

# WOMEN IN SECURITY AND DEFENCE SCIENCE IN THE CROATIAN ARMY

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Review paper

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**Abstract:** UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is the first official document on the position and role of women in armed conflicts, peace processes and activities related to peace and security. It marked a turning point in the direction of strengthening a comprehensive approach to security and opened the way for the realization of the specific contribution that women can and should make to world peace policy.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia are an example of a modern military organization in which women participate equally. According to data from the Annual Report on Defence for 2022, 14% of the Armed Forces are women, more than the average of NATO member countries. However, only a small number of women are in leadership positions. The military organization is known for its strict hierarchical structure and rules of behaviour and communication. Throughout history, the military was primarily intended for men. Nevertheless, women fought for equality and today, in most armies of developed democratic countries, they have become part of military organizations.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how many women are represented in the educational work of the Croatian Army, how many of them participate in the teaching of the

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undergraduate and graduate university programmes in military leadership and management and military engineering. In addition to the above, the paper will investigate how they are accepted among their male colleagues and how much easier/harder it is for them, due to their private obligations (motherhood), compared to their male colleagues.

**Keywords:** Croatian Army, women in Croatian Army, defence sciences

## ***Introduction***

The Croatian Army is an example of a modern professional army that provides women with equal rights and opportunities for work and advancement. Since its beginnings and founding during the Croatian War of Independence, women have actively participated in the Croatian Army. According to the data of the Ministry of Croatian Veterans, 23,081 women participated in the Croatian War of Independence, of which 14,194 were in the combat sector, and the rest in support - medicine, supplies, personnel affairs and the like. (Stanić, Mravak, 2012) 127 women died in the Homeland War, and 1,103 gained the status of Croatian war invalid. Most of them stayed to build their careers in the Croatian Army, even after the war.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most developed, democratic countries actively had female members in their armies. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO member countries began to increase the number of women in their armies, at military universities in the field of defense and security sciences, and gender awareness among all members increased. (Carreiras, 2010).

Based on the above, the logical sequence was to legally regulate the position of women in the military world. The UN Security Council adopted the Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (Resolution 1325) in October 2000, which, for the first time, points to the inequality of women and men when making decisions in the field of defence and security.

Resolution 1325 became a fundamental document for the protection of women's rights in the fields of defence and security. In 2007, the NATO alliance implemented the aforementioned Resolution into its policy and alliance and called on all member countries to ensure the increased presence of women at all levels.

In 2008, the Republic of Croatia passed the Law on Gender Equality (OG 85/08 I 112/12), which prohibits any type of discrimination against a person based on race, ethnic affiliation or skin colour, gender, language, religion, etc. Protection of female employees of the Croatian Army is regulated by the Law on Service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia (OG 73/13, 75/15, 50/16, 30/18 i 125/19) and the Defence Law (OG 73/13, 75/15, 27/16, 110/17, 30/18 i 70/19). In addition to legal regulations, the Ministry of Defence appointed a gender equality coordinator who coordinates the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and communicates with the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. In 2019, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. The aim of the plan is to strengthen the position of women in the areas of defence and security, but also in all other areas, and to increase the representation of women in leading positions.

The changes in the position of women in the Croatian army and defence and in security sciences during the 21<sup>st</sup> century were the motive behind the investigation into how many women there are today in defence and security sciences and to what extent all the aforementioned Laws, Resolutions and Regulations have affected their position.

### **Methodology**

The aim of this paper is to investigate how many women have a degree in and how many are attending undergraduate/graduate university studies in military leadership and management and military engineering, which are held at the University of Zagreb. In addition to the above, the paper also investigates how the

number of women has changed in the last nine years, from the beginning of the study programmes until today, and how their male colleagues treat them. When we talk about tenured professors and assistants, they include officers of the Croatian Army and civilian professors. Both studies are taught in the premises of the Croatian Military College "Dr. Franjo Tuđman".

The methodology used in the paper is content analysis. ECTS information packages for the following academic years were analysed:

- 2014/2015 – the year when the study programmes started
- 2018/2019
- 2023/2024 – the last year for which data is available.

Graduate study programmes for both subjects started in 2018.

The paper does not analyse all the academic years from the beginning of the study programmes, because the subject holders and assistants do not change every academic year, but depending on the needs of the study programmes and the progress of the professor/assistant.

The following hypotheses are put forward in the paper:

1. H1: The number of female subject holders is 60% lower than that of males:
2. H2: The number of female lecturers (both subject holders and assistants) is constantly growing.
3. H3: The number of women in security and defence sciences is growing in proportion to the number of women in the Croatian army.

## **Results**

Based on the conducted research, it was determined that over the past nine years, the percentage of women in the field of defence and security sciences attending undergraduate/graduate university studies in military leadership and management and military engineering, has not changed significantly. Table 1

shows the total number of lecturers and assistants and the percentage of women.

Table 1. Research results

academic year	subject holder professors	assistants
2023/2024	TOTAL: 224 23% female 77% male	TOTAL: 460 21% female 79% male
2018/2019	TOTAL: 188 24% female 76% male	TOTAL: 371 23% female 77% male
2014/2015	TOTAL: 190 23% female 77% male	TOTAL: 226 18% female 82% male

Source: Author's work

It can be seen from Table 1 that the percentage of female subject holder professors is the same today as in 2014 i.e. 23%. The number of female assistants has increased in the last nine years by 3%, i.e. from 18% to 21%. In addition, the highest percentage of women can be observed during the 2018/2019 academic year. The assumption is that the cause of this increase is the launch of graduate courses in both studies.

Using a qualitative method – by interviewing female professors, it was determined that they are satisfied with their positions, that they have the support of their male colleagues and that they are not challenged or threatened in any way, they have all the same rights as the men.

From the above, we can conclude that hypothesis 1 is confirmed. At undergraduate/graduate studies, military leadership and management and military engineering are taught 80% by men and 20% by women. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed when we look at

the total number of lecturers (both subject holders and assistants). In the last nine years, the total percentage of women increased from 20% to 21.6%, more precisely in the figures for 10 female professors. Hypothesis 3 was confirmed, that the number of women in defence and security sciences grows proportionally with the number of women in the Croatian army. Specifically, in 2014, the Croatian army had 12% women, and, according to the last publicly available defence report from 2022, the Croatian army has 14% women. Therefore, the increase of active female military personnel is 2%, and of female lecturers 1.6%.

### ***Discussion***

From the results of the research, it is evident that the number of female subject holder lecturers is stagnating, while the number of female assistants is increasing. When we compare the number of women in the field of defence and security sciences and the number of women active in the military, it is evident that there are approximately 10% more women in the field of science. Although the number of women is on a slight increase, if we take a period of ten years and an increase of 1% (a total of 10 female professors more in ten years), we can conclude that the increase is too small.

If we look at science in general, without dividing it into areas, according to the Eurostat survey, 57% of women in Croatia are in the sciences. Croatia is among the countries with over 52% of women in science, ranking it among the countries with almost the highest percentage of women in science. In Figure 1, we can see the representation of the percentage of women in science in certain European countries, in 2023.

In the time span analyzed in the paper, from 2014 to the present, the percentage of female active military personnel and lecturers did not increase significantly. However, it is important to point out that 2014 was a significant year for women in the Croatian army because that year the Croatian army had its first temporary female general. Brigadier Gordana Garašić was appointed to the position of general in the ISAF Afghanistan mission, as an

advisor to the Commander in the decision-making process of gender equality, and, with this position, she also received the temporary rank of General during her tenure. In addition to being the first woman in the Croatian Army with that rank and in that function, Brigadier Garašić was also the first woman in the ISAF Afghanistan mission in the position of general. A year later, after returning from the mission, Gordana Garašić received the rank of General. Since then, no other woman in the Croatian army has been promoted to the rank of General.

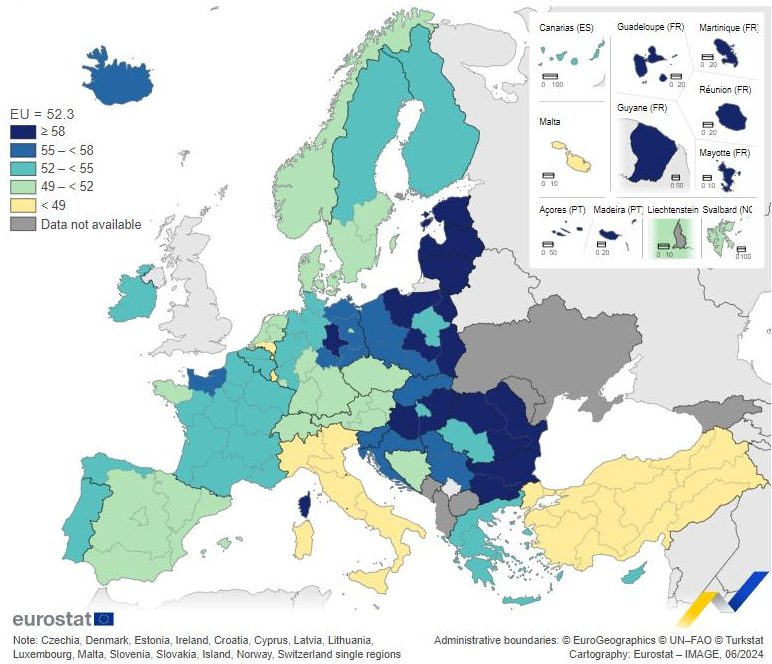


Figure 1. Percentage of women in science in European countries for the year 2023<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240613-2>

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According to the 2022 Annual Report on Defence of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, the latest publicly available, the proportion of women active in the military was 14% (2,046 women) in relation to the total number of members (14,562). The proportion of women employed in the Ministry of Defence in the category of civil servants and employees was 51% in relation to the total number of employed civil servants and employees. In the academic year 2022/2023, a total of 417 cadets, of whom 23.7% are women, were enrolled in the undergraduate/graduate studies in military leadership and management, undergraduate/graduate studies in military engineering and undergraduate/graduate studies in military maritime studies. In 2022, there were a total of 13 who specialized as doctors of medicine at the Ministry of Defence, of whom 61% were women. 65 employees, of whom 26% were women, attended graduate and post-graduate studies with scholarships from the Ministry of Defence. In 2022, 713 employees, of whom 9.8% were women, participated in functional training and advanced training within the framework of civilian and military educational institutions in Croatia.

Although the number of women active in the military, in security and defence sciences, and the number of the Ministry of Defence female scholars and cadets is growing, the number of women in leadership and command positions is only 12%. One of the reasons for this are the prejudices in relation to the role of women in the army, which are certainly still present. Galović and



Domjančić point out that the attitude towards the presence of women in the army can be divided into the following categories:

- those who are vehemently opposed to women in the military
- those who accept women in certain areas
- those who accept the full integration of women into the military.

Certainly both sexes, male and female, should be aware of their biological differences; however, neither of the sexes should be denied certain things based on this. Warfare today and in the past has changed. War is not waged and won exclusively by physical strength, but often by intellectual and information advantage. Indeed, not all, but most weapons systems, are becoming easier to use, for example radar systems, computer systems and missile systems. All of these are systems that do not require special physical strength. In addition, infantry weapons, portable air defence systems and the like, do not represent an additional physical burden for women.

In the Croatian Army, the only unit where women are only partially represented due to their physical strength is the Special Forces Command. Namely, women there take part in staff duties and in departments dealing with psychological operations, but do not take part in combat groups. The only reason for non-participation is the physically demanding selection training, known as commando, which women cannot complete due to their biological differences.

## ***Conclusion***

During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, democratic countries, especially NATO member countries, have committed to increasing the number of women in the defence sector - in the field of active military personnel (soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers), in defence and security sciences, in ministries of defence and other

institutions dealing with defence and security. They have set legal frameworks regarding the position of women, based on the UN Council Resolution 1325 and special laws and regulations at the level of each individual country.

In that regard, the Republic of Croatia can boast of several legal regulations and a coordinator for gender equality within the field of defence. Today, the Croatian army, a member of the NATO alliance, has a higher percentage of women than the average of other member countries of the NATO alliance (14% for the Republic of Croatia, 13% for the NATO alliance). Although the Croatian army is on the right track and the position of women is legally regulated, there are still prejudices against women in the fields of defence and security, especially if we are talking about the combat sector. According to Vesna Trut's research conducted in 2021 on members of the Croatian Army, prejudice occurs among men with a lower level of education and a younger age. Additional education through workshops, interaction and joint teamwork of men and women members of the Croatian army should certainly have a positive effect on changing negative attitudes towards women.

An additional burden on women in building a military and/or scientific career is represented by maternity planning and motherhood. Despite the fact that maternity leave for women is legally regulated in the Republic of Croatia for a period of one year (the first six months must be taken by the mother, the second 6 months by the mother or the father, depending on what is agreed), and in the Croatian Army a woman can go on maternity leave without fear, knowing that she will return to her workplace and that no one will replace her, even so motherhood presents a certain challenge. The fact is that a woman is absent for at least 13 months according to the legal framework, and, in the case of pregnancy complications, even longer. A military career in the Croatian Army includes constant, successively increasing training for which certain conditions must be met, and which are also a condition for further advancement. The same is true in the field of sciences, where a specific quota of hourly rates and a

number of published works must be met in order to achieve the specific status as a lecturer.

Based on the above, I conclude that the Croatian army has laid a good foundation and is now on the way to sensitize individuals who still have prejudices and to try to support (emotionally, financially, organizationally) all women in defence and security sciences and in the Croatian army, in order to be able to balance career and motherhood, without denying them opportunities for further development and advancement.

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