDER refers to the social norms, roles, and characteristics assigned to men/boys and women/girls based on their sex- usually at birth. The terms man, woman, masculinity, and femininity refer to gender⁴. Gender is fluid and a product of culture; as culture changes, gender norms, roles, and characteristics often change as well.

GENDER NORMS are standards and expectations for how women and men should be and how they should behave, in accordance with society, culture, and community at a given moment.

GENDER ROLES refer to the social norms and behavioral expectations that a given culture considers socially appropriate for members of a particular sex.

GENDER CHARACTERISTICS are reflected in clothing, style, body posture, presence, communication, etc., assigned/associated with men and women.

GENDER BASED ATTITUDES are negative or positive attitudes about women and men.

GENDER BASED STEREOTYPES are generalized views or prejudices about the attributes, characteristics, or roles that women and men possess or should possess.

GENDER EQUALITY is defined as equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities of men and women.

GENDER PARITY refers to equal representation of women and men in terms of number and proportion.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTION is any institution capable of responding to the different security and justice needs of men and women and promoting their full and equal participation in all spheres of work and decision-making.

² For the definitions in the glossary, multiple sources were used, including the official definitions from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), NATO, DCAF, and OHCHR.

³ **Intersex** is a generic term referring to various physical characteristics of an individual that do not align with the precise medical definitions of male or female. These characteristics may be chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical, and may be present to varying degrees.

⁴ Gender also includes individuals who do not identify as either woman or man; these terms encompass transgender and non-binary individuals, among others. For the purposes of the Gender Self-Assessment (GSA), these gender identities were neither used nor included in the assessment.

■ **GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING** involves integrating gender aspects into the budgeting process. This requires evaluating budgets from a gender perspective, incorporating gender perspectives at all stages of the budgeting process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures to promote gender equality.

■ **GENDER PERSPECTIVE** entails assessing gender-based differences between women and men as reflected in their social roles and interactions in the distribution of power and access to resources. This perspective takes into account gender-based differences when considering any social phenomenon, policy, or process.

■ **GENDER MAINSTREAMING** refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. . It is a strategy to incorporate the diverse needs and experiences of women and men as an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

■ **GENDER ANALYSIS** is a thorough assessment of how variations in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities, and rights affect women and men in a specific policy area, situation, or context.

■ **SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA** refers to data collected and tabulated separately for women and men.

■ **GENDER QUOTAS** are instruments aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by setting a specific proportion (percentage) or number of seats or positions to be filled or allocated to women and/or men, usually under certain rules or criteria.

■ **GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT** refers to any behavior that policies and reinforces traditional heterosexual gender norms. It is often used to get people to follow traditional gender stereotypes (e.g., dominant men, subservient women). Unlike some other forms of sexual harassment, gender-based harassment is generally not motivated by sexual interest or intent. It is more often based on hostility and is often an attempt to make the target feel unwelcome in their environment.. Harassment directed towards women or men is used to exclude, isolate, or create a hostile work environment with the intention of making them feel unwelcome or unsupported in the workplace.

■ **SEXUAL HARASSMENT** is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical behavior of a sexual nature that aims to or results in violating the dignity of an individual. Sexual harassment typically occurs in the context of power abuse, promises of rewards, or threats of retaliation.

■ **GLASS CEILING** is a metaphor for invisible barriers that prevent women and other marginalized individuals from reaching higher levels of professional success, specifically hindering their access to senior leadership and decision-making positions.

GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT (GSA)

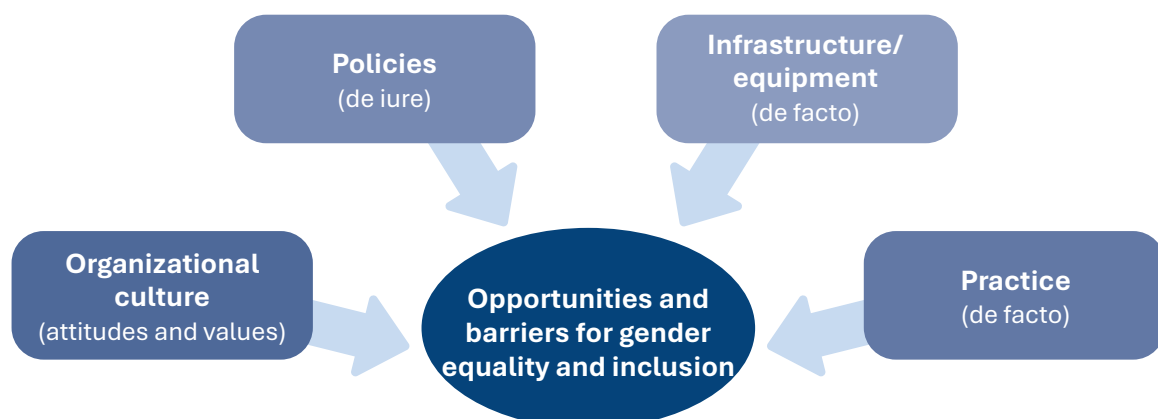
GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT (GSA)

Gender self-assessment is a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the extent to which the policies, practices, infrastructure, equipment, and organizational culture within a given institution/organization contribute to gender equality and gender integration, i.e., the inclusion of the gender perspective throughout the entire operational process.

Methodological Framework

The methodology for the Gender Self-Assessment (GSA) was designed to identify opportunities and barriers to advancing gender equality and inclusion within the Ministry of Defence and the Army. To this end, a **methodological framework** was developed focusing on *four priority areas*: policies, practice, infrastructure/equipment, and organizational culture.

- **Policies** are represented in strategic documents, policies, processes, guidelines, and procedures established by the institution (or the state as a whole)) and serve as the foundation for institutional priorities, values, and approaches.
- **Practice** refers to how the institution operates in reality (de facto), including whether and to what extent policies are upheld and consistently implemented by leadership and staff.
- **Infrastructure and Equipment** include personal equipment, such as personal weapons, uniforms, combat equipment, or office equipment; soft infrastructure, such as organizational charts/structures, technology (IT), and communication systems; and hard infrastructure, such as barracks, training facilities, and living and working spaces like office space/locations, sanitary facilities, and rest areas.
- **Organizational culture** reflects the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the people who make up the institution (the Ministry and the Army), influencing the development of policies and determining whether and to what extent established policies are consistently implemented and upheld within the institution.



The methodology employed a combination of **quantitative and qualitative** methods and tools, each targeting the areas of barriers and opportunities. The **triangulation method**⁵ was used in the research study to enable greater validity and reliability of the findings and data. In other words, multiple methods were used to collect data addressing the four priority areas of barriers and opportunities to provide various data sets on the same or related issues.

⁵ **Triangulation** refers to the use of multiple different methods and/or data sources, as well as various research perspectives within a study, to ensure greater validity and reliability of the findings.

The following methodological tools were used in the process:

- **Review of policies and documents at the national and institutional level**, reflecting institutional priorities, strategies, and approaches related to gender equality and inclusion.
- **Fact finding** which involved collecting numerical data, including the actual number of men and women currently employed in the Ministry and/or serving in the Army.
- **Interviews**, which focused on collecting qualitative data that reflect the opinions, experiences, perspectives, and suggestions of institutional leadership regarding the four priority areas.
- **Focus Groups** with employees of the Ministry and the Army, aimed at gathering qualitative data that reflect the opinions, experiences, and perspectives of staff on specific topics.⁶ Each focus group discussed one topic using a question-discussion format. Topics of discussion included work-life balance, peace operations⁷; equal and fair professional development, and preventing and protecting against workplace harassment.
- **Personnel Survey** aimed at collecting both quantitative and qualitative data reflecting the experiences and perspectives of personnel, ensuring representativeness across ranks, positions, gender, age, and ethnicity. The survey contained **70 questions** targeting the four priority areas, where respondents had the opportunity to choose from the offered answers on the Likert scale and to provide their opinions and views on specific questions (narrative responses). The survey was conducted in both electronic and printed formats, depending on the technical possibilities for completing the questionnaire.⁸

Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents in the Research

Out of the total number of employees in defence, **673 respondents** participated in the gender self-assessment, which accounts for 9.5% of the total personnel.

The total number of participants in the research is presented in Table 1.

Methodological tools	Women	Men	Total Respondents
Survey	211 (39%)	325 (61%)	536
Focus groups	42 (39%)	67 (61%)	109
Individual Interview	16 (57%)	12 (43%)	28
Total No. of participants in the research	269 (40%)	404 (60%)	673

Table 1: Total number of participants in the research

Interviews were conducted with a total of **28 individuals in managerial and command positions, 14 of whom held command positions in the Army** and **14 in managerial positions in the Ministry**. In terms of gender representation, 16 of the interviewees were women, while 12 were men.

A total of **109 employees** participated in the focus groups, of which 42 were women and 67 were men. Discussions were conducted in **13 focus groups**, nine with the Army and four with the Ministry.

A total of **536 employees from the Ministry and the Army** completed the survey. These numbers, specifically the total number of completed surveys (sample size), together with the total personnel (employees in the Ministry and the Army), were used to calculate a **95% confidence rate** in the accuracy of the responses, with **a margin of error of +/- 4%**. In other words, we can be 95% confident that the responses are accurate within a +/- 4% margin of error.

⁶ The focus groups were conducted in Army garrisons and in the Ministry premises, led by national experts.

⁷ This included participation in training exercises, missions, humanitarian, or peace operations outside the territory of the country.

⁸ Printed surveys were distributed to Army commands and units, including military barracks across all eight garrisons, thereby covering all eight statistical regions of North Macedonia, as well as the General Staff headquarters and the Military Academy in Skopje. Electronic surveys were distributed via email to the Ministry's staff.

The socio-demographic data of the survey respondents are presented in Table 2.

Socio-demographic data of survey respondents			
Total No. of respondents		536 (100%)	
Total men		325 (61%)	
Total women		211 (39%)	
Ministry of Defence		Army	
Respondents	159 (100%)	Respondents	377 (100%)
Gender			
Man	64 (40%)	Men	261 (69%)
Women	95 (60%)	Women	116 (31%)
Ethnicity			
Macedonian	(74.2%)	Macedonian	(71.9%)
Albanian	(11.3%)	Albanian	(18.8%)
Turks	(3.1%)	Turks	(1.9%)
Roma	(1.3%)	Roma	(0.5%)
Serbs	(4.4%)	Serbs	(2.9%)
Bosniaks	(1.9%)	Bosniaks	(2.7%)
Vlachs	(3.8%)	Vlachs	0
Other	0	Other	(1.3%)
Professional Profile			
Administrative servant	(62.9%)		
Officer	(24.5%)	Officer	(17.5%)
Non-commissioned officer	(3.8%)	Non - commissioned officer	(29.2%)
Civilian staff	(8.2%)	Civilian staff	(3.7%)
Professional soldier	(0.6%)	Professional soldier	(49.6%)
Years of service in the Ministry/ Army			
Up to 2 years	(6.3%)	Up to 2 years	(11.1%)
2-10 years	(4.4%)	2-10 years	(14.6%)
10-15 years	(21.4%)	10-15 years	(23.6%)
15-25 years	(37.1%)	15-25 years	(41.9%)
More than 25 years	(30.8%)	More than 25 years	(8.8%)
Marital/ Partnership Status			
Married	(66.8%)	Married	(76.1%)
Life partner (Cohabiting)	(4.5%)	Life partner (cohabiting)	(3.8%)
Single	(26.5%)	Single	(12.6%)
Divorced	(1.3%)	Divorced	(5.7%)
Widowed	(0.2%)	Widowed	(1.9%)
No response	(0.5%)	No response	0

Table 2: Socio-demographic data of survey respondents

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE GENDER SELF-ASSESSMENT

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The principles of equal opportunities and gender equality are embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia. These principles are further strengthened by numerous laws and strategic guidance at the national level, among which the following are of particular importance for the specific area:

- **The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men**⁹, which, among other things, includes the aim of promoting the participation of women in the fields of security and defence.
- **The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2022-2027)**, which contains a specific section on women, peace, and security, identifies gender equality as an integral element for achieving and maintaining positive peace.
- **The Law on Service in the Army**¹⁰ stipulates that the law has a gender-sensitive approach and applies equally to women and men serving in the Army (Article 1a). In accordance with this law, responsible authorities ensure appropriate and fair representation of community members and implement the gender perspective (Article 13a).
- **The Law on Defence**¹¹ mandates that the General Staff of the Army ensures appropriate and fair representation of community members and takes care of the gender perspective (Article 26, Paragraph 8a). The law also establishes the responsibilities of all state authorities to consider the gender perspective in the exercise of defence-related duties (Article 21a).
- **The National Action Plan (2020-2025) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325**¹² outlines five strategic objectives aimed at promoting gender equality: Leadership, Inclusion, Facilitation, Protection, and Communication, Education, and Training. The Ministry of Defence is responsible for coordinating all activities to be implemented during the 2020-2025 period and has developed [Operational Plan for Implementation](#).

The legal and policy framework in North Macedonia, together with the strategic documents that guide the priorities and approach of the Ministry and the Army, is comprehensive, well-elaborated, and consistently reflects good practice standards. This represents a positive finding and has provided a solid foundation for conducting the gender self-assessment.

This gender self-assessment serves as evidence of the commitment of the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia to operationalize the Constitution, the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the National Strategy for Gender Equality, and the Second National Action Plan (2020-2025) for the implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

9 This Law was enacted in 2006 and amended in 2008 and 2012.

10 This Law regulates the status, rights, obligations, duties, and responsibilities of personnel in the service of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the system of wages and allowances.

11 The Law on Defence is the fundamental legislation governing the organization of defence in the country and the military structure.

12 North Macedonia is a member of NATO, and in line with this, the second National Action Plan (NAP) is aligned with NATO policies and the Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, guided by the principles of inclusiveness, integration, and integrity.

GENDER STRUCTURE AND PRACTICE AT THE MINISTRY AND AT THE ARMY

The gender structure at the Ministry of Defence and the Army is comprehensive and ensures the strengthening of gender equality at multiple levels.

In accordance with the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, **a Coordinator and a Deputy Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** have been appointed at the Ministry. They coordinate activities under the Ministry's jurisdiction to establish equal opportunities, provide proposals for promoting and advancing equal opportunities within the Ministry and the Army, monitor activities, and prepare annual reports on the progress achieved.

A Working Group for Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation has been established within the Ministry as the primary national operational body for the efficient and transparent implementation of the Second National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, with a designated Coordinator and members.¹³

In alignment with NATO policies and best practices, for the first time in 2019, **a gender structure** was institutionalized within the Ministry and the Army, with the introduction of a new position, an official post in the Army - **a Gender Equality Officer** at the Chief of the General Staff's Office, responsible for advising on gender equality and workplace harassment prevention. **An authorized person and a deputy authorized person for protection against harassment in the workplace** have been designated, and a network of **36 gender representatives** and **24 mediators** has been established within the Ministry and the Army.

- **The authorized person** is responsible for receiving requests for protection from harassment and conducting the internal procedure, as well as providing professional assistance and advice to employees in the Ministry and the Army.
- **Gender representatives** serve as contact persons for advice and assistance in cases of workplace harassment. They offer opinions and advice to managerial and command personnel in this area and also promote gender equality.
- **Mediators** facilitate in cases of requests from Ministry and Army employees for protection against workplace harassment.

Additionally, since 1992, the Ministry has had a systematized position at the Defence Inspection Sector, a so-called **Counsellor – Inspector for Personnel and Citizens' Rights- Ombudsman**.

The Ministry has **28 NATO-certified gender trainers** responsible for raising gender awareness by conducting gender training within the Ministry and the Army. These trainers conduct training for employees in the Ministry and the Army with the aim of raising gender sensitivity among different categories of personnel, and it is mandatory for personnel deployed to peacekeeping missions. The gender structure within the Ministry and the Army is appropriately established for the comprehensive promotion of gender equality. However, for smooth and effective functioning, additional efforts are required to ensure timely replacement of personnel in roles within the structure when they are assigned to other positions, continuous capacity building of gender trainers, and the continuity of responsibilities within the structure.

Data from the Ministry on **gender training**¹⁴ shows that, since 2013, training on gender equality and equity has been conducted more intensively, covering subtopics such as gender-based violence, workplace harassment, gender-based discrimination, and content on international documents and conventions. In the period from 2022 to 2023, training was provided to a total of 508 participants, 64% of whom were men and 36% women. The training is intended for various categories of personnel from the Ministry and the Army, as well as for the teaching staff of the Military Academy. Gender training also forms part of the pre-deployment training for international (peacekeeping) missions and operations (hereinafter referred to as missions).

Regarding **higher security and defence schools**, which are prerequisite for promotion and appointment to higher command positions, it should be noted that by the end of 2024, 8 women have completed the Command and Staff Academy, 2 women have completed the National Defence School, and 2 are currently

¹³ The working group is responsible for coordinating with institutions at the national and local levels, with the aim of verifying, harmonizing, supporting, as well as monitoring, evaluating, and synthesizing reports from responsible institutions.

¹⁴ Gender training is organized and conducted in accordance with the [Guidelines for Organizing and Conducting Gender Training for employees in the Ministry](#).

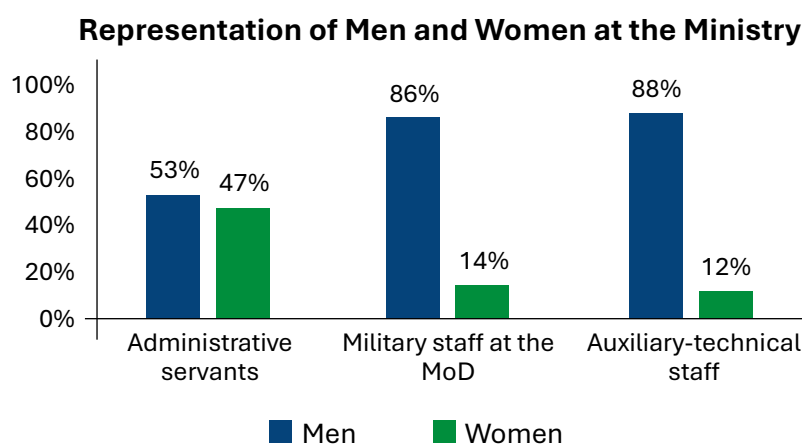
enrolled. Additionally, 2 women have completed the Senior Non-Commissioned Officers School.

The Ministry of Defence incorporates the gender perspective into the **education process for cadets**, including the phase of encouraging interest in enrolling in the Military Academy up to promotion to the officer rank.

Since 2018, the Ministry of Defence has been implementing **gender-responsive budgeting** in accordance with the Strategy for the Introduction of Gender-Responsive Budgeting, including Program 6 – Military Academy.¹⁵ As of last year, gender-responsive budgeting is being implemented under another subprogram, Program 11 – Professional Training and Development, both domestically and abroad.¹⁶

REPRESENTATION OF MEN AND WOMEN AT THE MINISTRY AND THE ARMY

Of the total number of employees in the Ministry (administrative staff, military personnel, and auxiliary technical staff), **68% are men, and 32% are women**. The chart below illustrates that the largest proportion of women employed in the Ministry are administrative officers, making up **47%** of all categories of administrative staff. However, it is important to highlight that, among senior administrative officers in the Ministry, in category B positions, 48% are women. Specifically, 4 women hold the position of State Counselor (category B1), 2 women are heads of departments (category B2), 7 women are assistant heads of departments (category B3), and 17 women are heads of divisions (category B4).

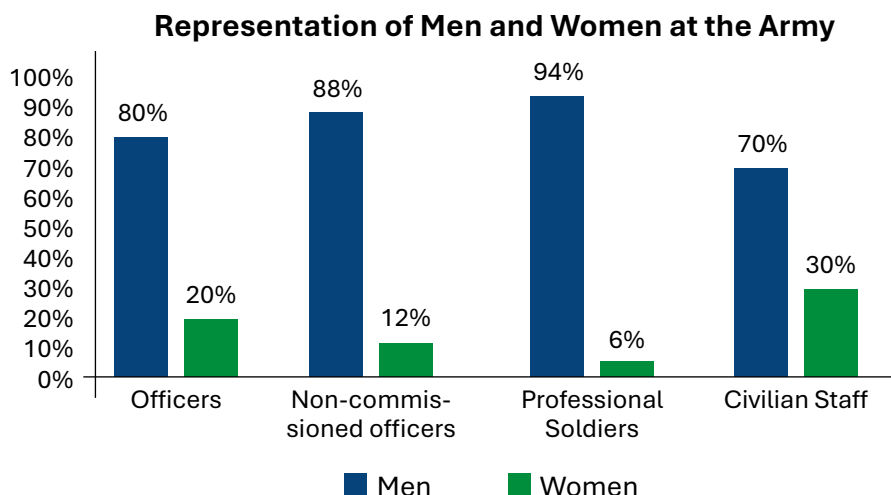


Graph 1: Representation of Men and Women at the Ministry

Regarding the Army, in 2014, women constituted 8.4% of the Army of North Macedonia, whereas in 2023, they make up slightly more than 11% of the personnel (11.04%). Percentagewise, the largest proportion of women in the Army are civilians (30%), followed by female officers (20%), female non-commissioned officers (12%), and 6% of women are employed as professional soldiers.

¹⁵ [Gender Budgeting Statement](#) (2018-2020)

¹⁶ [Gender Budgeting Statement](#) (2022 – 2025)



Graph 2: Representation of Men and Women at the Army

Due to the relatively late entry of women into service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia (1997, with the first group of female officers joining the Army's services), they are still not proportionally represented in the organizational positions within the Army. This lack of proportional representation means that women have a lower probability of being promoted to positions and organizational roles within the hierarchy. However, in line with the goals of policies related to gender equality, the representation of women in the fields of security, defence, and peacekeeping operations has steadily increased over the past decade in North Macedonia. Accordingly, greater progress is expected in the coming years regarding the representation of women in command positions within the Army.

Several interviews noted support for taking further steps, including affirmative measures to increase the representation of women in the Army, such as the introduction of mentoring and coaching programs within the Ministry and the Army to support and encourage women to apply for leadership and command positions, as well as encouraging women to pursue further education to meet the criteria for appointment to managerial and command positions.

Advancing gender equality in terms of opportunities and responsibilities involves ensuring that both men and women can be represented across the full spectrum of duties and functions, whether in units/staff offices or at leadership, managerial, and command levels. Ideally, representation should be proportionally reflected in terms of rank, duty, and position. Assignments and promotions based on competence and merit represent the ideal standard, which does not exclude efforts to support both women and men in assuming non-stereotypical roles. Based on the data obtained from the gender self-assessment, it is evident that while progress has been made in increasing the number of women in both the Ministry and the Army of North Macedonia, there remains insufficient representation in certain areas. In the Army, although the percentage of women has increased over the years, they are still not proportionally represented in organizational positions, limiting their opportunities for promotion to command positions. However, there is an encouraging and positive trend of greater representation of women in leadership positions within the Ministry. These findings underscore the importance of affirmative actions, as well as continued efforts to encourage the further education of women to meet the criteria for managerial and command positions.

SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY AT THE MINISTRY/ARMY

Survey respondents (65% from the Army and 74% from the Ministry) understand gender equality as equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities between men and women within the Ministry and the Army. Interviews with leadership in the Ministry and command personnel in the Army indicated that most believe gender equality

is a priority for the Ministry and the Army, and that there is currently strong political will, especially with the appointment of the second female Minister of Defence. This provides a solid foundation for a consistent, coherent, and successful policy for implementing the gender perspective.

However, despite this, there is **insufficient knowledge and understanding of how to effectively promote gender equality in practice**, with some participants in the survey **associating gender equality primarily with women**, rather than as a collective effort involving both genders. Furthermore, although there is a general acknowledgment of the importance of gender equality, there are differing perspectives on how it should be achieved. Some respondents express concern about the potential introduction of gender quotas, fearing that it could compromise merit-based selection processes.

Overall, while there is commitment to gender equality within the Ministry and the Army, there are challenges to overcome related to developing and raising awareness among employees about the importance of gender equality and integration, and how it can be achieved.

PERCEPTIONS OF EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

The survey, interviews, and some focus groups included a series of questions related to perceptions of equality and fairness. The goal was to identify experiences and perceptions of whether men and/or women are at a disadvantage in the workplace - whether in recruitment/selection, training/professional development, recognition/praise, promotion, and/or assignment. Survey results reveal a general sense among personnel that, **in some cases, men are disadvantaged, while in other cases, women are**. It is worth noting that approximately 60% of the respondents in the study were men, while approximately 40% were women, meaning the percentage of male respondents could shift the overall survey results by a margin of error greater than +/- 4%.

Summarizing the data, 35% of respondents from the Army and 66% from the Ministry believe that women are always, often, or sometimes at a disadvantage. On the other hand, 53% of respondents from the Army and 29% from the Ministry believe that men are *always, often, or sometimes* at a disadvantage. Or, 47% of respondents from the Army and 71% from the Ministry believe that men are rarely or never at a disadvantage. These data indicate that the dominant perception among respondents from both the Army and the Ministry is that **men are not at a disadvantage compared to women at the Ministry and at the Army**, with these views being particularly prevalent in the Ministry.

Survey data further suggest a general perception that women are at a disadvantage in the context of **assignment to official posts in the Army** (41%), **promotion in the Ministry** (45%), and **training and professional development in the Ministry** (39%). Similarly, men are perceived to be at a disadvantage in the context of **training and professional development** (34%) and **assignment** (33%) in the Army, and in **promotion in the Ministry** (36%).

In which situations are employees at a disadvantage in the Ministry and the Army?	Men – Army	Women – Army	Men – Ministry	Women – Ministry
A) Recruitment/Selection	22%	28%	19%	23%
B) Assignment/Deployment	33%	41%	24%	30%
C) Promotion	22%	27%	36%	45%
D) Training/Professional Development	34%	28%	14%	39%
E) Recognition/Praise	19%	14%	29%	25%
F) All	12%	13%	19%	17%
G) Other	9%	5%	7%	4%

Table 3: In which situations are employees at a disadvantage in the Ministry and the Army

Regarding the question of who is at an advantage, 40% of respondents in the Army believe that men are *always, often, or sometimes* at an advantage, while for Ministry respondents, the percentage is significantly higher, at 72%. As for whether women are at an advantage, 50% of respondents in both the Army and the Ministry believe that women are *always, often, or sometimes* at an advantage.

Survey data show that men are perceived to be at an advantage primarily in the context of **training and professional development** in the Army (40%) and in **promotion in the Ministry** (38%). Conversely, women are perceived to be at an advantage in the context of **assignment in the Army** (35%) and **recognition/praise in the Ministry** (36%).

In which situations are employees at an advantage in the Ministry and the Army?	Men – Army	Women – Army	Man- Ministry	Women- Ministry
A) Recruitment/Selection	16%	21%	25%	12%
B) Assignment/Deployment	20%	35%	31%	23%
C) Promotion	30%	25%	38%	32%
D) Training/Professional Development	40%	25%	36%	23%
E) Recognition/Praise	20%	26%	24%	36%
F) All	22%	20%	27%	15%
G) Other	4%	2%	4%	5%

Table 4: In which situations are employees at an advantage in the Ministry and the Army?

The general conclusion on respondents' perceptions of which gender is at an advantage is that men are more likely to be at an advantage than women in both the Ministry and the Army.

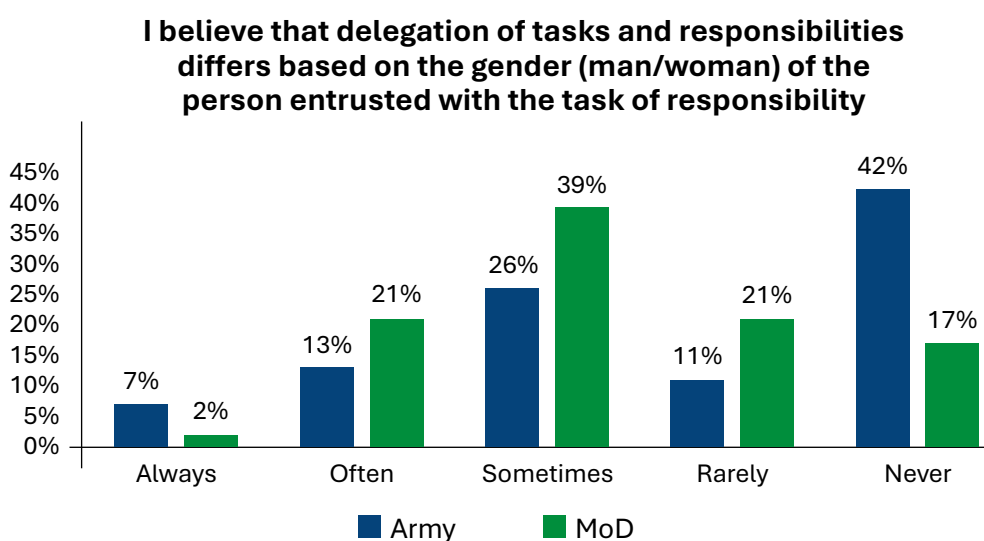
Interviews and focus group responses provide some insights into why respondents perceive men or women to be at a disadvantage or an advantage. Some female respondents expressed the perception or belief that leadership may hesitate to appoint women to certain positions or roles due to the **influence of gender-based attitudes and stereotypes**. In this regard, the results indicate that men do not always recognize the benefits of gender equality, whereas women tend to more clearly see the advantages it brings. Men often prioritize knowledge and skills in terms of institutional effectiveness and efficiency, while women focus on the positive changes they have observed in their work as a result of gender equality. This difference in perspectives may explain why men are less likely to view gender equality positively and may even perceive themselves as being at a disadvantage.

The findings from the GSA indicate the presence of varying perceptions regarding gender equality and fairness in the workplace within the Ministry and the Army. While some participants in the study believe that men are at a disadvantage, particularly in training and professional development within the Army and in promotion within the Ministry, others feel that women are at a disadvantage, especially in terms of assignment/deployment in the Army and promotion in the Ministry. Notably, the results suggest that gender-based stereotypes may have an indirect impact on decision-making and management. These insights highlight the importance of ongoing efforts to address gender bias and more actively promote equal opportunities and institutional cohesion within the Ministry and the Army.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE SUITABILITY OF MEN AND WOMEN FOR CERTAIN JOB AND OFFICIAL POSITIONS IN THE MINISTRY AND THE ARMY

The findings from the GSA indicate that respondents from both the Ministry and the Army do not significantly differ in their views regarding the suitability of men or women for certain positions within the Ministry and the Army.

Regarding the delegation of responsible tasks, most respondents in the survey were asked whether gender influences the delegation of tasks in the Ministry and the Army. In response, 53% of the respondents in the Army and 38% in the Ministry *rarely* or *never* believe that gender influences the delegation of tasks. The percentage of responses in the Ministry is higher than in the Army, with 23% in the Ministry and 15% in the Army indicating that gender *always* or *often* influences task delegation.



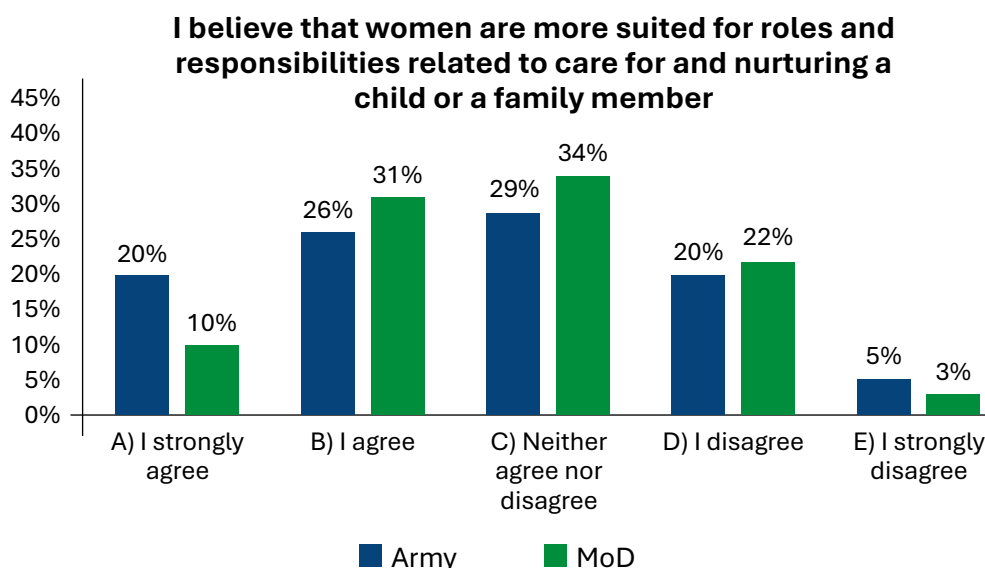
Graph 3: Perception of whether gender influences delegation of tasks in the Ministry and the Army

Some respondents believe that task delegation is subjective and depends on the superior delegating the task and their general perception of gender roles, pointing to the existence and influence of gender stereotypes. Prejudices and stereotypes regarding tasks that are perceived as unsuitable for women were mentioned several times in narrative responses as factors influencing whether a woman would be assigned or delegated a task by her superiors. Responses such as, “*Men are ingrained with the belief that women cannot handle certain work positions or tasks*” or “*Under the influence of stereotypes, superiors believe some tasks are better suited for men than women*” corroborate the above claims.

When it comes to the suitability of men and/or women for specific job or official positions in the Ministry and the Army, most respondents associate women with **administrative roles and office work**. The survey highlighted that women are perceived as being better suited for kitchen work, sanitary services, logistics, communications/signals, civil-military cooperation, medical care/support, archive/clerical and office work, monitoring duties, and other jobs where physical strength and management skills are not required or deemed essential.

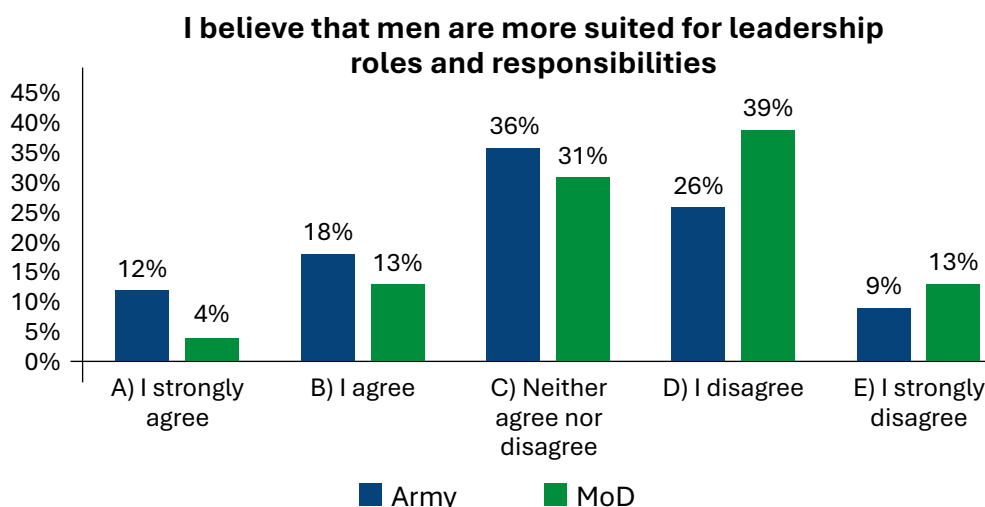
Similarly, **men are associated with roles and responsibilities requiring physical strength and endurance**, including special forces, truck loading/unloading, handling tools with a larger mass, guard duties/outposts and night shifts, fieldwork, work in troops (regiment, platoon, company), aviation and paratrooper duties, artillery, armoured mechanized units, drivers of combat motor vehicles, and operators of armoured vehicles. This perception is also evident in the context of leadership and decision-making roles, with some respondents narratively expressing the view that men are more suited for leadership and decision-making positions.

The following graph shows that 46% of Army respondents and 41% of Ministry respondents believe (*strongly agree or agree*) that *women are more suited for roles and responsibilities related to care and nurturing*. These gender-disaggregated data show that in the Army, 47% of men and 44% of women agree or strongly agree that women are more suitable for the care of children or family members. Similar responses were seen in the Ministry, with 41% of men and 41% of women agreeing.



Graph 4: Perceptions on whether women are more suited for care-related roles and responsibilities

On the other hand, 30% of Army respondents and 17% of Ministry respondents believe (strongly agree or agree) that men are more suited for leadership roles and responsibilities. These gender-disaggregated data show that 39% of men in the Army, compared to 23% of men in the Ministry, share this view. However, it is important to emphasize the high percentage of female respondents (61% in the Ministry and 60% in the Army) who disagree that men are more suited for leadership roles and responsibilities. This indicates that stereotypical views on gender and leadership roles are more prevalent among male respondents than female ones.



Graph 5: Perceptions on whether men are more suited for leadership roles and responsibilities

These perceptions reflect two of the most common gender-based stereotypes: that men are leaders because they are emotionally strong and physically capable, and that women are more suited for caregiving roles because they are emotionally sensitive and nurturing.

Although the data reveal stereotypes linking women to administrative roles and caregiving responsibilities, while men are often viewed as suitable for physically demanding tasks and leadership roles, there are some differences in opinions among respondents, particularly among those in managerial and command positions. **While some acknowledge the persistence of gender stereotypes in society and the defence sector, others believe these stereotypes are gradually being overcome.** Most interviewees in leadership and command positions believe that the stereotypes and the notion that women are more suitable or “predestined” for certain professions, and men for others, are being slowly but steadily challenged. Regarding the perception of women in command and managerial positions, this group of respondents largely believes that gender does not determine leadership ability or management effectiveness, as these require other qualities and skills acquired over time in service and on the job. Additionally, focus group discussions revealed a noticeable determination among women to challenge traditional gender norms and excel in professions traditionally dominated by men.

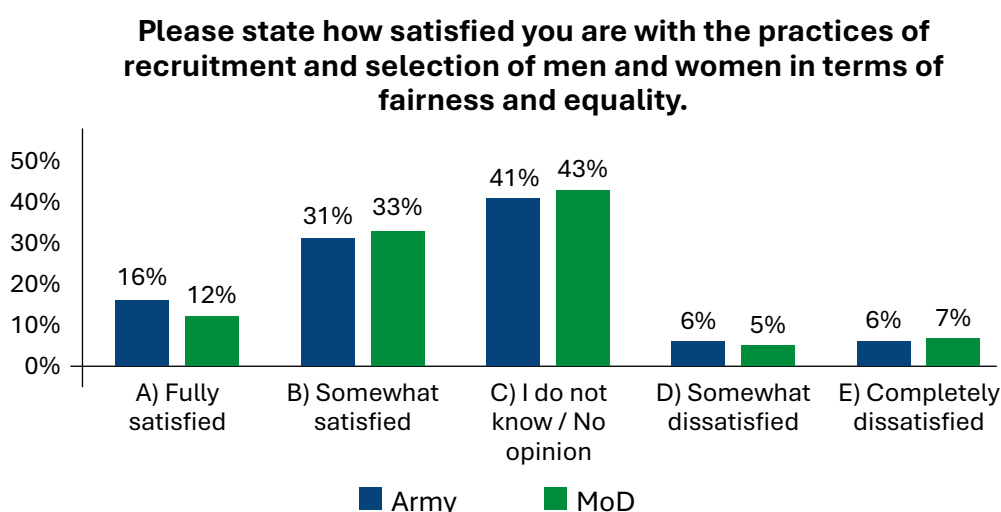
When it comes to leadership, survey responses, when disaggregated by gender, show that men in the Army are more inclined to believe that men are more suited for leadership than women. However, leadership in the Ministry and command personnel in the Army believe that gender is not a determining factor for effective leadership but rather competence and expertise. The interviews indicate support for a more “open leadership” approach based on “values promoted by gender equality,” which involves fostering better understanding, using more personal communication with employees, promoting teamwork, providing more space for employees to express their opinions, and not adhering strictly to hierarchical power.

Overall, the findings highlight the complexity of gender dynamics within the Ministry and the Army and underscore the importance of ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and overcome gender biases and stereotypes. From the above, it can be concluded that there is a need for a broader inclusion of various categories of employees from the Ministry and the Army (particularly professional soldiers) in gender training, specifically in the area related to demystifying gender stereotypes, biases, and gender roles. This would lead to greater awareness and understanding of these concepts, resulting in the reduction and/or elimination of existing stereotypes within this category of respondents.

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES ON EQUAL AND FAIR EMPLOYMENT, SELECTION, ASSIGNMENT, PLACEMENT, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PROMOTION

The majority of respondents from the Army (61%) and the Ministry (59%) stated that they are *fully satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the availability, equality, and fairness of **professional development and training opportunities for men and women**. Similarly, respondents from the Ministry (52%) and the Army (56%) reported being *fully satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the fairness and equality of **promotion practices**. These responses suggest positive institutional practices and reflect a high level of trust in the fairness and equality of the processes for professional development, training, and promotion within the Ministry and the Army.

Regarding **recruitment and selection**, the dominant responses from the Ministry and Army respondents were positive, with 47% of Army respondents and 45% of Ministry respondents being *fully satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the practices in this area. It is noteworthy that a significant percentage of respondents indicated a neutral stance, responding with “*I don’t know*” or “*I have no opinion*.” This could be interpreted as a lack of information, insufficient involvement in these processes, or reluctance to respond to this question.



Graph 6: Level of Satisfaction with Recruitment and Selection Practices for Men and Women

In accordance with the Law on Service in the Army (Article 87), a regulated body, the **Personnel Council**, is established, with members appointed by decision of the Minister of Defence, upon the recommendation of

a competent superior officer. The council is formed in military units and institutions at the battalion level and higher. Members of the Council are obligatorily appointed from among **senior officers holding the position of head or a representative from the relevant section (Article 13)**. There are few women in senior positions, and accordingly, their representation in the councils is insufficient, as was noted by participants in the focus groups.

Although there were few narrative comments on this topic in the survey, they reflect two perspectives. The first is the view of some employees that **recruitment and selection practices are influenced by other factors, rather than gender or other socio-demographic factors**. The second perspective is that there is a perceived **difference in the physical fitness testing standards for men and women in the context of the Army**, creating a sense of unfairness among some respondents. However, this also points to a lack of understanding and/or information regarding the different norms and standards for physical fitness for men and women, which are not only gender-adapted but also tailored to the specific positions individuals are assigned to, as well as to their age, and are regulated accordingly. Nevertheless, it should be considered that men and women have different physical and biological characteristics and predispositions, and the norms and standards for physical testing should not be identical.¹⁷ On the other hand, data from interviews and focus groups revealed the viewpoint that, although women are subject to less stringent physical fitness criteria upon entry into the military and during regular physical checks, this approach is deemed entirely appropriate. The criteria are set by experts and are in accordance with the prescribed criteria and standards of NATO member states.

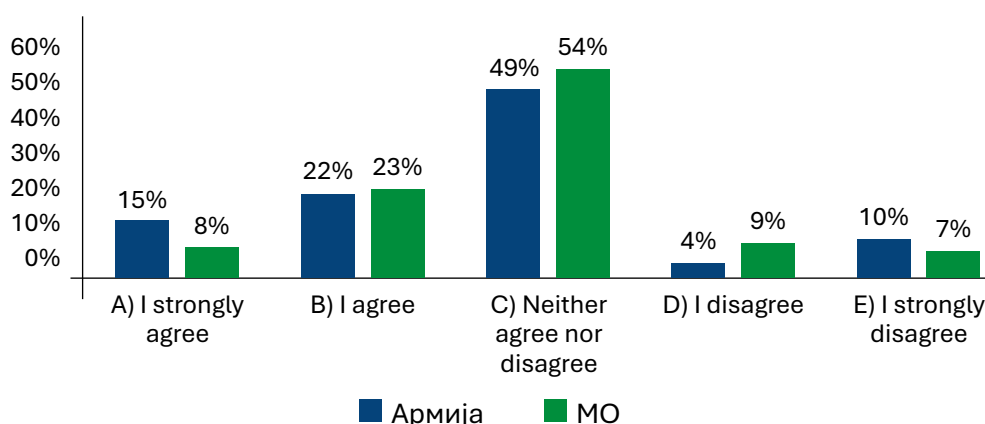
Although there is a generally positive perception among respondents regarding the fairness and equality of professional development, training opportunities, and promotion practices, the results indicate a need for greater awareness and understanding of gender concepts. This includes expanded training initiatives on gender issues for managerial and command personnel to address and overcome existing stereotypes that affect the recruitment and selection process. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for policies that promote gender inclusivity in decision-making bodies. Additionally, efforts should be made to provide opportunities for women to enhance their physical preparedness and skills, enabling them to compete on an equal footing for roles traditionally dominated by men, such as special forces or handling combat weaponry, should they choose to pursue such duties.

PERCEPTIONS ON THE SELECTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF MEN AND WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

In comparison to other institutional practices such as promotion, professional development, and even recruitment and selection processes, the deployment process for missions has the lowest percentage of respondents who are *fully satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* - 37% from the Army and 31% from the Ministry. However, the majority of personnel do not have a clear stance on this issue, with 49% of Army personnel and 54% of Ministry personnel responding with *"I don't know"* or *"No opinion."* This suggests that neutral responses may have been given by individuals in the Army who have not yet applied to participate in missions. Additionally, very few employees in the Ministry are deployed on foreign missions, although some are involved in administrative procedures for application, selection, and choice. Therefore, no clear conclusion can be drawn regarding trust and satisfaction in these processes, despite 37% of Army respondents and 31% of Ministry respondents expressing satisfaction with the management of the selection and deployment processes for missions.

¹⁷ The Ministry and the Army adopted a [Rulebook for the maintenance and assessment of physical fitness for service in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the work of the committees for assessing physical fitness](#) (Official Gazette of North Macedonia, no. 147 of July 1, 2021), which prescribes the method of assessing physical fitness for both candidates for service in the Army and active military personnel in the Ministry and Army. According to this Rulebook, the norms of the tests for all disciplines differ depending on whether the individual is man or woman, as well as by age group.

Please state how satisfied you are with the selection and deployment of men and women to international missions (in terms of fairness and equality)



Graph 7: Level of Satisfaction with Fairness and Equality in the Selection and Deployment of Men and Women for International Missions

The results indicated that women are underrepresented in missions compared to men due to structural and sociocultural reasons, as well as the specific requirements of certain missions.¹⁸ In this context, it should be mentioned that the Ministry's Operational Plan (2020-2025) for the implementation of the Second National Action Plan (NAP) of North Macedonia for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security includes a strategic objective under Goal 1 - Leadership, with sub-goal 1.2 *Increase the number of women leaders in peacekeeping missions and in regional and international defence diplomatic representations, aiming for 30% women among the total number of deployed personnel.*

Interviews with leadership in the Ministry and command personnel in the Army, along with feedback from focus groups regarding deployments, revealed a consensus in support of including women in peacekeeping operations. This consensus was often justified by **operational needs**, emphasizing situations where only women can effectively engage with civilian women or conduct searches of other women. Additionally, participants in the interviews and focus groups highlighted the potential positive impact of women soldiers on local populations, noting that women are often **more skilled in conflict resolution and effective communication**.

Despite the general perception of equal and fair deployment to missions regardless of gender, some participants identified certain challenges, **including the need to encourage women to apply for missions and instances where required training or qualifications for certain mission positions may be lacking**. Specifically, according to some respondents, many women do not possess the specialized training or qualifications necessary for many of the positions required in peacekeeping operations.¹⁹ Another challenge raised was the **responsibilities women have at home related to childcare, making deployment for the necessary time periods more difficult**. These findings highlight the need for appropriate measures to better balance professional and personal life, and where possible, to adopt positive practices from other NATO and EU member states.

¹⁸ Deployment in missions is regulated by the **Law on Defence**, where Article 41-v clearly states that the deployment of Army personnel and Ministry employees outside the territory of the Republic for participation in humanitarian operations, international operations, NATO missions, and operations is regulated by the Minister of Defence. Decisions to send Army units abroad for participation in international operations are made by the Assembly, while decisions for participation in humanitarian operations, NATO missions and operations, and in the exercise of the right to individual or collective self-defence are made by the Government of North Macedonia (Article 41-a).

¹⁹ Examples provided included training for explosive ordnance disposal, training in the use of mortar systems, patrolling, and other specialized training categories.

The survey results indicate a lack of clearly defined views regarding the processes of deployment to missions, with a significant portion of respondents remaining neutral. The results suggest that gender is not a significant factor in deployment decisions for most respondents, with one reason being the lack of information and proper encouragement for women to apply. Additionally, it can be concluded that gender stereotypes influence task assignment decisions, as women are often assigned to traditionally “female” roles due to perceived preferences or pressures related to family obligations. These findings underscore the importance of specialized training for female soldiers and non-commissioned officers to address skill discrepancies, as well as the need to support policies that promote the balance between professional and personal life.

PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT AND RESPONSE TO HARASSMENT

Institutional Policy Framework and Practices

The gender self-assessment revealed that both the Ministry and the Army demonstrate **institutional commitment to preventing and responding to workplace harassment**. This includes a series of actions to operationalize the national legal framework regarding workplace harassment.²⁰

The authorised person for protection from workplace harassment is responsible for receiving complaints, conducting internal procedures, and providing expert assistance and advice to employees in the Ministry and the Army. **Gender representatives** focus on providing advice and assistance in cases of workplace harassment, while **mediators** are specially trained to mediate when complaints are filed. Currently, there are 36 gender representatives: 19 in the Army (10 women and 9 men) and 17 in the Ministry (5 men and 12 women). Additionally, there are 24 mediators: 13 in the Ministry (9 women and 4 men) and 11 in the Army (7 men and 4 women). The Ministry has **6 certified trainers for workplace harassment protection**, whereas the Army has no certified trainers, indicating a need for additional capacity building.

The Law on Service in the Army regulates the status, rights, obligations, duties, and responsibilities of personnel serving in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia, including disciplinary responsibility, specifically addressing sexual harassment as a serious breach of military discipline (Article 131, Paragraph 16). The same article, Paragraph 26, also covers psychological harassment, or mobbing, in the workplace. Additionally, the [Code of Ethics for Employees in the Ministry](#) establishes basic standards for communication with colleagues and external parties, including respect for the rights and integrity of others. The Ministry's website has a dedicated section – [CODE OF ETHICS](#). With the amendments to the Code of Ethics in 2023, an **Ethics Officer and an Ethics Committee** were appointed. Employees of the Ministry and the Army can report unethical behavior they believe violates the provisions of the Code of Ethics to the Officer. Furthermore, there is a [Guidelines on protection against workplace harassment at the Ministry and at the Army](#)²¹ and a toolkit package available, including a [Workplace Harassment Protection Handbook](#). The Ministry's website has a separate window titled [STOP HARASSMENT](#), where contact information for gender representatives and mediators is provided, along with a phone number for reporting harassment. The [Harassment reporting form](#) is also available on the Ministry's website.

²⁰ The legal framework of the Republic of North Macedonia defines and prohibits harassment, including sexual harassment, as stated in the Law on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, the **Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination**, the **Law on Protection against Harassment at the Workplace**, and the **Law on Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**.

²¹ The Guidelines elaborate the internal procedure for reporting harassment, which includes several options. According to the guidelines, harassment should be reported within six months of the last incident, and the procedure should be completed within 30 days of filing the complaint.

Awareness of Policies and Mechanisms for Harassment Protection and Response

Data from interviews with managerial and command personnel reflect **strong support for the policies and internal mechanisms for protecting against and responding to workplace harassment**. In this context, the importance of familiarizing new employees with these mechanisms and relevant laws was emphasized. Respondents unanimously recognized the value of existing protection mechanisms but expressed concerns about potential misuse.

Specialized training is conducted for employees in managerial and command positions, as well as for other categories of employees within the Ministry and the Army. However, some respondents noted that the number of annual training sessions is insufficient to raise awareness to the necessary level, resulting in situations where *“harassment is still not understood and may be taken as a joke because people do not recognize what it is.”*

This need for ongoing training and raising employee awareness of existing harassment protection policies and mechanisms is supported by research data, which reveal that **45% of Army personnel are unaware or uncertain that a harassment protection mechanism exists**. On the other hand, **18% of Ministry personnel are unaware or uncertain of the existence of such a mechanism**. Nonetheless, it is evident that Ministry personnel are better informed about the existence of this mechanism (81% responded that they are aware), compared to 54% of Army personnel.

Furthermore, participants noted that there is **insufficient informational support for individuals experiencing harassment, including potential measures that could be taken against the perpetrator**. However, it was also noted that *“each unit has a psychologist available for support”* and that *“the stigma around seeking psychological support is decreasing, with more and more people seeking advice and protection from psychologists.”*

Participants in the focus groups also expressed the view that **gender-based attitudes and biases limit reporting and the willingness of leadership, mainly men, to seek support** from professionals on this issue, including the designated authorised person/deputy, gender representatives, and mediators. This was further confirmed during interviews with leadership in the Ministry and command personnel in the Army, where most male interviewees stated they had no need to contact gender representatives because *“everything is going well in their departments, and they maintain discipline.”* In contrast, the women interviewed emphasized that they communicate with gender representatives, seek advice when necessary, and some are even part of the gender equality structure. Thus, gender norms and attitudes influence who uses or does not use the internal gender equality structure. However, all respondents confirmed that they know someone in the “gender network,” indicating that the existence and availability of these mechanisms are recognized by employees.

Experiences and Testimonies of Workplace Harassment

Regarding employees' experiences or testimonies of workplace harassment, the survey data reveal that some personnel have noticed or witnessed jokes, comments, or questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Given the relatively small number of formal complaints, as noted in the focus group with the designated authorised person/deputy, gender representatives, and mediators, it was concluded that most of these uncomfortable situations likely go unreported. This may be linked to the fact that there is no clear perception that jokes (or comments/questions) can be considered as harassment. However, the majority of respondents from both the Ministry and the Army reported that they rarely or never noticed or experienced inappropriate jokes, questions, or comments.

Positively, a larger percentage of survey respondents from both the Ministry and the Army stated that they rarely or never noticed or witnessed uncomfortable physical contact/touching, with 91% of Ministry personnel and 95% of Army personnel affirming this. Although the percentage of those who reported sometimes, often, or always witnessing physical contact is very low (9% from the Ministry and 6% from the Army), it is necessary to continuously monitor these incidents and take timely appropriate action.

Addressing gender-based violence, as one form of violence, largely depends on fostering an atmosphere of equality and non-discrimination within the organization. Cultivating an organizational culture capable of preventing, protecting against, and appropriately responding to harassment or other inappropriate behavior requires knowledge, awareness, skills, and commitment at all levels of personnel and leadership. Military organizations are sensitive and traditionally male-dominated environments, but they provide opportunities for professional development and active participation in work processes and reforms, thus contributing to the development of an organizational culture of zero tolerance towards violence. The GSA demonstrates institutional commitment to preventing and responding to workplace harassment, as evidenced by various activities aimed at operationalizing the national legal framework on this issue. Key personnel, including the designated authorised person/deputy, gender representatives, and mediators, play a significant role in implementing internal procedures and mechanisms, as well as providing support and advice to employees. However, the GSA revealed a lack of sensitivity among a small portion of employees, particularly in the Army, regarding the existence of harassment mechanisms and an understanding of what harassment entails (which may include jokes, questions, or comments that could cause discomfort to the individual they are directed at). While the commitment to addressing workplace harassment is evident, additional activities are required to ensure the necessary sensitivity and prevention strategies, along with continuous efforts to promote a culture of reporting and support.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES: PATERNITY LEAVE

Paternity leave

In order to assess the support for efforts aimed at providing more opportunities for fathers to take paternal leave and participate more directly in the care of their young children, respondents in the survey were asked questions related to paternal and parental leave. The quantitative data from the survey, along with the results from interviews and focus groups, demonstrated that respondents from both the Army and the Ministry overwhelmingly support **parental leave** (15-20 days after the birth of a child) and **parental leave** (4-6 months at a specific point during maternity leave), regardless of whether it is taken concurrently with or independently from the mother.

A total of 61% of respondents from the Army and 69% from the Ministry expressed strong support for paternal leave, i.e., fathers taking leave from work to care for the child for 15-20 days after its birth, while 48% of respondents from the Army and 56% from the Ministry strongly supported paternity leave, i.e., fathers taking leave from work to care for the child for 4-6 months after its birth.

Despite the general support, the narrative responses from the survey indicate that respondents (both men and women) tend to identify the mother as the primary caregiver for the newborn and exhibit a lack of recognition of the purpose of these policies and measures, which are aimed at promoting gender equality at home and balancing private and professional life. Regarding the father's role in childcare and work leave while the child is still a baby, both male and female respondents expressed the belief that the mother is more important in the child's first year, particularly for its psychophysical development. Statements such as *«a period of 4-6 months is too long for the father to care for the child,»* *«a man cannot care for a 15–20-day old baby; this could just be an excuse to be off work,»* and *«a child needs its mother»* reflect the thinking of certain respondents on this issue. In contrast, data from interviews and focus groups with Ministry and Army personnel reflect a more informed and supportive approach, emphasizing the importance of encouraging fathers to take leave and promoting a fairer division of childcare responsibilities.

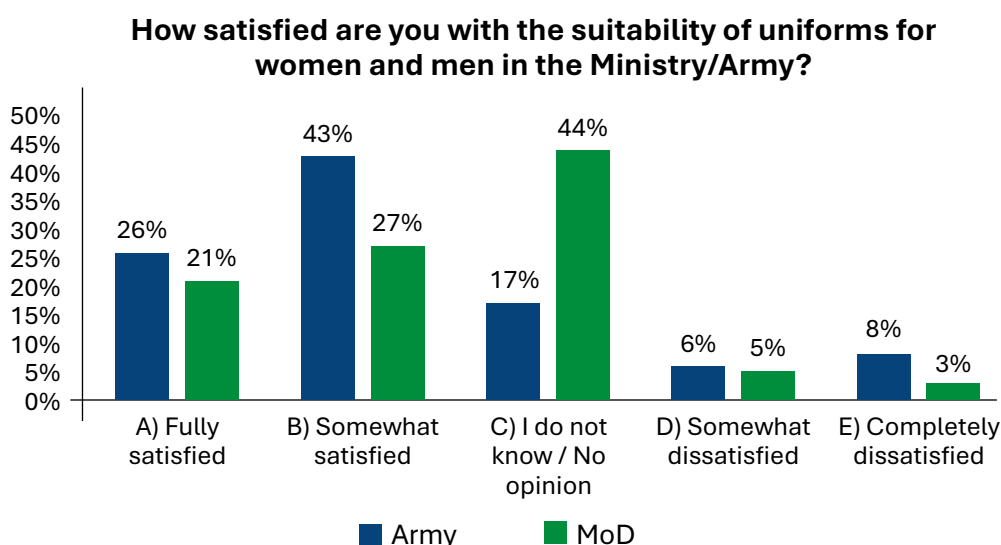
Previous data indicate that **34 men have taken paternity leave** in the Ministry and the Army, suggesting an already established practice of men using parental leave in these institutions.

In order for women to have the opportunity to fully realize their careers, including participating seamlessly in missions, it is necessary to support policies that encourage men to participate in family and domestic responsibilities related to childcare. The GSA demonstrated broad support among respondents in both the Ministry and the Army for the potential implementation of paternity and parental leave policies aimed at promoting gender equality at home and in childcare. Given that only 34 men have taken paternity leave in the Ministry and the Army, it is essential to establish a more consistent practice for men taking parental leave. For the effective implementation of these policies, efforts must focus on changing attitudes that associate childcare exclusively with mothers, while also ensuring support and understanding from superiors to mitigate potential career implications for fathers who take paternity or parental leave.

EQUIPMENT, UNIFORMS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A significant part of the Report includes an analysis of respondents' experiences regarding the adjustment of infrastructure, uniforms, and equipment to the specific needs of women and men.²²

Approximately 69% of respondents from the Army and 48% from the Ministry expressed *being somewhat satisfied* or *fully satisfied* with the uniforms for men and women. However, a smaller portion of the surveyed individuals indicated that the field uniforms are designed for the male body, and sizes are not available for petite or pregnant women.



Graph 8. Percentage of satisfaction with the suitability of uniforms for women and men in the Ministry and the Army

In this context, it is important to mention that according to the **Regulation on Army Uniforms of the Republic of North Macedonia**²³, the uniform must match the basic anthropometric characteristics of the personnel wearing it (Article 12), and it is further stipulated that all types of uniforms are made for both men and women, and maternity uniforms can be made for pregnant members of the Army (Article 13). From this, it can be concluded that despite the existing Regulation, respondents' answers indicate that, in practice, in certain individual cases, there are no operational requirements for appropriate field uniforms for women or suitable maternity uniforms.

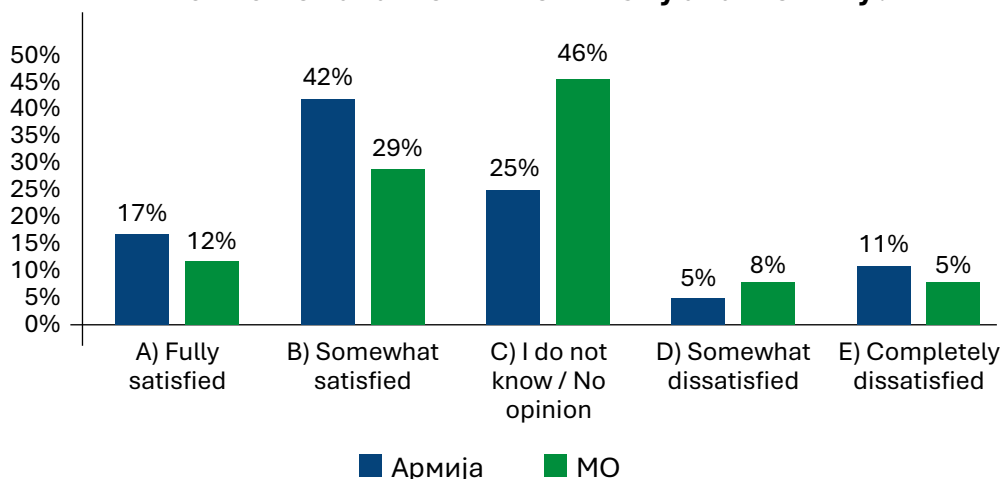
Regarding individual equipment, approximately 59% of respondents from the Army and 41% from the Ministry expressed being *somewhat satisfied* or *fully satisfied* with the individual equipment for men and women. It

²² Aligning equipment, uniforms, and infrastructure with the different needs of men and women is key to operational efficiency and optimizing workforce potential, as well as ensuring the overall well-being of Ministry and Army personnel, regardless of gender.

²³ Regulation on Army Uniforms of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019, Official Gazette No. 137.

was noted that the protective/bulletproof vest is not gender-specific, with examples provided from the armed forces of the United Kingdom and the United States, which offer gender-specific body armor. Additionally, there was a high percentage of «*I don't know*» and «*no opinion*» responses, both for uniforms and individual equipment, likely from respondents in the Ministry who are administrative officers or from the civilian personnel in the Army for whom the questions about uniforms and individual equipment are not applicable.

How satisfied are with the suitability of individual equipment for women and men in the Ministry and the Army?



Graph 9. Percentage of satisfaction with the suitability of individual equipment for women and men in the Ministry and the Army

Regarding infrastructure and working conditions for women and men, the majority of respondents in the survey indicated that they were *somewhat satisfied* or *fully satisfied* (64% from the Army and 61% from the Ministry). Narrative responses highlighted the main issue - the lack of spatial and infrastructural capacities specifically for women. This includes the need for women's facilities with separate toilets and showers, as well as better-equipped guard posts that provide greater privacy and comfort for women. Although the survey data suggest that not all individuals are satisfied with the infrastructure, this could likely be explained by the location of barracks and units. Specifically, according to demographic data from the survey, greater dissatisfaction is evident among respondents located/working in facilities outside the capital city.

Data from focus groups and interviews are similar, although it was noted that efforts have been made to improve infrastructure in recent years. Respondents pointed out that the Military Academy's infrastructure was renovated in 2022. These renovations addressed the specific needs of young women and men in the dormitories and workspaces. It was also noted that the inclusion of women in the Army initiated infrastructural adjustments to meet the specific needs of women. However, many more adjustments are needed due to the previously inherited infrastructure, which was designed solely for men's needs, and its adaptation is a longer process and a long-term investment. In this regard, it is important to mention that the **Operational Plan for Resolution 1325**, specifically Strategic Goal 3.2, envisages the adaptation and expansion of infrastructural and material capacities according to the specific needs of women and men, while the **Defence Strategy (2020)** foresees the provision of additional financial resources for renovating and constructing new infrastructure and improving living and working conditions for personnel in the defence sector and the Army.

The alignment of equipment, uniforms, and infrastructure to the diverse needs of men and women is crucial for operational efficiency and the optimization of the workforce's potential, as well as for the overall well-being of personnel in the Ministry and the Army, regardless of gender. While the majority of survey respondents expressed satisfaction with uniforms, individual equipment, and working conditions, the narrative responses highlight occasional issues related to the lack of operational requirements for appropriate uniforms for petite and pregnant women, the absence of gender-specific body armor, and inadequate facilities, including shared accommodations and sanitary facilities for men and women. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the inclusion of women in the military has prompted infrastructural adjustments in recent years, though further efforts are needed to address the inherited infrastructure, which was primarily designed to meet the needs of men.

CONCLUSION

The gender self-assessment within the Ministry of Defence and the Army reveals that the Republic of North Macedonia has a comprehensive legal and political framework for promoting gender equality and protection from discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence. Furthermore, the Ministry and the Army have made significant efforts to design and implement activities and policies to operationalize the national legal and political framework. In line with these efforts, most personnel in the Ministry and the Army have a consistent and accurate understanding of gender equality and support efforts to advance gender equality and equal opportunities. However, the GSA identifies specific areas for improvement and updates to policies and practices to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The GSA highlights the persistence of gender-based stereotypes among certain groups of employees, along with numerous myths and misconceptions about gender and gender equality. Additionally, there are indications that personnel in the Ministry and the Army may not be sufficiently familiar with the objectives of gender equality policies, which often generates resistance to these policies. The gender-based stereotypes identified among some employees emphasize the importance of comprehensive education and training programs for employees at all levels and categories, with a particular focus on strengthening the capacities of gender trainers and increasing women's access to higher education in security and defence to foster their advancement within the institution.

Given the existence of a base of gender trainers as part of the overall internal gender structure, this resource should be consistently utilized as a significant asset and a key factor in the implementation of internal policies and measures to promote gender equality and equal opportunities. Therefore, greater coherence within the overall internal gender structure is needed, as well as the establishment of an organizational unit for equal opportunities, composed of a team of employees with a clear mandate to further integrate the gender perspective into the Ministry and the Army, while monitoring the implementation of gender equality policies, plans, and programs.

In terms of policies, the analysis indicates the need for continued progress in integrating gender into bylaws, regulations, codes, and decisions governing various aspects of work within the Ministry and the Army. Monitoring and evaluation of operational, strategic, and annual plans should also continue consistently, with particular emphasis on the regular collection of gender-disaggregated statistical data.

The GSA also reveals a need for greater representation of women in certain advisory bodies, committees, and decision-making structures to achieve greater gender balance and sensitivity in decision-making processes. The underrepresentation of women in some of these bodies is partly due to insufficient representation in higher positions, which is a key prerequisite for membership. This is directly linked to the previously mentioned need for greater inclusion of women in higher defence schools, which would enable their career advancement and increased representation in decision-making positions.

Survey data reveal strong support among respondents in the Ministry and the Army for the proposal to provide opportunities for fathers to take paternity and parental leave. However, the analysis also identified a lack of recognition of the need for greater involvement of fathers in child-rearing, as well as a lack of understanding of the purpose of specific measures aimed at promoting gender equality in the home and helping to balance professional and private life. Accordingly, informative activities and/or campaigns are needed to raise awareness and encourage fathers to take leave for childcare by showcasing positive practices and experiences of individuals who have already taken such leave. Focus group findings also suggest the need for specific measures and policies for married couples serving in the Army. Additionally, other measures should be considered, such as implementing flexible working schedules where possible, cross-training for men to develop capacities for non-traditional roles, and institutionalizing training on balancing professional and private life as a regular topic within gender training programs.

In the context of popularizing the military profession among the younger population, especially among girls, it is necessary to continue with informative and promotional campaigns in secondary schools, with mixed

teams from the Army (potentially expanding to the upper grades of primary schools). At the same time, efforts to promote the military profession via the Ministry and Army websites and social media platforms should continue to send a positive message about the inclusion of women in the Army.

Regarding infrastructure and equipment, findings indicate some dissatisfaction with conditions in certain facilities (particularly in barracks outside Skopje), mainly concerning the lack of separate spaces for men and women. In this regard, annual plans within Program 7: Facilities and Infrastructure should integrate the gender perspective into the planning of construction, reconstruction, and renovation of facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, other strategic documents should consistently integrate the gender perspective. Findings also highlight the need to adapt certain equipment components to better fit women's bodies. Positive examples and experiences from other countries, cited during interviews and focus groups, indicate that consideration should be given to further adjusting certain equipment, such as body armor/bulletproof vest, and establishing operational requirements for specific components of field uniforms to accommodate the specific needs and physical builds of women.

Regarding workplace harassment, findings reveal insufficient awareness of the existence of the internal mechanism for harassment protection. Accordingly, efforts should be made to improve awareness through a comprehensive program aimed at informing all Ministry and Army personnel. Moreover, there is a need to increase the number of training sessions on identifying various forms of harassment, as the findings showed that not all respondents can recognize harassment. In this context, continuity in maintaining regular records of harassment cases and the centralized collection of data is required. Regular annual reports and greater transparency in the reports prepared by the designated authorised person/deputy and gender representatives, along with regular oversight of this mechanism's implementation, will contribute to greater trust in the existing mechanism among Ministry and Army employees.

Gender equality is a key way of utilizing the diverse and specialized human resources necessary to address the increasingly complex and rapidly changing domestic, regional, and global contexts. Advancing gender equality means supporting and enabling men and women to equally participate in and contribute to ensuring, planning, and overseeing security and defence within the Army and the Ministry. Its goal is to eliminate shortcomings, harassment, and discrimination, and to provide an equal and fair environment for both men and women at all levels of effective strategic, operational, and tactical security and defence.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY #1: STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Institutional Policies and Mechanisms

1. **Establish an organizational unit within the Systematization of the Ministry and the Formation of the Army** with specific positions dedicated to equal opportunities and gender equality.
2. **Regular and continuous monitoring and evaluation** over a defined period. This would include the continuous collection of gender-disaggregated data, based on gender, age, and other relevant factors, from recruitment/selection to the termination of employment for any reason. This includes setting a timeline for monitoring and evaluation, as well as establishing indicators to track achieved results.
3. **Review and assess gender equality policies, identifying best practices (documented results), and tracking positive trends** at regional and international levels. This would also include updating and revising policies and forming working groups for policy development, updates, and revisions, involving personnel from various levels and with different profiles.

Education, Training, and Professional Development

1. **Sensitization of leadership and command personnel through the introduction of a gender equality program** aimed at enhancing analytical skills, mitigating the impact of implicit biases, and aligning attitudes with gender equality values.
2. **Expand the gender equality training program and increase the number of courses for training and professional development** regarding general and specific topics related to gender and gender equality, targeting not only managerial/command personnel but also other staff in the Ministry and the Army across different ranks/positions and units/departments.
3. **Conduct regular briefings** on gender and gender equality for units/departments.
4. **Introduce gender equality sessions/workshops for cadets and instructors at the Military Academy.**
5. **Incorporate gender-sensitive communication and skills training as part of the broader training program, including the use of gender-sensitive language.**

Practice

1. **Continuous monitoring and regular evaluation of training over a defined period** to measure changes/improvements in: a) Knowledge/awareness, and b) Attitudes/values related to gender equality. This should include:
 - a) **Pre-training and post-training assessments measuring the direct impact of the training on knowledge and changes in participants' attitudes/values.** This assessment should be tailored to the training/professional development materials and include knowledge-based questions as well as attitude/value-based questions. The assessment should be anonymous and designed to measure short-to mid-term changes, depending on the length of the training/professional development course.
 - b) **Monitoring of qualitative changes resulting from long-term training and professional development processes that impact organizational culture.** This includes documenting expressed attitudes/values and examples after each intervention and subsequently analyzing the data for any changes. It is important to identify individuals whose attitudes and values have shifted in one direction or another.

c) Follow-up research on the GSA regarding the gender climate/status related to gender equality and equal opportunities, using the same methodological tools to measure changes in attitudes and values related to gender and gender equality.

2. **Ongoing promotion of gender equality within the Ministry and the Army to the public** – this includes continuously conducting promotional campaigns in secondary schools and on the Ministry of Defence and Army websites, as well as on the official Ministry of Defence and Army social media pages, emphasizing the equal and fair engagement of men and women in all areas of work.

PRIORITY #2: INCREASING PROPORTIONAL GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND THE ARMY

Institutional Policies and Mechanisms

1. Conduct an **analysis to determine where men and women are over- or under-represented and identify the reasons for such representation**. In this regard, it is necessary to continue activities aimed at recruitment by encouraging and promoting the participation of both men and women (in tasks, training, etc.) in non-stereotypical roles and positions, including deployments to missions.
2. Continue **evaluating policies and specifically tracking and recording the men and women who have gained new skills and abilities** while deployed, with the goal of increasing the representation of both genders in various job positions within the Ministry and the Army.
3. **Review regulations** to identify whether **any institutional biases exist** that may affect the implementation of the gender equality concept and/or reproduce under-representation (either of women or men) in specific roles, units, and/or departments. If this is the case, methods of good practice may be applied to address such practices, including:
 - a) **Blind decision-making**²⁴ – eliminating information that may lead to unconscious bias affecting decisions or assessments;
 - b) **Gender balance and participation in decision-making bodies (including committees, councils, and other decision-making bodies)** – this also includes representative decision-making bodies) – policies should ensure that decision-making and advisory bodies are gender-balanced, with both men and women involved in assessment, evaluation, and decision-making processes²⁵.

Education, Training, and Professional Development

1. Implement a program for **cross-training and cross-tasking in different branches and/or skills, intended for both men and women**²⁶ under specific conditions, to develop their skills and capacities for non-stereotypical positions and functions (based on conducted analysis – see above).
2. Introduce **specialized tactical training for women** (e.g., driving in high-threat environments, shooting, camping, survival skills, and other areas).
3. Support and encourage **women to apply for high/senior officer and non-commissioned officer schools** as a prerequisite for representation in command positions. Based on the principle of fairness, women should be given preference in the selection process for high/senior military schools, provided they have equal qualifications and abilities.

²⁴ **Blind decision-making** refers to the practice of implementing mechanisms designed to reduce the influence of information and factors that may reveal gender or other characteristics, potentially triggering unconscious bias among decision-makers. The goal is to create a fair and impartial decision-making process by reducing factors unrelated to the qualifications, skills, or merits of individuals. For example, configuring recruitment software to omit gender and other personal characteristics of candidates, using gender-neutral language in job descriptions, etc. See more at: <https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2013/oct/14/blind-auditions-orchestras-gender-bias>

²⁵ It is important to note that the presence of women does not eliminate unconscious bias - both men and women may harbor unconscious biases based on prevailing socio-cultural attitudes and stereotypes.

²⁶ **Cross-training** refers to training military personnel in a range of skills and competencies beyond their primary specialties. Individuals may receive training in areas traditionally associated with roles of the opposite gender, allowing for a broader skill set and breaking gender stereotypes.

Practice

1. Introduce and develop **a mentoring program at all levels** (leadership mentoring program and a regular mentoring program at lower levels), based on an analysis of capacities and needs, to support the following:
 - a) Supporting both men and women in non-stereotypical positions (cross-training and cross-task support/mentorship), including cadets, students, and trainees at the Military Academy.
 - b) Supporting women and men in the promotion and deployment process.

PRIORITY #3: PREVENTION AND PROTECTION FROM WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Institutional Policies and Mechanisms

The ultimate goal of anti-harassment policies is **to prevent, protect, and respond to both informal and formal harassment complaints, as well as other undesirable behaviors** that may negatively impact an equal, fair, and productive work environment. This involves addressing each of these three components - **prevention, protection, and response** - specifically within the context of policy design, and also pertains to organizational culture, practice, and training as key elements supporting and sustaining the effective implementation of the policy.

A) Prevention²⁷

1. **Reorganize and strengthen the system of gender trainers, gender representatives, workplace harassment mediators, and the authorized person, deputy authorized person, and ombudsperson.**
2. **Develop specialized training for those responsible for preventing harassment, as well as psychologists in the Army and Ministry.**²⁸ Representatives and psychologists need training on how to protect themselves from power dynamics and to ensure a fair and impartial process for both the person reporting harassment and the person being reported. Thus, further development of their knowledge and skills through specialized training and capacity-building with national, regional, and international experts is necessary.
3. Further develop and continue the **awareness-raising and information program, which includes regular efforts to inform, educate, and shape attitudes toward harassment among personnel.** Activities would include:
 - a) Continuous planning of **awareness campaigns, poster campaigns, and the creation of brochures** with clear information about options and procedures for informal and formal reporting.
 - b) **Regular briefings** in organizational units twice a year to promote a culture of equality and fairness.
 - c) **Regular discussion workshops with units/departments, observing gender balance**, to create a space for personnel to ask questions, share concerns, and discuss the complexities of this topic. These **workshops would include theoretical and practical elements** to encourage personnel to reflect on their own or others' behavior, promote self-awareness, and foster an organizational culture that prevents harassment.
 - d) **Targeted workshops, as needed**, that do not necessarily follow the principle of gender balance among participants.

²⁷ The goal of 'prevention' is **to prevent the occurrence of unwanted harassment**. Therefore, the policy on harassment should raise awareness and understanding of what constitutes harassment, including gender-based harassment. Prevention aims to create and maintain an organizational environment that is not conducive to harassment, where even early signs of harassment, such as jokes, comments, and behaviors that are unwanted, inappropriate, and directed at a group or individual, are not tolerated.

²⁸ The harassment procedure, including interviews with complainants, witnesses, and those accused of harassment, are specialized skill sets that need to be developed.

Protection²⁹

1. Specific assistance available for both formal and informal reporting, with referrals to additional support services within the institutional context (counseling/psychology, as well as external support services).
 - a. In formal reporting, this may include information on the potential outcomes of the procedure, such as what may happen to the person reported for harassment (e.g., transfer to another unit/department, written warning, unpaid leave, dismissal, etc.). It may also include information on the potential outcome for the person reporting the harassment, such as transfer to another unit/department, change of supervisor, temporary reassignment to another position, in consultation with the person reporting the harassment, etc.
 - b. In informal reporting, this may include an explanation of how the gender representative/intermediary can support the complainant in resolving the undesirable behavior and the options for formal reporting and possible sanctions.
 - c. In both formal and informal reporting, support services or referral services should be provided to individuals who have experienced harassment or unwanted behavior, along with a structured process for following up on both reporting options.

Response³⁰

1. **Develop an informal reporting process** to enable a) Early detection of behaviors that may undermine an equal, fair, and supportive work environment; b) Providing complainants experiencing unwanted behavior with support and assistance, even when the behavior does not meet the definition outlined in harassment policies and/or the complainant does not wish to engage in a formal process (with potential sanctions). A manual for conducting informal procedures should be developed for this process.
2. **Explain the formal reporting process, which should include:**
 - a) Internal procedure for handling the case;
 - b) Establishing minimum criteria for initiating a formal institutional response;
 - c) Types of sanctions;
 - d) Support options for the complainant and the potential outcomes of the procedure;
 - e) A specific timeline for each phase of the procedure.
3. **Third-party reporting/intervention** within the Ministry and Army when inappropriate comments or behaviors based on gender stereotypes or conduct negatively affecting gender equality are observed.
4. **Formal reporting options should be more accessible and simplified.** This may include:
 - a) Reporting in person or in writing via a form, as is the current practice for reporting harassment;
 - b) The reporting form available on the Ministry's website should be well-known to personnel.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Policies

Monitoring and evaluation are critical elements for the successful implementation of policies—without institutionalized monitoring, there is little or no opportunity to determine whether the policy is effective. There is a need to strengthen the **annual reporting process**, which documents the activities implementing the policies and tracks complaints (formal or informal) and institutional responses, while maintaining the confidentiality of the complainant and the reported person. Additionally, it is important that the annual report be published to increase transparency and encourage personnel to report.

²⁹ The goal of 'protection' is to **provide support and assistance to individuals who have experienced harassment** as defined by policy, as well as other unwanted behavior. Thus, protection policy should provide a clear process for offering help and creating a safe, equal, fair, and supportive workplace. The goal of 'response' is to establish a clear formal and informal reporting process, including intervention or investigative steps, information on evidentiary means to determine responsibility, timelines, and potential outcomes (sanctions for the harasser and relief measures for the complainant).

³⁰ The goal of 'response' is to **establish a clear formal and informal reporting process**, including intervention or investigative steps, information on evidentiary means to determine responsibility, timelines, and potential outcomes (sanctions for the harasser and relief measures for the complainant).

1. Centralized data collection for the following information:

- a) Formal complaints**—how the complaint was reported, basic demographic information (gender, ethnicity, age, rank/position, and years of service), and the nature of the complaint (e.g., type of harassment—sexual, gender-based, ethnic, age-based, etc.);
- b) Informal complaints**—if possible, collect data on how the complaint was reported, basic demographic information, and the type of harassment;
- c) Continuous short-topic specific surveys** as part of the monitoring and evaluation process, widely distributed to the target group, to provide ongoing feedback on personnel awareness of policies, specific reporting options, and their experience with reporting (whether formal or informal).

Education, Training, and Professional Development

- 1. Increase the number of certified trainers in the Ministry and Army for workplace harassment protection** (currently, there are 6 certified trainers in the Ministry, but none yet in the Army).
- 2. Institutionalized third-party intervention/reporting program** within the Ministry and Army to build the necessary knowledge, awareness, skills, and commitment among personnel (and leadership) to prevent, protect, and respond to harassment and unwanted behavior. Ideally, this program should be mandatory for all individuals in leadership and command positions and, where possible, for all personnel in the Ministry/Army.

Practice

- 1. Continue developing and promoting an organizational culture where productive behaviors and practices are rewarded, and undesirable and counterproductive behaviors are discouraged.** This will help personnel develop skills and a sense of duty to intervene when they notice inappropriate comments or behaviors based on gender stereotypes or conduct negatively impacting gender equality. This should be combined with programs promoting social cohesion, including joint engagement and programs aimed at improving teamwork, positive group dynamics, and collaboration.

PRIORITY #4:
BALANCING PROFESSIONAL AND PRIVATE LIFE

Institutional Policies and Mechanisms

- 1. Increase the number of paid leave days for fathers following the birth of a child, with a minimum of 15 working days.**
- 2. Implement flexible work schedules** for parents wherever possible. This may include working from home, earlier arrivals/departures from work, etc.
- 3. Establish childcare facilities** (kindergartens) **for the staff of the Ministry and Army** (in certain facilities, within barracks or similar locations), based on a prior assessment of personnel needs and infrastructural capacities.

Education, Training, and Professional Development

The goal of training and professional development interventions is to compensate for the setbacks women may experience in accessing regular training, provide targeted support for women after childbirth, and train male personnel for non-stereotypical caregiving roles.

- 1. Develop guidelines for reintegrating women and men into the workplace after an absence of more than 6 months.**

Practice

1. Raise awareness and **encourage men (fathers) to take paternity leave by conducting campaigns** showcasing positive examples and experiences (from men who have taken paternity leave). This will enable fathers to engage in parenting, thereby creating better conditions for balancing professional and private life.
2. **Conduct awareness-raising activities to inform personnel about existing childcare options** and ensure that policies are accessible and well-known to all staff, particularly those policies highlighting the value of caregiving—both at home and in the workplace. This would also include ensuring equal conditions for men and women with children under three years of age in the Collective Agreement, in line with the legal framework.
3. **Ensure alignment between the private and family lives of married and unmarried partners in Army service when it comes to assignments, deployments, and missions, as well as night and fieldwork.**
4. Launch an **informational campaign** aimed at promoting a positive image of the Ministry and Army by reinforcing the family and society through the sharing and balancing of family, domestic, and professional responsibilities and duties.
5. **Promote gender equality at home and in the workplace as a regular theme in gender training.** This would include presenting best practices for shared caregiving, statistics, case studies, and opportunities for discussion and reflection. The goal is for personnel to make the connection between gender equality in the workplace and gender equality at home—each supports the other.

PRIORITY #5: INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

1. **Update and review strategic documents in the area of maintenance, construction, reconstruction, and renovation of facilities and infrastructure from a gender perspective.**
2. **Review and assess infrastructure and equipment** based on the functional and specific needs of both men and women to ensure full operational efficiency for all personnel.
3. Prioritize the **renovation of infrastructure**, particularly outside of Skopje, with appropriate facilities that cater to the different needs of men and women, including separate restrooms, changing rooms, and shower facilities.
4. Interventions **to address equipment and uniform deficiencies** should at a minimum include appropriate uniforms and individual equipment for women, such as maternity uniforms, proper body armor for women, and other necessary items.



Republic of North Macedonia

Ministry of Defence

ACTION PLAN

FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND IN THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA 2024–2028

The Working Group for Monitoring and Supporting the Gender Self-Assessment Process, in cooperation with DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, conducted a Gender Self-Assessment with employees of the Ministry of Defence and the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2022–2024. The Gender Self-Assessment Report resulted in specific recommendations for promoting gender equality in the

Ministry and in the Army, which are an integral part of this Action Plan.

Acronyms used

Action Plan – Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in the Ministry and in the Army

GS – General Staff of the Army

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

CCGS – Cabinet of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army

LSO – Legal Support Office

PC – Personnel Council

CSA – Command and Staff Academy

MoD – Ministry of Defence

ILO – International Labour Organisation

MoSPDY – Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth

MoF – Ministry of Finance

OU – Organisational Unit

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer

WG – Working Group

GSA – Gender Self-Assessment

DoC – Directorate of Communications

DoA – Directorate of Acquisitions

DoPIM – Directorate of Property and Infrastructure Management

DoLA – Directorate of Legal Affairs

DoF – Directorate of Finance

DoHRMET – Directorate of Human Resources Management, Education and Training

NDS – National Defence School

OBJECTIVE

The *Action Plan for Advancing Gender Equality in the Ministry of Defence and the Army (2024–2028)* aims to strengthen the process of gender mainstreaming in the workflow and operation of the MoD and the Army. In doing so, the Action Plan identifies other actors with which the Ministry and the Army may collaborate in the area of gender equality in order to strengthen cooperation with other stakeholders, such as national and international organisations and institutions.

The Action Plan was developed by the members of the Working Group from the MoD and the Army with their active participation in all stages of elaboration of this document. DCAF provided expert support in the process of developing the Action Plan.

To implement the Action Plan, a working group was established, composed of representatives from the Ministry and the Army, including administrative personnel from the Ministry, as well as military and civilian staff from both the Ministry and the Army, which will coordinate, monitor and implement the objectives and activities specified in the Action Plan. The working group consists of the following representatives:

1. Irena Stankovska, Head of the Human Resources Department (Coordinator of the Working Group for the implementation of the Action Plan);
2. Gabriela Kalkova, Special Advisor in the Minister's Cabinet (Deputy Coordinator of the Working Group for the implementation of the Action Plan);
3. Dr. Biljana Karovska Andonovska, Military Academy (Deputy Coordinator of the Working Group for the implementation of the Action Plan);
4. Biljana Stevkova, Head of Unit and Gender Equality Coordinator in the Ministry (Member of the Working Group);
5. Minevere Leskovic, Head of Unit, Human Resources Department (Member of the Working Group);;
6. Tatjana Atanasovska, Advisor, Human Resources Department (Member of the Working Group);
7. Captain Zorica Zdravkovska Nikolova, Army (Member of the Working Group);
8. Vlatko Rafeski, Head of the Department for Services, Tourism, Vehicle Fleet, Maintenance and Security (Member of the Working Group);
9. Lieutenant Colonel Strašo Stojčevski, Department for International Cooperation (Member of the Working Group);
10. Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandra Donevska, Army (Member of the Working Group);
11. Vladimir Trpkovski, Human Resources Department (Member of the Working Group);
12. Julijana Risteski, Psychologist, Civilian in the Army (Member of the Working Group);
13. Lieutenant Colonel Riste Petrovski, Army (Member of the Working Group);
14. Lieutenant Colonel Siniša Lozanoski, Army (Member of the Working Group);
15. Marija Jankova, Junior Associate for Gender Issues, Department for Support to the Minister (Administrative-technical support to the Working Group).

The Action Plan follows the recommendations made in the Gender Self-Assessment Report, and therefore, the proposed activities have been grouped into five strategic priorities, the purpose of which is to operationalise the defined recommendations:

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthening the gender structure and raising awareness of gender equality in the MoD and in the Army

Strategic Priority 2: Promoting proportional gender representation in the MoD and in the Army

Strategic Priority 3: Improving the workplace harassment prevention and protection system

Strategic Priority 4: Reconciling professional and personal life

Strategic Priority 5: Enhancing infrastructure and equipment to meet the specific needs of women and men.

Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
1.1.3 Setting up a Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in the Ministry of Defence and in the Army	Functional Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan	The Working Group has been set up	1. Number of persons in the Working Group for the Implementation of the Action Plan 2. Number of Working Group coordination meetings held per year	MoD	Resolution on setting up a Working Group	2024 (for Indicator 1) Continuously throughout the period 2024–2028 (for Indicator 2)	MoD
Area 1.2. Training, education and professional development							
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
1.2.1 Developing a Training Manual for gender trainers and delivering trainings for gender trainers	Strengthened capacities of gender trainers to deliver gender trainings	There are 27 certified gender trainers There is no Training Manual for gender trainers with specific modules for different target groups	1. The Training Manual for gender trainers with specific modules for different target groups has been developed 2. Number of delivered trainings for gender trainers 3. Number of gender trainers who have participated in the specialised trainings	MoD and the Army	Training Manual for gender trainers with specific modules for different target groups	2025 (за Индикатор 1) Прва половина на 2026 (за Индикатор 2) Прва половина на 2026 (за Индикатор 3)	DCAF

1.2.2 Developing and implementing Training Programme by gender trainers	A Training Delivery Programme has been developed and implemented by the gender trainers in the MoD and in the Army	There is a basic gender training that has been attended by a small number of command and leadership personnel There are trainings without unified modules for the different target groups	Number of trainings delivered by gender trainers to the command and leadership personnel per year Number of new module-based trainings Number of training participants from the MoD and the Army per year	DoHRMET GS/ J1 and gender trainers, WG	Gender Training Programme with defined target groups and specialised training modules for different target groups Report on the modules developed Report on the delivered trainings Evaluation of the knowledge acquired at the trainings with ex- and post-evaluation questionnaires	Programme developed in 2026 Trainings delivered in 2026–2028	MoD / the Army DCAF
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
1.2.3 Implementing information sessions on gender equality	Implemented gender equality information sessions following an annual plan	There is no plan for implementing information sessions on gender equality	1. Plan for implementing information sessions on an annual basis has been developed 2. Number of implemented gender equality information sessions per year Number of personnel from the MoD and the Army who have participated in the information sessions	Gender representatives, gender trainers and the WG	Report on the implemented information sessions	On an annual basis (for Indicator 1) Continuously throughout the period 2025–2028 (for Indicator 2)	MoD and the Army
1.2.4 Evaluating the implementation of the Action Plan	Conducted survey into the level of impact of the Action Plan implementation on the organisational culture	2024 GSA Report	Percentage of surveyed personnel by category, sex, age Number of interviewed personnel by position, sex, age	WG	Final Report	2028	MoD / the Army

Strategic Priority 2: Promoting proportional gender representation in the MoD and in the Army

Area 2.1 Institutional policies and mechanisms

Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
2.1.1. Developing an annual report on gender balance in the MoD and in the Army	Improved monitoring of representation of women and men in the MoD and in the Army	There is a general overview of gender balance in the MoD and in the Army which is not comprehensive and detailed	Report on gender balance in the MoD and in the Army on an annual basis has been developed	DoHRMET in cooperation with J-1 / GS	Annual report on gender balance in the MoD and in the Army	March – last year's report, starting from March 2026	None
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
2.1.2 Making an analysis of policies and documents for improving the gender balance in the MoD and in the Army	Recommendations made for amending the policies and documents	There is no detailed analysis made of policies and documents regards barriers and opportunities for promoting gender balance in the MoD and in the Army	Policies and documents requiring amendments so as to achieve better gender representation / balance, commissions, committees, at various decision-making levels have been identified	DoHRMET in cooperation with J-1 / GS	Prepared analysis of the gender representation status in the MoD and in the Army	2026	None
2.1.3 Implementing the recommendations and measures for improving the gender balance in the MoD and in the Army	Objective criteria set for improving the gender balance in policies and documents	Insufficient number of women in commissions at various decision-making levels 11.23% women in the Army; in the MoD, of all categories, 47% are women administrative servants, and from those holding Category B leadership positions, 48% are women 6.35% are women professional soldiers 1 woman in the Army (a Battalion Commander)	Percentage of men and women according to the organisational unit on an annual basis Percentage of men and women posted to leadership positions in the MoD, command and staff duties in the Army, command and staff duties in combat units and combat support units on an annual basis Percentage of men and women in working bodies, commissions / committees on an annual basis	MoD / DoLA GS / Legal Support Office	By-laws	The activities will be implemented in the period between 2027 and 2028	MoD and the Army

Strategic Priority 3: Improving the workplace harassment prevention and protection system

Area 3.1 Institutional policies and mechanisms

Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Time-frame	Budget Holder
3.1.1 Appointing authorised personnel and mediators for protection against workplace harassment	List of authorised personnel and mediators for protection against workplace harassment has been defined	There are outdated lists of appointed individuals to the positions of authorised personnel and mediators for protection against workplace harassment	Number of authorised personnel and mediators responsible to take actions in cases of workplace harassment	DoHR- MET / MoD J-1/GS	There are lists of authorised personnel and mediators for protection against workplace harassment which are updated on an annual basis	2024	None
3.1.2 Updating the Guidelines on Protection against Workplace Harassment in the MoD and in the Army	Improved system of workplace harassment reporting and protection	There are Guidelines on Protection against Workplace Harassment in the MoD and in the Army (2019) which require updating	1. The new Guidelines on Protection against Workplace Harassment have been applied 2. An internal annual report has been developed containing data about the number of submitted complaints disaggregated by sex and the form of workplace harassment Number of conducted / suspended proceedings and number and type of given recommendations and imposed measures for protection against harassment	DoHR- MET / MoD J-1/GS	Updated Guidelines on Protection against Workplace Harassment with annexed complaint forms	2025 (for Indicator 1) Every year in the period between 2026 and 2028 (for Indicator 2)	None

Area 3.2 Training, education and professional development						
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Time-frame Budget Holder
3.2.1 continuously implementing trainings and sessions on prevention and protection against workplace harassment	Raised awareness of mechanisms for protection against harassment and identification of workplace harassment	Continuous implementation of trainings ever since 2013, and in 2023 a training on protection against workplace harassment was delivered to a total of 19 participants from the MoD and the Army (8 women and 11 men)	Number of implemented trainings and workshop on an annual basis Percentage of participants disaggregated by sex and category on an annual basis Number of harassment trainings before posting to missions on an annual basis	DoHR-MET The Army	Reports from implemented trainings and sessions	Continuously in the period 2024–2028 MoD and the Army
3.2.2 Planning and implementing training of trainers on protection against workplace harassment in the MoD and in the Army	Increased number of certified trainers for protection against workplace harassment	There are 5 certified trainers in the MoD, and in the Army there are no certified trainers	Indicator A training of trainers on protection against workplace harassment has been implemented in the MoD and in the Army Number of certified trainers for protection against workplace harassment	MoD / DoHR-MET The Army	Certified trainers	Time-frame The budget of the MoD / DCAF
Area 3.3 – Practice						
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Time-frame Budget Holder
3.3.1 Conducting an information campaign to identify workplace harassment, with a focus on gender-based harassment and sexual harassment	Raised awareness of identifying violence and sexual harassment and of reporting and protection pathways	One information campaign conducted in 2022	Number of produced promotion videos Number of information posters placed in the working rooms / facilities of the MoD and the Army Number of produced brochures	WG, Directorate of Communications, and the Army	Videos posted on the MoD website and posters and brochures produced Reports on information campaigns submitted	Continuously in the period 2026–2028 MoD DCAF

Strategic Priority 4: Reconciling professional and personal life

Area 4.1 Institutional policies and mechanisms

Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
4.1.1 Amending the MoD Collective Agreement in the paid leave section (childbirth)	15 days of paid leave for the father after the child is born	It exists as a right / measure (absence from work with paid salary for a duration of 5 working days)	Number of individuals who have exercised this right	Trade Union in collaboration with the OU in the MoD and in the Army	Collective Agreement Adopted Resolutions on the use of paid leave	2027	MoD / the Army

Strategic Priority 5: Enhancing infrastructure and equipment to meet the specific needs of women and men

Area 5.1. Training, education and professional development

Activity	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
5.1.1 Implementing information sessions for the personnel of the Directorate of Acquisitions and J4 / GS on topics related to gender equality	Increased awareness and strengthened skills and competences of the public procurement personnel to incorporate the gender perspective into the procurement process	No information sessions are conducted to incorporate the gender perspective into public procurement	Public procurement is included as an area in annual training programmes Number of information sessions conducted per year with public procurement personnel Number of persons participating in sessions / briefings on the gender perspective in public procurement by sex	Gender structure of the Army, Directorate of Acquisitions and J4 / GS	Gender equality information sessions implementation programme List of participants	Continuously in the period 2026–2028	MoD / the Army

Area 5.2 – Practice							
Activity / Measure	Result	Baseline Situation	Indicator	Activity Leader	Evidence	Timeframe	Budget Holder
5.2.1 Assessing the condition of the current infrastructure against the different needs of men and women	Identified specific facilities requiring intervention (guardhouses, toilets...)	There is no detailed assessment, except for the GSA findings	Number of identified facilities requiring renovation according to location	Gender structure of the Army, Directorate of Acquisitions, Directorate of Property and Infrastructure Management and J4 / GS	Identified facilities for renovation The identified needs have been fed to the Financial Plans and Public	2026 and 2027	MoD DCAF
5.2.2 Making infrastructural modifications to the facilities so as to respond to the different needs of men and women	Facilities modified in a way to respond to the different needs of men and women infrastructure-wise	No facilities have been identified which do not respond to the different needs of men and women infrastructure-wise	Number of identified facilities requiring infrastructural modifications to respond to the different needs of men and women	MoD and J-4 / GS	Number of adapted / renovated facilities where the infrastructure responds to the different needs of men and women	Second half of 2027 and 2028	MoD
5.2.3 Assessing the equipment against the physical characteristics of men and women	An equipment procurement proposal corresponding to the anatomy of men and women has been drafted	The equipment is not gender-specific according to the GSA findings (bulletproof vests, combat uniforms) and equipment for pregnant women	An analysis identifying the needs for equipment according to the anatomy of men and women has been made	MoD and the Army	A submitted equipment procurement proposal	2028	MoD / the Army

