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- GENDER IN POWER
- GENDER IN WAR AND PEACE
- GENDER IN FOREIGN POLICY

Gender in Power

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FUNCTIONAL PARTICULARITIES OF THE PRESENT GENDER POLICY WITHIN THE STATE BORDER GUARD SERVICE OF UKRAINE: HOMELAND EXPERIENCE

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Nowadays in Ukraine, state agenda is changing in many spheres. A tendency for promoting a gender component within the security and defence sector is quite evident. The issue of gender inequality is still urgent because it remains a serious current issue worldwide to be prioritized in all spheres of life. The law enforcement agencies are no exception, as it is known that women do not achieve equality in many of them. The level of women's access to equal opportunities and rights within the security sector is not high, though the situation in the border agency is better than in other law enforcement bodies of Ukraine. Unfortunately, women are currently underrepresented within the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, but every year the number of female personnel increases. The presence of female staff can be a key element of the border security, increasing effectiveness of detection and investigation. The more law enforcement institutions recognize the benefits women bring to them in serving communities, the more will be done to address gender-based discrimination within law enforcement structures. The State Border Guard Service is committed to the national and international principles of gender equality, though female personnel are still not part of decision-making process.

What we all notice and identify nowadays in our country is the change of the Ukrainian state agenda in many spheres of the present life on all levels. The Ukrainian nation now requires changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

The Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine has changed our society greatly and we all now see the consequences. What we monitor now are the new reforms in the system of public administration, enormous changes in political hierarchy, and the process of launching reforms within the security sector of Ukraine.

A tendency for promoting a gender component not only in the Ukrainian policy but also within the security and defence



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sector of Ukraine is quite evident. Gender mainstreaming is actively underlined here and seems to be an integral and an essential part of activity of the law enforcement bodies of Ukraine. A talk about gender within the security sector of Ukraine often involves misunderstanding, i.e. the term 'gender' is correlated only with women or with some problems in relations between men and women or even with feminism.

Any time you start describing issues regarding gender policy, the main thing is its definition.

We know that:

- Gender relates to particular roles and relations, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, and values that society ascribes to men and women¹;
- 'Gender' therefore refers to learned differences between men and women, while sex refers to biological differences between males and females²;
- Gender roles vary widely within and across cultures, and can change over time³.
- Gender roles depend on the culture – yes, it is true – and can change over time – this is what is visible now in Ukraine.

Every year we are approaching closer and closer to gender mainstreaming.

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995.

And in July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality."

In our opinion, gender mainstreaming is not about adding a "women's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It goes beyond – increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to be equal no matter what their profession is.

Gender equality in Ukraine is now regarded as an important parameter in relation

¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Gender and Environment, A guide to the Integration of Gender Aspects in the OSCE's Environmental Projects, OSCE: Vienna 2009.

² Muller M., "Gender, Social Inequality and Waste Management", Gender and the Waste of Economy. Vietnamese and International Experience, National Political Publisher: Hanoi 2003.

³ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Aide-Mémoire on Gender Mainstreaming Projects, OSCE: Vienna 2006.

to security issues, because women, who represent over a half of population – and have equal rights with men, have much to contribute to resolving security issues. It is obvious that the attitude to gender equality in law enforcement must be reconsidered and it must circulate in law enforcement society aiming:

- To promote women's participation at all levels of decision-making and in fields related to security policy;
- To focus on and address gender-sensitive issues in the security policy; and
- To introduce structures to ensure respect for women's rights and interests.

The issue of gender inequality is an urgent one and a great deal of different organisations put this problem in the first place. Law enforcement agencies are no exception, and it is known that women do not achieve equality in many of them.

Here we would like to pay attention to the security sector of Ukraine, in particular to the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (here and further – the SBGSU). The Administration of the SBGSU is constantly trying to take necessary organisational, administrative, and practical measures for equal and proportional deployment of all categories of the military staff in their positions according to their educational level and qualifications, professional skills, and gained experience in the units of the border agency. With this purpose, even a special order of the Head of the SBGSU was signed in 2011, which cancelled any restrictions for female personnel while being assigned or promoted to any position.

The national legislation in the sphere of the provision of equal rights and possibilities for men and women includes:

Decree of the President of Ukraine, On Perfection of Work of Central and Local Executive Bodies in Relation to Providing of Equal Rights and Possibilities for Women and Men (2005);

Law of Ukraine, On Providing of Equal Rights and Possibilities for Women and Men (2005);

Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, On the Approval of Conception of the Government Program for Providing of Equal Rights and Possibilities for Women and Men in a Period to 2016 (2012);

Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, On the Adoption of the Government Program for Providing of Equal Rights and Possibilities for Women and Men in a Period to 2016 (2012).

The border agency of Ukraine started to make its first steps towards gender mainstreaming only in 2006 after examining the situation, which was almost catastrophic. If we look at the statistics of 2006, we will see the following picture: as of 1 January 2006, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine had only 308 female officers – that meant 4.7% of all officers within the service and no gender-oriented strategy at all. Since that time, a state policy on equal rights and possibilities for men and women under the conditions of military service and law enforcement activity has been implemented within the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

The results of gender research in the State Border Guard Service show the following. Today, the total number of the personnel that fulfils duties in the SBGSU constitutes approximately 32 thousand of military staff. Six thousand among them are females, which comprises about 20% of the whole SBGSU personnel; 22% of them are officers (1,320 women).

At the present time in the administration of the SBGSU (the central headquarters), the percentage of women constitutes only 10% of the total number; at the regional level, this figure is bigger and comprises 20% of the total number of personnel. Women are currently underrepresented within the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, but every year their number increases.

It is obvious that there are specific advantages for the border agency to hire and retain more women who may be absolutely “applicable” to the border management. The presence of female staff and integration of gender into the system of border control can be a key element of the border security, increasing of operational effectiveness by means of:

- Facilitating protection of and adherence to human rights;
- Increasing the level of prevention of and combating illegal migration and trafficking in human beings;
- Increasing female representativeness within the border control institutions;
- Developing cooperation with local population and ensuring of democratic civil control.

There are some spheres of activity where women may have better outcomes than men do, being people-centred and consistent with a human security approach, or just being more attentive towards small details. For example, female personnel can define faster female victims of human trafficking, or may check female travellers who wear a veil or recognize men who with the help of such a veil pretend to be a woman and cross the border illegally.

The presence of women in border control helps to decrease the level of problems connected with gender discrimination at the border, enhances reactions to sexual harassment cases, leads to the absence of usage of excessive force.

Besides that, the operational effectiveness of border management is strengthened by ensuring that the border agency is a representative of and mirrors the society it serves in terms of sex, language, nationality, religion, etc.

I am convinced that the absence of women in border service reduces its legitimacy and the explanation here is very simple. The local population, foreigners, travellers,



The presence of women in border control helps to decrease the level of problems connected with gender discrimination at the border, enhances reactions to sexual harassment cases, leads to the absence of usage of excessive force.

especially women, cannot trust and work with all-male personnel. The presence of female staff contributes to ensuring a “healthy border environment”, and can potentially play a distinctive role in prevention and resolution of conflict situations.

The more law enforcement institutions recognise the benefits women bring to them in serving communities, the more needs to be done to address gender-based discrimination within law enforcement structures.

When it comes to military ranks, which in the law enforcement environment means much, it is necessary to outline that within the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the female border guards have the following military ranks:

- Senior officer grades – more than 5%;
- Junior officer grades – almost 17%;

- Non-commissioned officers – approximately 17%;
- Junior enlisted – approximately 5%.

However, the situation with the decision-making level is even worse – only 37 women possess the senior positions (2.8% of female officer personnel):

- Six of them serve in the Administration of the SBGSU (two deputy heads of the department, two heads of sectors, two heads of units);
- Thirty-one women – in the border detachments (two heads of military hospitals, in Kiev and Odessa, and two their deputies; the head of clinical health resort; seven assistants to the heads of border detachments – the chiefs of press services; three heads of departments at the National Academy of the SBGSU; one deputy rector of the National Academy and one head of the faculty; 16 heads of border sub-units).

Such a deeply troubling survey against the background of unprecedented challenges for Ukraine presumes that we still do not have enough level of women's access to equal opportunities and rights within the security sector, though the situation in the border agency is better than in other law enforcement bodies of Ukraine.

It is true that to some extent the border guard females in Ukraine continue to face gender discrimination. I absolutely agree that the roots of that can be found in patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes within the Ukrainian society (especially the military), weak capacity of national machinery for the advancement of women, lack of will of the higher border officials, and absence of a social protection system inside the agency.

I must confirm that the State Border Guard Service does not neglect the national and international commitments on gender equality, but the female personnel are still not part of decision-making process.

The mechanism of the advancement of women within the border agency of Ukraine remains weak, even in spite of the existence of the SBGSU internal Plan of the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Realization of the Provisions of the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period to 2020⁴ and the common OSCE project on ensuring gender equality. This prevents a comprehensive and wide implementation of the gender equality agenda within the border agency of Ukraine.

Sometimes women are unable to rise to supervisory positions despite their qualifications. Very often, these female officers feel that they are constantly in a position “needing to prove themselves” and have to actively “fight the system” just to be “leaders” in a male-dominated world. At the same time, their male colleagues are easily accepted for positions where women were automatically refused. Only after being able to change this perception will it be possible to reach the target – to ensure gender equality.

This example shows that gender should not be an issue in what the leadership must be – only responsibility, leadership, and knowledge are the features that should be taken into account by both the officers and the public while promoting a person for a new position.

I must confess that discrimination against women today is not extreme, but it is still a problem, though the State Border

⁴ “The National Plan of the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Realization of the Provisions of the UN Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period to 2020”, approved by Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2016 [<http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/113-2016-%D1%80>, access: 18 February 2017]

Guard Service of Ukraine is working on improvement of gender mainstreaming and it seems to be doing well.

More and more women have the dedication to climb the ranks and they succeed at making the climb. Women of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine today, just like men, are responsible for their own careers. They need to be assertive and listen to their inner voice – urging them to strive for success.

Nowadays the SBGSU commandment adheres to the following line and concept – personal characteristics of individuals that allow them to fulfil their service border guard duties regardless of sex can be defined as follows: high level of motivation for achievement, persistence, independence, communication skills, high level of understanding of emerging problems, responsibility, self-criticism, ability to control emotions and good orientation in tense situations, courage, and high self-control.

Nevertheless, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine has room for improvement and the following recommendations may be defined. To address gender-based inequality, the State Border Guard Service should:

- not only increase the number of women serving as border officers, but also properly address their concerns on an equal partnership with men;
- employ oversight mechanisms, such as internal affairs units, which can help address the challenges women police officers face in service;

- create a law enforcement workplace which does not need to be equal but needs to be “gender intelligent”;
- fulfil national commitments on gender equality;
- integrate gender-sensitive and gender-oriented topics into the training programmes and schedules.

To cut the long story short, it is worth mentioning that under the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Ukrainian military female personnel fulfil their duties together with men, and not worse than men do, within the anti-terrorist operation zone. More than 150 female officers and non-commissioned officers – border guards – were awarded by the President of Ukraine with medals and other awards for courage in defending Ukrainian territorial integrity.

We are convinced that the State Border Guard Service will continue implementing the best world and European experience and practices in the sphere of gender mainstreaming and will stay committed to the idea of ensuring gender equality.

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