



Balkan 2023
**Defence
Monitor**

Women in defence system



BCSP
Belgrade Centre
for Security Policy

WOMEN IN THE DEFENCE SYSTEM

REGIONAL OVERVIEW



Although by 2023 most countries in the region have already adopted their second or third generation of '1325' action plans, Croatia and North Macedonia are the only two that have valid action plans on women, peace and security. Strategic documents of other countries have expired, and there seems to be no political will to develop new ones.

Compared to the previous "Balkan Defence Monitor" report, MoDs' have made progress in the area of collecting data and reporting on the representation of women in defence systems based on requests for access to information of public importance. Albania and Croatia are the only two countries that have almost reached the NATO commitment of 15% female members of the uniformed armed forces. In the remaining countries, women make up between 8% and 10% of the military personnel. However, Albania is the only one that has a quota for women in the army (15%), which could influence further admission of women into the armed forces.

When it comes to the share of uniformed women among officers, Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro have a higher percentage of female officers than Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia is still the country with the highest participation of women among the enlisted personnel. Women perform mostly civilian jobs in the defence system, making up half of the civil servants in Croatia and Serbia. Montenegro stands out because more than two thirds of civil servants employed in its MoD are women. This is not the case in North Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where women make up between 30 and 43% of the civilian personnel.

Throughout the region, the percentage of women in command and leadership positions is low and ranges from 4 to 8%, with the exception of Croatia with 12% of women in command positions. Still, all the countries have recorded a slight increase in women's participation in command positions. In most countries, the highest ranking women in the military are colonels. The rank of general is still held by only two women in the region: one in the Albanian Armed Forces and one in the Croatian Armed Forces. Serbia is still the only country that has never appointed a woman as defence minister.

Participation of women in peacekeeping missions is generally low (5-7%), with the exception of Serbia, which deploys approximately 15% of female members of the armed forces to UN and EU peacekeeping operations. No members of the Ministry of Security and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are currently engaged in peacekeeping missions.

1 Enlisted personnel refers to the soldiers up to NATO OR-3 ranks.



National Action Plan 1325: Most countries have already adopted the second generation of action plans, except for Albania, which was the last in the region to adopt the first Action Plan in 2018. The Albanian Action Plan expired in 2020 and there seems to be no political will to draft a new one. The Ministry of Defence however states that it complies with other gender-related documents, such as the newly adopted National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030. The Ministry is focused on fulfilling three strategic goals: promoting and enhancing women's leadership in the military, increasing women's participation in missions and operations, and increasing the number of women in the Albanian military representations in NATO command structures and the number of women in diplomatic missions.



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: The total number of employees in the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces is 7,749, of which 19.98% are women. This constitutes a slight increase of 0.58% compared to 2021. The representation of women in the Albanian Armed Forces is 14.98% (892 women out of 5,953 personnel), which is an increase of 0.66% compared to 2021. **Albania thus met the NATO goal of 15% of female uniformed personnel in the armed forces.** However, Albania is the only country in the region with the quota for women in the army (15%) that can affect their further admission. The increase of representation of women in the armed forces is slow; namely, the percentage of women military personnel in the armed forces in 2011 was 12.3%, in 2012 – 13.42%, while in 2013 it decreased to 11.2%.¹ Still, **Albania had the highest share of women officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in 2022** – 21.01% of the officers (365 out of the total of 1,737) and 13.78% of the non-commissioned officers (348 out of the total of 2,525), while female enlisted personnel make up 10.58% (179 out of the total of 1,691), which is an increase of 1.94%. The percentage of women among the civil employees in the MoD is 36.56%. In other words, out of 1,795 civil servants, 657 are women.



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: Female officers who perform duties of commander and deputy commander make up 8.25% (35 women out of 424). The highest rank of women in the Albanian Armed Forces is that of Major General. This rank is held by Manushaqe Shehu, who became the first female Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Armed Forces in 2018. Until recently, Albania had two women defence ministers, who headed the Ministry from 2013 to 2020. Mrs. Olta Xhaçka was the second woman to be appointed Minister of Defence (2017-2020) after Mrs. Mimi Kodheli, who led the defence sector for four consecutive years. There are also other decision-making positions held by women, such as that of Deputy Defence Minister.



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: As at 21 December 2022, 16 out of 324 military personnel participating in missions are women, which is 5%. This represents a slight decrease compared to 2019, when 7% of women participated in NATO operations.²

1 Megi Llubani, Women's representation in the security sector in Albania, Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2014, <https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/albania.pdf>

2 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, 2019, p. 142, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/9/pdf/NCGP_Full_Report_2019.pdf



National Action Plan 1325: The third local action plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the women, peace and security agenda expired in 2022. In 2021, the BiH Agency for Gender Equality published the final evaluation report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2018–2022.



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: The number of members of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence is limited by the Law on the Budget of BiH Institutions and by international obligations of BiH to have 10,000 professional military personnel (generals, officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers) and 1,000 civilians employed in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹ The total number of employees in the defence system is currently 8,482, and women make up 8.2% of professional military personnel (674). According to data from 2023, the number of women among the **civil servants and employees in the MoD is currently 100, which is 43.1% of total number of civil servants (232)**. When it comes to the share of uniformed women among officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers, Bosnia and Herzegovina has 6.7% female officers (120), 4.9% NCOs (127) and 11.1% soldiers (427). **Compared to 2019, there is a decrease in the representation of women in the total number of professional military personnel and civil servants, but there is also a slight increase in female officers and soldiers.**



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: There are currently 106 women in leadership and commanding positions, i.e. 4.2% of the total number of employees in the MoD and AF. The highest rank held by women in the Armed Forces of BiH is still that of Colonel, while a woman headed the Ministry of Defence from 2015 to 2019.



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: There are currently no members of the Ministry of Security and the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina engaged in peacekeeping missions.

1 Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, O oružanim snagama Bosne i Hercegovine [On the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina], 2022, http://os.mod.gov.ba/o-oruzanim-snagama-bih/misija/Default.aspx?id=41&lang-Tag=bs-BA&template_id=181&pageIndex=1



National Action Plan 1325: Croatia is currently implementing the second Action Plan 1325 on women, peace and security for the period 2019–2023. In November 2021, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs published its first report on the implementation of the National Action Plan 1325 for 2019 and 2020.¹



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: According to the annual defence report (2022), the number and share of women among the personnel employed in the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Army is constantly increasing. Of the 15,008 active military personnel on 31 December 2021, 2,019 were women (13.45%). As at 31 December 2021, there were 1,003 women, i.e. 50.7% of the 1,982 employees in the categories of civil servants and state employees. The latest data on the proportion of women among officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and soldiers are not available. Still, the Croatian government assesses that Croatia ranks among the top NATO member countries in terms of the level of representation of women in the armed forces and regulated rights in the field of gender equality.



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: The share of women in command and leadership positions was 12.04%. According to the MoD's annual defence report, a total of 13.86% of women were promoted to a higher rank in 2021. The number of women with the rank of General has stagnated since 2014, with a single female officer holding that rank (Brigadier General).



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: According to the MoD's annual defence report (2022), the proportion of women in peace support operations and missions abroad was 6.93%. However, submitting the report to the parliamentary Defence Committee, the minister Mario Banožić said that “in 2021, Croatia continued to actively participate in NATO, EU and UN peace support operations, missions and activities, with 643 members of its armed forces, including 48 women (7.47%)”.²

1 Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – Republic of Croatia, NAP II, 2022, <https://mvep.gov.hr/informacije-za-gradjane-244593/ugovori-dokumenti-i-obraci/dokumenti/nap-ii/27171>

2 <https://www.sabor.hr/en/press/news/parliamentary-committee-defence-adopts-annual-report-defence>



National Action Plan 1325: Montenegro's second Action Plan 1325 on women, peace and security expired in 2022. However, there is no information whether the Government of this country has taken any steps to develop the third one. Nonetheless, **the Government of Montenegro regularly publishes reports on the implementation of NAP 1325, making it the most transparent in the region.**¹



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: Montenegro is the country with the highest share of women among the civil servants and employees in the MoD. More than two thirds of the civil servants employed in the MoD are women (66.25%). **Representation of women among professional military personnel has increased slightly, from 10.35% in 2022 to 10.77%.** When it comes to the share of women among officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers, their number in the ranks of officers and professional soldiers is relatively high - 16.86% of the officers and 14.29% of the soldiers. The representation of women among non-commissioned officers (NCOs) is 5.21%.



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: In 2020, Montenegro appointed a woman to the position of defence minister for the first time. Ms. Olivera Injac served as Minister of Defence of Montenegro from 4 December 2020 until 28 April 2022, in the Government of Zdravko Krivokapić. According to the Ministry of Defence, **the share of women in leadership and command positions is 6.96%.**



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: According to the Ministry of Defence, the share of women in the total number of members participating in peacekeeping operations outside of Montenegro is 10%.

¹ Government of Montenegro, Report on the implementation of activities from the Programme of Implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security (2019-2022) for 2021, 31 March 2022, <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/86e5343d-1dd9-4581-ab77-a4bf-751ce3c5>



National Action Plan 1325: North Macedonia is currently implementing its **second Action Plan 1325 on women, peace and security for the period 2020-2025.**¹



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: According to the Ministry of Defence, **women currently (2022) make up 30.86% of the civilian staff and 10.66% of the armed forces.** The share of women among officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers increased moderately compared to the last year's survey. North Macedonia has 18.16% of women with the ranks of officers, 11.87% of the NCOs and 5.78% of the soldiers. Although the percentage of women in operational jobs has increased, women generally still work in civilian positions in the defence system.



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: North Macedonia is one of the three countries in the region that have appointed **women as defence ministers.** The share of women among the total number of officers in the Armed Forces is 10.93%.



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: According to the Ministry of Defence, 4.92% of women are currently deployed to peacekeeping operations. This is a significant drop compared to 2019, when North Macedonia deployed 8% of its uniformed women to peacekeeping operations.

1 Second National Action Plan of the Republic of North Macedonia for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security 2020 – 2025, July 2020, <https://www.globalwps.org/data/MKD/files/2020-2025.pdf>



National Action Plan 1325: Serbia's second Action Plan for the implementation of the Resolution 1325 expired in 2020. In 2022, the Ministry of Defence formed a new organisational unit within its human resources sector - the Gender Equality Office, with the aim of improving gender equality in the defence sector. The Office will be responsible for the preparation of the third action plan.



Participation of women in the MoDs and the Armed Forces: Military service recently became quite popular in Serbia, both among young women and young men. In the last two years, more girls than boys have enrolled in the Military Gymnasium and Military Vocational High School in Belgrade.¹ Currently, there are 34% female cadets at the Military Academy, while at the Medical Faculty of the Military Medical Academy (VMA) the number of women is greater than 70%.

In principle, all positions are available to women and they are represented even in the special forces' units such as the Military Police Detachment for Special Purposes - "Cobras" or the 72nd Special Operations Brigade of the Serbian Armed Forces. Statistics from the Ministry of Defence show that the share of women among **non-uniformed personnel (civilians) in the MoD and in the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) is currently 54.23%, while the representation of women in the total number of professional military personnel is 10.59%**. Similar to many other countries in the region, women are engaged mostly in civilian positions within the defence system. When it comes to the share of women among officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and soldiers, **Serbia has the highest percentage of women who are professional soldiers - 17.66%**. However, a similar trend is not present in the higher ranks, as only 10.24% of women serve as officers and 3.63% of women as NCOs. Still, a slight increase has been noted in all the categories compared to the previous "Balkan Defence Monitor".



Representation of women in command and leadership positions: Women are still under-represented in leadership positions, with **26.88% of them in managerial positions in the MoD and 6.23% holding command positions in the Serbian Armed Forces**. The highest rank held by women in the Serbian Armed Forces is still that of Colonel. Serbia is still the only country that has never appointed a woman as defence minister.



Participation of women in peacekeeping operations: Currently, out of 283 members of the Serbian Armed Forces participating in four UN peacekeeping operations and three EU missions, 43 are women (15.09%). In 2022, there were 88 women in peacekeeping operations.

¹ Vojkan Kostić, Vojni poziv u Srbiji sve popularniji među ženama [Military service is becoming ever more popular among women in Serbia], Balkan Security Network, 21 Jan 2023, <https://www.balkansec.net/post/vojni-poziv-u-srbiji-sve-popularniji-me%C4%91u-u-%C5%BEenama>