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Sociological study

ACCESS TO MILITARY EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN UKRAINE

conducted as part of the NAKO project
Promotion of Gender Equality in the Armed
Forces of Ukraine (*abridged version*)

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INTRODUCTION

A democratic society should provide women and men with equal opportunities to participate in all spheres of life, including education and the state military sector. Ukraine has identified promoting gender equality as an important component of its development and as one of the state policy priorities.¹ Ukraine has ratified the following main international documents on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women: the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women², UN Global Sustainable Development Goals 2016–2030³, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁴.

The Constitution of Ukraine and Laws of Ukraine “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men”⁵ (2005) and “On the Principles of Prevention and Counteraction of Discrimination in Ukraine”⁶ (2012)⁶ establish the principle of gender-based non-discrimination in various areas of public life. This study deals with the intersection of

two areas: education and the military sector. The principle of gender equality is gradually being introduced in relation to women’s access to military education.

Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, noted that “we can claim continuous success in relation to the National Action Plan on the implementation of Resolution 1325.”⁷ Among the achievements are free access for females to military education at all levels, in particular at military and naval vocational schools. The tasks identified in the National Action Plan for Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, and Security” until 2025⁸ includes ensuring the equal access of women and men to educational institutions at all levels of the security and defense sector and inclusion of a gender component in education.

In 2018, Lieutenant General Anatolii Petrenko, Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine for

¹ Gender Policy in Regulatory Documents. Part 1. Edited by K. B. Levchenko / H. H. Zhukovska, K. B. Levchenko, O. O. Ostapenko, O. I. Suslova. Kyiv, 2020; Gender Equality and Development: Opinion Within the Context of the European Strategy of Ukraine. – K.: Razumkov Center, 2016.

² UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (18/12/1979) // http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_207

³ On the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine until 2030 (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 722/2019 dated September 30, 2019) // <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/722/2019#Text>

⁴ Resolution 1325 (2000), adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, October 31, 2000 / http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_669

⁵ Law of Ukraine No. 2866-IV “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” dated September 8, 2005 // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15>

⁶ Law of Ukraine No. 5207-VI “On the Principles of Prevention and Counteraction of Discrimination in Ukraine” dated September 6, 2012 // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine / <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5207-17#Text>

⁷ Guidelines for the gender approaches integration into the system of training specialists for the security and defense sector of Ukraine / Olena Volobueva, Alla Viatkina, Svitlana Hanaba, et al. Kyiv: PI Y. Y. Klymenko, 2021. – P. 6.

⁸ On the approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, and Security” until 2025: Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1544-r dated October 28, 2020 // Government portal / <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-nacionalnogo-a1544r>

European Integration, noted that “military universities and colleges have conditions for women to enroll, study, receive primary officer ranks, and start their officer careers. More than 160 girls have already expressed their desire to enter such institutions. Soon they will be officers.”⁹ However, in the same year, Polina Kravchenko, press officer of the motorized infantry brigade, was denied admission to the officer training program at the Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Ground Forces Academy because of her gender.¹⁰ Polina managed to enter the military academy only on the fifth attempt.¹¹

In the summer and autumn of 2015, we conducted the sociological study “Invisible Battalion: Women Participating in ATO Military Operations.”¹² Following it, we identified the phenomenon of vertical and horizontal gender segregation that was inherent in Ukraine’s Armed Forces. Vertical segregation is inequality between men and women related to positions on the career ladder. The phenomenon of horizontal segregation is also one of the gender inequality tools implying the existence of the so-called “male” and “female” areas in society.¹³ It is obvious that similar phenomena could be expected

to be found in military education, as well.

Some female respondents in our subsequent sociological study, “Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Return to a Peaceful Life” (2019), were interested in military education. In particular, the interviewed female veterans noted that “they see no significant challenges in receiving higher or additional education, in certain cases, the state itself offers such programs to those willing to participate.”¹⁴ Therefore, it is crucial to narrow down and overcome the impact of gender inequality and gender stereotypes in military education. After all, we still have cases of women seen mostly as the army’s “adornment.” In particular, this was a journalist’s report on the participation of women in Ukraine’s Independence Day parade in 2018: “Female cadets of Taras Shevchenko National University Military Institute and the Military Institute of Telecommunication and Information Technologies named after the Heroes of Kruty really adorned the holiday. Their composite battalion was definitely the most beautiful one.”¹⁵

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine (February 24, 2022), women expressed

⁹ H. Karpiuk. There will be female high-ranking officers in Ukraine. On Gender in the Armed Forces of Ukraine // Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, September 18, 2018 //

<http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2018/09/18/zhinkam-generalam-v-ukraini-buti-pro-%D2%91ender-u-zbrojnih-silah-ukraini/>

¹⁰ M. Verbovska. At least three women were denied admission to officers’ courses because of their gender // Povaha, August 9, 2018 //

<http://povaha.org.ua/schonajmenshe-trom-zhinkam-vidmovly-u-vstupi-na-kursy-ofitseriv-cherez-stat/>

¹¹ I. Semeniaka. Lieutenant Polina Kravchenko’s path to a dream: She entered the Land Forces Academy on the fifth attempt, and now she is fighting near Avdiivka // Novynarnia, 23/03/2021 / <https://novynarnia.com/2021/03/23/pkravchenko/>

¹² T. Martseniuk, H. Hrytsenko, A. Kvit, M. Berlinska. “Invisible Battalion: Women Participating in ATO Military Operations (Sociological Study)” / edited by T. Martseniuk – K.: Ukrainian Women’s Fund, 2015. – 89 p.

¹³ T. Martseniuk. Gender for Everyone. Challenging Stereotypes. – K.: Osnovy, 2017. – P. 55–58.

¹⁴ T. Martseniuk, H. Hrytsenko, A. Kvit, L. Vasylenko, M. Zviagintseva. “Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Return to a Peaceful Life: (Sociological Study)” / edited by T. Martseniuk – K.: UN Women, 2019. – P. 83.

¹⁵ H. Karpiuk. There will be female high-ranking officers in Ukraine. On Gender in the Armed Forces of Ukraine // Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, September 18, 2018 //

<http://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2018/09/18/zhinkam-generalam-v-ukraini-buti-pro-%D2%91ender-u-zbrojnih-silah-ukraini/>

their desire to defend the country on par with men. In recent months of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine has been increasing, which indicates an increase in women's interest in the security and defense sector. Thus, the issue of women's access to military education is becoming even more urgent and requires a prompt solution.

In sum, this study was designed to identify the beneficial and challenging aspects of

women's access to higher military education institutions and military vocational schools in Ukraine. More details about the study are available in the methodology section. We are grateful to everyone who helped us and contributed to this study: male and female respondents, experts who took part in surveys and interviews, and state authorities that provided information. We would like to express our special gratitude to Tetiana Kostiuhenko, Iryna Sampan, Kostiantyn Horiainov, Anastasiia Banit, Elvira Useinova, Lilia Stankevych, and Yuliia Mykytenko.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in winter 2022. It consisted of two parts: academic and field (empirical).



The study aimed to identify achievements and challenges related to women's access to higher military education institutions and military vocational schools in Ukraine.

To achieve the objective, the following tasks were set:

- determine the relevant ideas ensuring equal rights and opportunities for expanding women's access to the military education system in Ukraine;
- identify legal aspects of women's access to military education in Ukraine;
- learn about public opinion on women's access to military education;
- find out the level of women's involvement as students in higher military education institutions and military vocational schools in Ukraine;
- examine women's positive and negative experiences with admissions and training in higher military education institutions and military vocational schools in Ukraine;
- make recommendations to improve women's access to higher military education institutions and military vocational schools in Ukraine and ensure gender equality in Ukraine's higher education system.

Ukraine's military education system consists of management authorities and a network of higher military education institutions, military departments at civilian higher education institutions, and military vocational schools¹⁶. In this study, we mainly focused on higher military education institutions and military vocational schools.



The academic part was interdisciplinary and involved a review of previous professional (scientific) domestic and certain international studies, publicly available information, responses to official requests for relevant statistical information sent to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and the legal basis for women's access to military education.

Female experts from Legal Hundred All-Ukrainian Human Rights Organization conducted a study of the **legal aspects of women's access to military education in Ukraine**. The study's legal framework included documents such as the Constitution of Ukraine; Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights of Women and Men"; Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1410 dated December 15, 1997, "On Creating a Unified System of Military Education"; Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 467 dated May 12, 2021, "On Approval of the Regulation on Higher Military Educational Institutions"; Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 672 dated June 30, 2021, "On Approval of the Regulation on the Military (Naval, Military Sports) Vocational School

¹⁶ Military Education // Ministry of Defense of Ukraine <https://www.mil.gov.ua/diyalnist/vijskova-osvita-na-tauka/>

and Vocational School with Advanced Course of Military Physical Training”; and others.



The empirical part of the study involved quantitative and qualitative sociological methods. It was based on the results of a rep-

resentative public opinion survey on women’s access to military education, an anonymous online survey, detailed semi-structured interviews with students of military education institutions, and expert interviews. The main field part of the study was carried out in January and February 2022.

First, we conducted an **anonymous online survey** among current students and graduates of military education institutions or people with unsuccessful experience enrolling in higher military education institutions and military vocational schools. The survey included questions on the nuances of entering a military education institution and the learning experience: motivation, level of satisfaction, problems and stereotypes, successful experiences, etc. The anonymous online survey format was chosen so that female respondents could answer questions about possible gender discrimination without feeling uncomfortable or pressured and remaining anonymous. Since a person could experience discrimination already at the stage of admission to a military education institution, male and female respondents were not required to have actual learning experience.

The online survey had an exploratory objective, which included gathering empirical data on women’s access to military education, as well as testing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also used to invite male and female respondents to detailed interviews. Male and female respondents who partici-

pated in the online survey and wished to discuss their experience in more detail provided their contact information for further interviews. Given the topic sensitivity and certain difficulties with respondents’ availability, no sampling requirements were set. Since all those willing were invited to complete the questionnaire, the final sample was formed by self-selection and did not meet the criteria of representativeness, which means that the data collected cannot be extrapolated to the totality of all former, present, and future military students. However, the data collected are useful to supplement the results of other parts of the study and determine recommendations and research questions for further studies on women’s access to military education.

In total, 85 questionnaires were completed by 72 women and 13 men. They were used to create a data array. As all the questions were optional and the number of responses to any individual question could be less than 85. Some questions allowed for more than one answer, so the total percentage may be greater than 100.

In February 2022, 11 **detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with students of military education institutions**. Ten women and one man were interviewed. Male and female respondents were identified for detailed interviews using an online survey and the “snowball” method, that is, all the respondents were asked to inform others of the study so that the latter could also participate. The anonymous questionnaire was also distributed through social media. We suggested leaving contact information for further communication if people wished to continue the discussion. Using the data, the study team contacted people to participate in a detailed interview. The method used had certain limitations: individuals who

do not keep in touch with their colleagues and are inactive on social media could not be covered by a similar method to create a sample totality. These features of the sample should be taken into account when reading the text below. Quantitative ratios within the surveyed sample cannot be extrapolated to the general totality.

Male and female respondents were informed that the information gathered would be confidential, and any personal data (names, etc.) would be removed from the quotations in the text.

The results of the online survey and detailed interviews are not representative of the entire system of military education in Ukraine, not only because of the number of respondents but also because the study mostly involved individuals who wished to share their experiences.

The method of **expert interviews** supplemented information about women's access to military education in Ukraine and the issue of promoting gender equality in military education. The interviews were with experienced professionals working in Ukraine's higher military education system or involved in projects designed to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men in higher military education and the military sector. The experts were selected using the following criteria: at least one year of work experience in Ukraine's higher military education system or at least one year of experience in research, analysis, and projects related to promoting gender equality in military education. To assess the gender nuances of access to higher education for women and girls, we interviewed

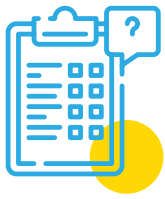
nine experts for this study. This number was objectively limited by the Russian Federation's full-scale war, as experts could not participate in the survey or did not consider it relevant to comment on the situation in light of possible changes. Expert interviews were conducted with military education professionals (five men and three women), and with one expert in civilian education for possible sharing of experience related to gender equality. Two out of nine experts answered the questions in writing.

We used the "key informant" and snowball methods to find male and female experts. The expert interviews were designed to identify the characteristics of Ukrainian women's access to military education, the achievements and challenges of involving women in Ukraine's higher education system as students, and the status of promoting gender equality in military education.

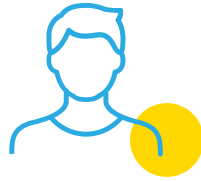
As for **quantitative sociological methods**, data were used as empirical material in the study from a public opinion survey deemed representative for Ukraine from the sociological study "**Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Return to a Peaceful Life**" (2019), conducted by the Institute of Gender Programs with the support of UN Women.¹⁷

The survey was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in 109 communities throughout Ukraine, except for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, the surveys were conducted only in government-controlled areas. Following the field stage, we received 2,026 questionnaires; 915 completed by men and 1,111 completed by women. The field stage ran September 8-23, 2018.

¹⁷ T. Martseniuk, H. Hrytsenko, A. Kvit, L. Vasylenko, M. Zviagintseva. "Invisible Battalion 2.0: Female Veterans Return to a Peaceful Life: (Sociological Study)", edited by T. Martseniuk – K.: UN Women, 2019.



2,026
questionnaires



915
completed
by men



1 111
completed
by women

During the study, the opinions were examined of adult residents of Ukraine (aged 18+ inclusive). The main study stages included designing the questionnaire and accompanying tools, developing a sample, conducting interviews with respondents, quality control of the work performed, entering and checking data for logical errors, and preparing final data and tables of one-dimensional distributions.

To conduct the survey, we designed a stratified, four-stage random sample that was random at each stage. The sample is representative of the adult population that permanently resides in Ukraine, does not do military service, and is not confined to prisons or medical institutions (e.g., hospitals, medical boarding schools). Initially, the population of Ukraine

was stratified by regions (24 oblasts and the city of Kyiv), then the population of each region was further stratified into urban (cities and towns) and rural populations (with the exception of Kyiv, where the entire population is urban). That is, the population of Ukraine was divided into 49 strata. For each stratum, we determined the number of interviews to be conducted proportional to the adult population and the number of communities to be involved in the survey.

Using qualitative and quantitative sociological methods in this study made it possible to examine the issue of women's access to military education in Ukraine in detail and to assess the situation with ensuring equal rights and opportunities in Ukraine's higher education system.

CHAPTER 1. SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO MILITARY EDUCATION

For more than 50 years, gender equality has been one of the values of democratic societies. The declaration of gender equality as a value implies the achievement of an equal position of women and men in all spheres of public life through legal provision of equal rights and opportunities for women and men, elimination of gender discrimination, and application of special temporary measures to erase the imbalance between the opportunities of women and men to exercise equal rights.

On the one hand, Ukraine has quite high indicators of overcoming the gender gap in education compared to other countries. In particular, according to the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, Ukraine ranks 25th, with a value of 0.998, which is close to full gender equality.¹⁸ Almost 100% of women and men in Ukraine are literate, and the level of participation of women and men in various levels of education in general is quite high and balanced.

On the other hand, the State Strategy on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men Until 2030 refers to problems such as access to education for different groups of women and men (for example, people from rural areas, people with disabilities, etc.), insufficient attention to gender as-

pects when designing educational policy, educators' low level of gender sensitivity, lack of a comprehensive system of gender education and special programs to train specialists in gender issues, etc.¹⁹

In general, the education sector exhibits the following indicators of gender inequality: vertical (the higher the status and prestige, the fewer women involved) and horizontal (division into the so-called traditional "female" and "male" areas of education) gender segregation; gender pay gap for sector personnel; widespread gender stereotypes, e.g., at girls' and boys' institutions; and cases of gender-based violence, in particular, sexual harassment.

Ukraine confirmed its commitments to gender equality by joining the Global Partnership for the Promotion of Gender Equality – Biarritz Partnership, a G7 countries initiative with the participation of UN Women. Another step was developing an Action Plan to implement the government's commitments as part of this international initiative. Ukraine's obligations within the Biarritz Partnership imply comprehensive integration of the gender component in education.²⁰

¹⁸ Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum, 2021. P. 381. URL: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

¹⁹ On the Approval of the State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Until 2030 (Draft Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 2021) // Government portal // <https://www.msp.gov.ua/projects/709/?fbclid=IwAR1FVo8KtabLHY99Sc31UTG8dpJGsEI4mAbR4i1XeiuHLYC-yEy36xyLa0U>

²⁰ The government approved the Action Plan for the Biarritz Partnership implementation // Office of the Vice-Prime Minister of Ukraine, published on December 16, 2020 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uryad-shvaliv-plan-zahodiv-z-realizaciyi-partnerstva-biarritz>

Moreover, it is recommended to conduct a gender audit in higher education institutions to better understand how equal rights and opportunities in higher education are ensured. An important initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science is gender audits in educational institutions.²¹ At higher education institutions, it is important to implement intra-university policies to promote gender equality and non-discrimination and counteract sexual harassment. This process began at the end of 2018, when the related policy was adopted at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.²² Over the past few years, a number of higher education institutions have introduced related policies and mechanisms.

Women's access to military education is an important component of establishing the value of equal rights and opportunities in the military sector. Ukraine's implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace, and Security" provides for equal access of women and men to educational institutions at all levels in the security and defense sector, and the inclusion of a gender component in education. It means providing comprehensive access for women to military education institutions; integrating gender approaches into the system of training spe-

cialists for the security and defense sector; and ensuring infrastructural, material, and technical conditions at education institutions in the security and defense sector for the training of girls.

At the end of 2021, the Ministry of Defense policy for military education was approved.²³ Equality of opportunities for all citizens to receive military education, in particular, promoting gender equality, is among the policy's main principles.

NATO gender policy provides for integrating a gender approach in planning, operations, missions, education, training, etc., in line with gender aspects set in NATO policies and programs, which is why Ukraine has been recently integrating the gender component into military education.²⁴ The fifth strategic goal of Ukraine's defense also included improving the system of military education and personnel training. This was implemented as integrating gender components when harmonizing the educational content and quality of training and qualification courses for military personnel (including reserves) with the needs of the defense forces.²⁵

Solving the issue of protecting military personnel from sexual harassment is an-

²¹ On Approval of Methodology and Criteria for Conducting Gender Audit in Educational Institutions (Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1182 dated November 5, 2021) // Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine // URL: <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/pro-zatverdzhennya-metodologiyi-ta-kriteriyiv-provedennya-gendernogo-audituzakladiv-osviti>

²² T. O. Martseniuk. Policies of universities to counteract discrimination and sexual harassment in Ukraine (with the example of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy): Achievements and challenges of implementation // Transformation of Social Institutions in the Information Society: IV Congress of the Sociological Association of Ukraine, Kharkiv, October 28–29, 2021: Theses of reports / Sociological Association of Ukraine. – Kharkiv: [no publisher], 2021. – P. 414–415. <http://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/handle/123456789/21345>

²³ Policy of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine for military education // Document dated December 15, 2021. https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/education/politika_mou_osvita.pdf

²⁴ NATO Policy on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 (2000) "Women, Peace, and Security" // Ukraine-NATO / <https://ukraine-nato.mfa.gov.ua/ua/about-nato/nato-res-1325>

²⁵ Assessment of gender impact within the Security and Defense Sector in Ukraine: study results. – K.: UN Women, 2017. – P. 11. <https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/gender/Ocinka%20gendernogo%20vplyvy.pdf>

other step on the path to creating a professional army. Education is an important factor here, as it is about awareness of the issue of gender equality, the ability to recognize sexual harassment, counteract it, and deal with the consequences. In 2021, the Prometheus online educational platform introduced the course Gender Equality and Counteracting Sexual Harassment in the Military Sector.²⁶ The course was developed by the Institute of Gender Programs as part of the information campaign "Invisible Battalion 3.0. Sexual Harassment in the Military Sector of Ukraine", which was supported by the Democracy Fund of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. The course was designed for personnel in Ukraine's security and defense sector, veterans, military journalists, employees of the military education sector, and for all those interested in promoting gender equality in the military sector.

Equality of opportunities for all citizens to receive military education is a component of the Ministry of Defense policy for military education. Information on the number of women in Ukraine's military higher education institutions is classified. Over the past two academic years, the number of females studying at the Ivan Bohun Military High School has doubled (from 25 to 50), as well as in other military institutions: the Training and Health Complex of the Ivan Bohun Military High School (from 15 to 30) and Vice-Admiral Volodymyr Bezkorovainyi Naval Vocational School (from 15 to 30). In academic year 2021-2022, 110 women studied at three military vocational schools.

Public opinion on whether women should

be given equal opportunities with men to receive military education was determined on the basis of a representative survey conducted in September 2018 in Ukraine. The vast majority of Ukrainians (60%) support women having access to military education, and significantly fewer oppose it (25%).

Differences in support for the statement that women should be given equal opportunities with men to receive military education depended on the respondents' gender, age, region of residence, community size, and level of education.

Women seemed to be slightly more egalitarian in supporting women's access to military education, but they were more uncertain about this answer compared to men. Expectedly, more egalitarian views regarding women's involvement in military education were inherent to respondents with a higher level of education and residents of large cities.

Fewer residents in the east of Ukraine support the opinion that women should be given equal opportunities with men to receive military education. Since there are several military education institutions in the east of Ukraine, particularly in Kharkiv (Ivan Kozhedub National Air Force University, Military Institute of Tank Troops of the National Technical University Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute, Military and Legal Institute of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University), it is important to draw additional attention to the visibility of women in this field.

The answer "it is difficult to say" deserves special attention. About 15% of respondents

²⁶ Gender equality and counteracting sexual harassment in the military sector // Online course on the Prometheus platform, basic level // https://courses.prometheus.org.ua/courses/course-v1:Prometheus+GE101+2021_T2/about

were uncertain about women's access to military education, which may indicate a lack of public discussion on this topic and appropriate role models in the media. Young people in the 30-39 age group and those with higher education were the least likely to choose this

answer. The oldest age group (70+ years), residents of villages, and respondents who have only a secondary education were more inclined to be uncertain about whether or not women should be given equal opportunities with men to receive a military education.

CHAPTER 2. LEGAL ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO MILITARY EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

The state's obligation to ensure equal conditions for accessing education is stipulated in two main laws on education: "On Education" and "On Higher Education." Article 3 of the Law "On Education" establishes the creation of equal conditions to access education by the state. The right to education and higher education is guaranteed regardless of age; sex; race; health; disability; citizenship; nationality; political, religious, or other beliefs; skin color; place of residence; language of communication; origin; social and property status; criminal record; and other personal circumstances and characteristics.²⁷ Therefore, the basic laws on education guarantee equality of women and men in terms of access to education, including in the military sector.

A peculiarity of military education is that it is subject to additional regulation. Higher military education institutions and military departments at civilian higher education institutions are subordinated to both the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Education and Science.

At the legislative level, there are no problems guaranteeing compliance with the principle of equality between men and women during admission to higher military education institutions and military departments at ci-

vilian higher education institutions. Certain nuances are revealed only upon examining by-laws regarding military service. It is worth noting the positive trends observed on the part of the Ministry of Defense in creating the same military career opportunities for women and men.

However, the military education system has a number of disadvantages, including:

1. The need to harmonize by-laws, in particular, the Regulation on Military Service by Citizens of Ukraine in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, where it is determined that women have the right to study only in specific specializations allowing them to do military service in the future.

Although equal access to education is provided for men and women at the constitutional level, until recently, women had some restrictions in exercising their right to military education. Women who wanted to build a military career were limited in their choice of specialization.

Paragraph 162 of the regulation on military service by Ukrainian citizens in the Armed Forces of Ukraine still reads that women can get training for military service in the positions of non-commissioned officers, warrant

²⁷ Law of Ukraine No. 2145-VIII "On the Education" dated September 5, 2017 // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2145-19#Text>

officers, and officers in specializations on a list that is determined by the Ministry of Defense.²⁸ The same provision is in the handbook for entrants to professional advanced military education institutions, higher military education institutions of the Ministry of Defense, and military departments at Ukrainian civilian higher education institutions in 2022.²⁹

These provisions do not comply with the Resolution of the Ministry of Defense No. 50 dated February 10, 2022, according to which the list of military officer positions that can be replaced by female servicemen is set out in a new edition.³⁰ Now, women have access to all military specializations and officer positions, and, therefore, access to training in all areas. Therefore, the specified provisions should be finalized in line with the changes adopted by the Ministry of Defense at the beginning of February 2022.

Moreover, canceling the reference to the list of specializations approved by the Ministry of Education and Science to the provision on military service by citizens of Ukraine in the Armed Forces will guarantee the observance of equal rights of men and women in the future if the Ministry of Defense decides to limit women's access to some officer positions again (as it was until 2022).

2. Obstacles in exercising the right to ed-

ucation for military personnel due to the impossibility of using education leave during the special period and martial law.

Before leaving for entrance exams, service members recommended for admission have to use regular leave this year because education leave is not granted during the special period and martial law. This prevents service members from exercising their right to education during military service. The same applies to the exams period.

Part 8 Art. 10-1 of the Law “On the Social and Legal Protection of Servicemen and Members of Their Families” specifies that additional education leave, creative leave, and social leave are granted under the Law “On Leave”, but part 17 of the same article indicates that service members can only use annual basic leave, family leave, and leave for other valid reasons during a special period.³¹ During martial law, service members may only take family leave and leave for other valid reasons.

Currently, there are a number of legislative initiatives in the parliament regarding education leave during a special period, in particular, draft law No. 2343, which was registered with the parliament on October 29, 2019. On January 14, 2020, it was adopted as a basis with a shortened preparation period, and on September 1, 2020, the initiators of the draft law submitted a table of the second round

²⁸ Regulations on Military Service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine by Citizens of Ukraine (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 1153/2008 dated December 10, 2008) // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1153/2008#Text>

²⁹ Handbook for entrants to institutions of professional advanced military education, higher military educational institutions of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and military departments at civilian institutions of higher education of Ukraine in 2022, approved by First Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Ivan Rusnak, dated February 2, 2022 // Ministry of Defense of Ukraine // https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/education/dovidnuk_vstupnuku_2022_compressed.pdf

³⁰ On amendments to the Decree of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine No. 412/DSK dated June 20, 2012 (Decree of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine No. 50 dated February 10, 2022) // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0355-22#n184>

³¹ Law “On Leave” // <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/595>

of amendments.³² The draft law is pending a second reading, while the issue remains unresolved.

Therefore, it is worth providing the right to education leave for military personnel at least during a special period. Such leave should be granted so as not to limit the right to education, while exercising the right should not affect the defense capability of the state.

3. The right of each military education institution to establish its own admission policies, which depend on the institution and may differ from the general conditions for admission to higher education institutions approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, violates the principle of legal certainty and fairness.

In the Admission Conditions for 2022 approved by Ministry of Education and Science Decree No. 1098 dated October 13, 2021, it is determined that “the conditions are mandatory for higher education institutions, except for higher military education institutions (higher education institutions with special study conditions) and military departments at civilian higher education institutions.”³³ Therefore, the general rules do not apply to admission to higher military education institutions.

The admission procedure to train military specialists with higher education in higher military education institutions and military departments at civilian higher education institutions is determined by the admission rules developed by higher military education institutions on the basis of the admission conditions related to higher education

institutions approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. When writing the admission policies, higher military education institutions also use the related legal acts of the Ministry of Defense when determining the specific features of admission to higher military education institutions and military departments at civilian higher education institutions. The academic councils agree on the admission policies with the Ministry of Defense Department of Military Education and Science and approve them.

The admission policies for military universities establish different deadlines for accepting applications and documents, minimum entrance score on external examinations, entrance exams, standards for determining the level of physical training, medical examination, and various categories of persons entitled to benefits who have the right for admission based on entrance exams and interviews. This situation is confusing to applicants as to the deadlines for submitting documents and taking exams. Moreover, it puts persons entitled to benefits in an unequal position, as they can be admitted to some universities on the basis of entrance exams and interviews regardless of the form of education and to some only on a full-time basis, while others do not secure such a right at all. The definition of the basic policies should be entrusted to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Defense. However, universities can retain the right to determine the minimum entrance score on external examinations, exams, educational programs, proposals and subjects with weighting factors for a competitive score, etc., in the same way civilian higher education institutions do.

³² On Amending Law “On the Social and Legal Protection of Servicemen and Members of Their Families” (Draft Law No. 2343 dated October 29, 2019) // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <https://itd.rada.gov.ua/billInfo/Bills/Card/595>

4. Admission policies are the same for men and women, with the exception of standards for determining the level of physical fitness.

It is true that women and men perform different exercises, but the list is the same in all the higher military education institutions' admission policies. If women and men perform the same exercises, the evaluation system differs. For example, for a serviceperson's admission, women run 3 km like men, not 1 km like civilian women, although to get 100 points, a female servicemember must run the distance within 16 minutes, unlike the 12 minutes for a male. During the 100-meter swimming test for admission to the Cherniakhovsky National Defense University, a woman must swim the distance in 2 minutes to get 100 points, while a man must swim it in 1.35 minutes.

There is an opinion that women's physical fitness cannot be determined by the same indicators as men's, as this issue is gender-sensitive due to biological differences. However, it must be taken into account that during the performance of military duties, there cannot be a distinction between men and women in terms of professionalism, which includes physical training, because if a woman servicemember performs only part of the work, she can no longer be considered a full-fledged army unit, which will have an impact on the state's defense capability.

5. Insufficient popularization among schoolchildren and improper informing of entrants about military education.

Enrollment in military education begins as early as high school, with the teaching of the Defense of the Country subject (which, by the way, was recently renamed Defense of Ukraine) and vocational counseling activities. The subject is taught at school mostly only for boys, while girls have Defense of Ukraine. Both boys and girls study Basic Medical Skills, albeit separately. Girls, on their own (personally motivated decision), will and with the consent of their parents, guardians, or custodians, study in the program designed for boys.³⁴ Therefore, girls do not fall under the information provision of military vocational counselling, and the division of girls and boys into groups indicates an approach based on gender stereotypes. It is important to raise the awareness of civilian schoolchildren, both boys and girls, about the possibilities of choosing a military major.

Therefore, to increase professionalism and enhance the Ukrainian army, it is worth reviewing the availability of military education for the population, as discussed above, as well as improving the conditions for military service, which is mandatory after graduating from a higher military education institution.

³³ On Approval of Conditions of Admission to Higher Education in 2022 (Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1098 dated October 13, 2021) // Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine // <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1542-21#Text>

³⁴ Methodological recommendations on teaching the subject "Defense of Ukraine" in academic year 2021/2022 (Addendum to the letter of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1/9-482 dated September 22, 2021) // Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine // <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/npa/shodo-metodichnih-rekomendacij-pro-vikladannya-navchalnih-predmetiv-u-zakladah-zagalnoyi-serednoyi-osviti-u-20212022-navchalnomu-roci>

CHAPTER 3. VOICES OF THOSE RECEIVING MILITARY EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

In general, women and girls are interested in secondary professional and higher military education, and it relates not only to military clans. The motivation for admission is the desire to pursue a military career, as well as civic and patriotic considerations, which is quite logical considering that Ukraine has been defending itself against the Russian Federation's military aggression since 2014. Among the factors that diminish this motivation, women and girls cite lack of self-confidence, fear of humiliating themselves, and age restrictions.

As derived from the 85 responses to the online survey, girls and women are motivated to pursue a military education and are often satisfied with the process of entering military education institutions and the quality of training offered there, although most of them note direct or indirect obstacles to admission because of gender, for example, a fewer number of seats for girls under the state-guarantee order.

The majority of male and female respondents in one way or another encountered direct prohibitions for women or men, unfavorable conditions for women and men, or other forms of unfavorable treatment of women and men. Among the main reasons for dissatisfaction with the learning process, both male and female respondents and experts indicate the following:

- Disrespectful or indulgent treatment by men (both teaching staff and cadets),

including direct discrimination and sexual harassment;

- Lack of proper infrastructure (uniforms, shoes, sports classes);
- Non-standardized and therefore unreasonable appearance standards; and
- Lack of women among the teaching staff and, in general, lack of positive examples of women who have successfully pursued a military career.

Another problem is gender discrimination in recruitment for military service after graduation: a woman can face the situation of being a military graduate but she cannot use it in the future. Curricula and materials generally do not have a visible focus on gender aspects of world-building, nor have they undergone gender and other anti-discrimination expertise.

Apart from discrimination and sexism, the most frequent difficulties mentioned by female respondents include fear of being humiliated and lack of self-confidence. These problems are not always identified as gender-related ones, but they are natural when entering a specialization that is stereotypically considered a male one. These kinds of problems mean that girls and women should be additionally motivated by positive examples of women who have successfully pursued a military career; in particular, this can be positively influenced by increasing the number of women among the teaching staff.

Women and girls should also be guaranteed an equal and respectful atmosphere in the learning process.

In fact, according to the female respondents, there is indirect and sometimes even direct gender discrimination in the educational environment. This negatively affects the opportunities for self-realization of girls and women in the security sector.

According to the male and female expert survey participants (nine people), there are currently no legal obstacles to studying in military education institutions for women and girls, however, the current organizational culture includes a “dynasty factor” during admissions (giving preference to applicants from military families) and the choice of traditionally “female” (i.e., non-combat) military specializations by girls at the admission stage. The expert community is also aware of individual cases of direct denial during admission.

An important aspect that distinguishes military employment from civilian is the availability of orders for graduates of military education institutions given by military units. The female experts suggest a potential scope for gender discrimination at this stage, which may result in difficulties in employment of women who have successfully completed their studies, and recommend this topic be examined in more detail.

According to the female experts, increasing the number of women first in military education institutions and, later, in their further employment in the security and defense sector may currently not be understood and accepted by the sector’s male personnel. This refers, in particular, to the fact that competition for positions, money, and other resources will increase for men. Also, men of the pri-

vate, warrant, and non-commissioned ranks, in particular, those of an older age, could be prejudiced against a young woman who has an education sufficient to be appointed to an officer’s position and refuse to respect the proper hierarchy and follow her orders. Experts know cases of spreading gender stereotypes, as well as of cases when boys tell girls during training that no one will follow a girl’s order. According to experts, this negatively affects the motivation to successfully complete studies. Among the older generation of servicemen, Soviet stereotypes about the image of the army are still widespread, where there are no women in combat and leadership positions. Experts generally consider the army to be an inert and conservative structure that can resist changes or at least be slow to implement them.

Among the unfavorable conditions, experts also note the actual lack of visible female military leaders, the general reservation and non-publicity of the military sector, and “benign sexism.” Recently, gender conferences and gender training modules have been incorporated into military education, but it still lacks a more in-depth approach that not only teaches a basic understanding of gender literacy but also integrates it into more specific professional training. The expert community also agrees that the infrastructural problem of providing female cadets and students with uniforms, underwear, etc., remains relevant, albeit to a lesser extent than before.

Male and female respondents of detailed interviews (11 people) also indicate the same problems revealed by other research methods: “dynasty factor”, age restrictions at admission, sexism, and disrespectful attitudes. Although admission to military education institutions is formally free to women and girls, one of the female respondents, a recent graduate of a military lyceum, received

information from one of the military academies that girls were not accepted there, and this influenced her decision to enter another institution. Another female respondent checked the actual availability of the specialization before admission, which turned out to be unavailable. Due to admission age restrictions, female respondents are known to experience delays, when applicants are denied admission several times for various reasons (lost documents, etc.) until they pass the age limit (in the case known to a female respondent, this limit was 30 years old). Female respondents also point out possible discrimination and corruption in admissions, which comes from the commander of the unit, who must allow training. This applies not only to long-term education in military education institutions but also to short training courses. Similarly, further employment after completing military education can also be challenging, although this is not a problem of military education institutions as such. There is also space for corruption and abuse, in particular the "dynasty factor," which in practice means not only that a woman who spent her time and effort on professional training cannot apply, but also ineffective use of state funds to train the person.

When entering military education institutions, boys and girls are assessed under different standards, which is related to a different level of physical training at school, since the physical education standards for boys and girls are different at the school level, as well. In theory, this initial difference in training should be evened out during the course of education. Female respondents have different opinions about the equality of the initial standards, as they subjectively assess the significance of the physiological differences between boys and girls in different ways. Nevertheless, providing real applied equality of rights and opportunities

must also take into account the actual opportunities for proper training. However, in practice, physical training in education is not always balanced, which means that a lower level of training may become an obstacle in the future when recruiting or doing service.

According to women respondents, practical reliefs for girls in education (e.g., less time in uniforms) can lead to a worsening of attitudes towards them. It is advisable to unify requirements, both to prevent formal grounds for bad treatment of girls, and to treat boys more fairly so that they do not have to bear greater burdens only because of their gender. The issue of appearance requirements for male and female cadets (hairstyle, manicure, etc.) remains unsettled, which gives rise to disputes and conflicts when personal preferences of male and female cadets and teaching staff do not coincide. A gender-sensitive approach to appropriately-sized military uniforms remains partly unimplemented. When uniforms are an uncomfortable size and cut, female cadets and students feel uncomfortable both physically and psychologically.

The understanding of gender equality in education also leaves much to be desired. An understanding of gender equality is not included in the curricula, or included only formally, which means that this term, which is often a buzzword, is now interpreted arbitrarily or even with elements of bullying. Information on gender equality in world-building is also not taught at all or not covered in all institutions. Female respondents also indicate a lack of female teachers and examples of female leaders, and also a lack of informal communication with experienced military personnel who could share their experience, become a source of inspiration, or just listen. The lack or low visibility of successful women in the defense sector can be an argument in favor of gender inequality, since, as indicat-

ed by female respondents, men will not look for examples of such women on their own.

In sum, the main issues are:

- disrespectful or indulgent treatment by men (both teaching staff and cadets), including direct discrimination and sexual harassment;
- lack of proper infrastructure (uniforms, shoes, sports classes);
- non-standardized and therefore unreasonable appearance standards;

- lack of women among the teaching staff and, in general, lack of positive examples of women who have successfully pursued a military career; and
- gender discrimination in military service after graduation.

In total, we recommend general training on integrity, including zero tolerance to corruption, and a more detailed study of the specified problem areas both at the level of educational institutions' individual policies and at the level of Ministry of Defense policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations to the legislative initiative

Provide for the possibility of using education leave, in particular for taking exams, during the special period that has been in effect since 2014, with the end date unknown. In view of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, certain safeguards should be set. The proposal may have the form of limiting the right in order to ensure increased combat capability.



Recommendations to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science

Ensure infrastructural, material, and technical conditions for security and defense sector educational institutions to train girls (medical care, providing anatomically adapted uniforms of the appropriate size, etc.).

Promote methodological recommendations on integrating gender approaches in the training of specialists for the security and defense sector, educational materials, and introduce an institute for reviewing educational materials (textbooks, etc.) used in education on anti-discrimination issues.

Develop standards for preparing a course used by recruitment centers and military personnel when regularly visiting senior grades at schools, and when heads of military units and vocational schools present them to military personnel and cadets.

Monitor equal access to education and edu-

cational benefits among youth, military personnel, and veterans, regardless of gender, and zero tolerance for corruption, and take prompt response measures in case of violations.



Recommendations to higher military education institutions

Study and include gender competency as a component of the professional competency of students in Ukraine's security and defense sector.

Provide infrastructural, material, and technical conditions in institutions to train girls.

Conduct gender audits at educational institutions, adapting the gender audit methodology developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Introduce intra-university policies to promote gender equality, non-discrimination, and counteracting sexual harassment, using international practices and the achievements of Ukrainian higher education institutions.

Recommend that female and male higher education institution employees, as well as students, take the online course "Gender equality and counteracting sexual harassment in the military sector", which is on the Prometheus platform.

Create a road map for an entrant to a military university that schematically presents the admissions process in simple words.

Support the motivation of girls and women

when entering military education institutions and during training, in particular by increasing the number of female veterans/military servicewomen in teaching positions.

Cultivate an organizational culture where women are neither humiliated nor indulged. In this context, it is also important to ensure that there are no greater loads on boys and men, and to omit tasks that are not related to education.



Recommendations to media

It is worth producing more professional stories (news, in particular) on issues of gender equality in the military sector; avoid sexism and other discriminatory visual and text materials in media products.

It is necessary to increase awareness about the possibility of military majors and about the admissions process among the target audience so that civilian youth will enter higher military education institutions and military personnel will acquire new knowledge in field-specified universities for further promotion.



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SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY
**ACCESS TO MILITARY EDUCATION
FOR WOMEN IN UKRAINE**

CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE NAKO PROJECT PROMOTION
OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE
(abridged version)

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