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POST-PATRIARCHAL SECURITY: INCLUSION AND EQUITY FOR THE OTHER 55%

EVENT REPORT



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Leadership at all levels is needed to ensure that good intentions and policy commitments to gender inclusiveness in the security forces translate into concrete changes for women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community serving in, or interacting with, the military and police.

That was one key conclusion from *Friends of Europe's* online debate held on March 18 which brought together policymakers, members of the security forces and other stakeholders to look at how to promote greater diversity and inclusion.

"We need political will from the highest level to change things because we have so many action plans, we have so many declarations, we have so many strategies ... but we really need to make this a priority at the top," said **Hannah Neumann**, Member of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Security and Defence.

Neumann pointed out that problems of under-representation for women, LGTBI people and ethnic minorities feed into feelings of insecurity and distrust of the security services.

"How do we get the diversity that is in the world out there to the decision-making institutions?" she asked. "People feel afraid of the police, who are the people they should turn to if they are afraid, if they feel insecure."

According to the #SHEcurity Index, women make up only 11% of military staff and 25% of police forces in EU and G20 countries.

At current rates, it will take over 460 years before women will reach parity with men in NATO forces, said **Elena Sáenz Feehan**, Programme Manager – Peace, Security and Defence at *Friends of Europe*. "We don't have that much time to spare," she said. For the LGBTIQ+ community, Sáenz Feehan said lack of data on levels of participation in the forces illustrates just how little attention the issue receives.

That lack of progress comes despite commitments under the UN Security Council's resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000 and the 2018 NATO-EU Joint Declaration pledging to 'aim for swift and demonstrable progress in ... promoting the women peace and security agenda.'

The million-dollar question

Turning such policies into action is the 'million-dollar question' said **Alan Sneddon**, Police Sergeant at Police Scotland and Director of Communications at the European LGBT Police Association (EGPA). Policies need to be realistic, achievable, measurable and with clearly defined outcomes in order to be effective on the ground, he said.

"It's all very well having wonderful policies, and an array of policies for different groups and marginalised and under-represented groups primarily within the security services," he told the meeting. "However, if we don't actually evaluate those policies and measure the effectiveness of those policies when they are implemented, then we really lose track ... and they tend to lead to nowhere."

Continuous evaluation of the application and effectiveness of policies and legislation is essential, including through feedback from staff within the security services and the communities they work with, Sneddon contented.

Measures pursued by the EGPA include outreach to police academics to explain the experience of LGTB officers and working with police services to explore ways for them to engage more proactively with the LGTB community.

Sneddon, who in 2003 was among the first uniformed police officers to take part in a Pride parade, also acknowledged the need for cultural change with the police and armed forces.

“Although the police service is a much newer institution than, say, the military, historically that has been a very masculine and heterosexual, white organisation,” Sneddon told the meeting. “You have a culture that has developed over many decades, or centuries, which needs to be rethought and needs to be challenged at times.”

Among the practical ideas to bring about change, Neumann urged greater use of quotas to ‘make it mandatory that we increase the percentage of different minorities’; and training to raise awareness among the traditional, male-dominated security establishment.

“When I say training, people say: ‘oh, we need to upskill women or we need to upskill LGTB people, or we need to upskill people of colour to make their way into the police or make their way higher up.’ Well, I think we need to upskill those who are used to their privilege on how to use it to uplift others,” said the German Green MEP, who is a member of the European Parliament Intergroup on LGBT Rights.

“Training on gender needs to be mandatory, it needs to be organisation wide,” agreed **Paul Kirby**, Co-Director of the UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Flexible working plans are needed to take account of ‘peoples’ lived-live experiences,’ in order for the security forces to recruit and retain staff from more diverse backgrounds, suggested Sneddon. He also advocated ‘reverse mentoring’ to generate understanding of different experiences and perspectives based on gender, gender identity, sexual origination or race.

There was broad agreement on the need to form an alliance between women, the LGBTIQ+ community and ethnic minorities to achieve progress together, rather than allowing competing agendas to develop.

Following up on the need for greater leadership to translate policies into action, **Emmanuel Jacob**, President of the European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL) urged the European Parliament to take a lead in putting the issue of LGTB rights in the armed forces onto the agenda of EU-NATO cooperation planning.

“It would be an enormous support for diverse and inclusive armed forces, if these issues were also discussed in the context of the EU-NATO cooperation,” Jacob said.

Neumann pointed out that a backlash from misogynist groups often stymies progress at European level. She referred in particular to efforts by the governments of Hungary and Poland to hold back women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights.

Time to change the culture

The armed forces should be open to all those who are 'willing and able to serve', stated **Marie Meigård**, Sergeant Major in the Swedish Armed Forces. She said measures to prevent 'unwelcome behaviour' in the security services are needed more than ever.

Meigård has been heavily involved in the women's network within the armed forces throughout her long military career. She pointed to the progress in Sweden where conscripted military service was re-activated in January 2018 on a gender-neutral basis. Still there is a clear need for the military culture to be updated.

"We have to, and we need to, adapt the culture and the leadership and everything around it," she explained. "Everything from uniforms, boots and body protection, and cultural issues that we have to handle."

Meigård too underscored the importance of leadership to overcome the negative cultural legacy and make the armed forces an attractive place for women and minorities to work.

"The successful integration of women into combat units depends on the beliefs of the commanders," she said. "If the commanders believe women can be successful soldiers and that women are just as capable as men, then the units will also become more accepting of female soldiers. I believe this applies to other minorities."

Leadership has to speak out against harassment and discrimination and follow through with active measures to ensure good intentions are put into practice. Training and awareness-raising are key.

"The organisation's core values have to be accepted and well known to all ... Everyone has to have sufficient basic awareness about gender and about gender roles," Meigård said.

"It is imperative that the core values and the organisation march in step."

On a practical level, gender issues have to be mainstreamed into all military activities.

"Gender perspective must be considered with planning all activities on all levels," Meigård insisted. "Since you never know when a gender perspective will become highly relevant, I suggest that we always use it ... think about it always."

Several participants cautioned against assigning service members specific tasks based on their gender. **Fernando Aguiar**, Strategic Adviser on Conflict and EU Politics for the Brussels International Centre, advised against assumptions that increasing the presence of women in the military should be directed at boosting effectiveness in gender-specific fields.

"This assumption can also add an extra burden on women and create high expectation ... this burden is not placed on men," he said. "How can we make sure that both male and female are equally represented, in a context where both bring an added value?"

Kirby, from the LSE, also warned against such assumptions. "There can't be an expectation that simply because some people are embodied in a feminine form they will, therefore, without any additional training, be better at responding to sexual violence or better at empathetic communication or any of those very loaded assumptions that sometimes come with the more essentialist versions of the WPS agenda," he said.

Speaking from her 25 years of experience in the military, SGM Meigård agreed on the need to avoid assigning gender-based tasks within the armed forces. “You are trained as a soldier and you have that training. It’s not important if you are a woman or a man, you have a mission to solve,” she explained. “It should be based on my abilities as a human being, not my gender.”

A focus on the numbers and role of women and minorities in the forces should not obscure the need for a wider reassessment of security priorities, Kirby argued. “There is a real danger ... that the work on inclusion in existing institutions detracts from, or even replaces, a more comprehensive transformation of what security means and who it is for,” he said.

As examples, he pointed to disarmament, where feminists have played leading role in campaigning against nuclear weapons; and peace-making policy, which often neglects the needs and input of women most affected in the Global South.

Kirby singled out the EU’s border agency for particular criticism, cautioning against “celebrating the inclusion of women in FRONTEX, without attending to the wider effects of the EU’s migration and containment strategy, which practically guarantees increased vulnerability for women and men to horrendous gender-based violence.”

Kirby called for a broader look at the role of patriarchy as a ‘whole way of being in the world and structuring it’. He urged caution in communicating with men about patriarchy and power.

“We have a tension, I would suggest, between, on the one hand, the need to meet men where they are and to not immediately alienate them from the conversation, which very often means that activists and advocates use a language around positive masculinity in order to provide an alternative way of understanding manhood, which can open a certain kind of conversation for men where men can talk about their experiences,” he explained to the group. “The difficulty of that approach is that, at the same time, it ends up centring men in the conversation again and tending to, overly perhaps, reassure men rather than confronting them with, perhaps, the more difficult facts and histories of patriarchy.”

