

OPINION
of the Association of Women in Police
on the implementation in 2020 of the Action Plan of the General Inspectorate
of Police on increasing the share and role of women in the Police,
for the period 2018-2020

During the 4 years, in which the Police of the Republic of Moldova went through an extensive reform process, gender mainstreaming was an objective that materialized through certain actions, which contributed to the achievement of the performance criterion - increasing the number of women in the Police, from 15% in 2016 to about 21% in 2020. In order to come up with a broader opinion, an online questionnaire was developed, which consisted of 10 questions and was completed by 127 members.

Profile of respondents:

20-25 y.o. – 18,9%;

26-30 y.o.– 21,3%;

31-35 y.o.– 21,3%;

36-40 y.o.– 25,2%;

40+ y.o. – 13,4%.

Of all the respondents: 86.6% in the executive positions, 85.8% in officer positions, with different internships in the system, being represented equally the territorial subdivisions and the subdivisions deployed in Chisinau municipality. Thus, in this opinion, the visions of the interviewed colleagues will be exposed, as well as some findings, which come as a result of the communication with the employees of the Police subdivisions.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, online awareness-raising and information activities on the place and role of women in the Police were carried out, as well as offline regional seminars with mentoring elements that contributed to the empowerment of women in the Police. Adapting to the restrictions imposed through online activities facilitated the inclusion of a larger number of participants from different regions of the country, which was a challenge in previous years.

We are glad that the image of the policewoman was promoted through the media, on the social networks of the police subdivisions, either in the dedicated articles/posts, or in the videos posted. This measure certainly contributes to the creation of models of police women, not only police men, who inspire and through their own examples can motivate young women and young men to choose this profession, which is characterized with many challenges and limitations, as well as with satisfaction.

Activities carried out within the project “Joint efforts for justice, peace and life with dignity - a need and requirement of nowadays”, financially supported by the Embassy of Germany in the Republic of Moldova and implemented by the Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims “Memory” (RCTV Memory) have contributed to strengthening the capacity of gender units within Police subdivisions, including through the training seminar conducted online and thanks to the anti-Covid informational package, provided for all gender units. It is worth mentioning the unique initiative of reasonable adaptation, by installing cabinets with personal hygiene items for women in 4 subdivisions, which we hope will be an incentive to identify the necessary resources, so that such cabinets be installed in each Police headquarters.

However, **increasing the number of women in the Police and achieving the performance criterion does not necessarily mean improving their situation**. Thus, 63.8% of employees consider that the situation of women in the Police has improved in recent years. However, 18.9% who consider that the situation has not changed and 17.3% did not provide any evaluation. This result makes us believe that the Police, with the support of development partners, must further strengthen their efforts to improve the situation of women in the Police, because they continue to be underrepresented. In this sense, we

consider it necessary **to include the objective of gender mainstreaming in the new Police Development Strategy for 2021-2025**, which is currently under development.

We are glad that 58.3% of colleagues believe that decision-makers are actively involved in increasing the number of women in the Police, which shows us that they perceived this involvement through specific actions or through changes in the attitude of leaders on the importance of women in the Police.

On the other hand, only 48% of respondents consider that women are being consulted in decision-making, 31.5% consider that they are not being consulted and 26% withheld comments. These data indicate that women continue to be under-represented in particular in the decision-making process, as they only hold the positions of heads of departments within the territorial IP, units/departments within the specialized or subordinated subdivisions. At the same time, only 39.4% consider that the decision-makers within the Police are actively involved in increasing the number of women in management positions, 40.9% that they are not involved and 19.7% did not comment in this regard.

In addition, female Police employees were asked whether a level playing field was created regards the promotion to management positions. Unfortunately, almost half of 44.9% consider that those equal conditions have not been created, 40.9% - that they have been created, and 14.2% have not commented on this subject, which raises questions.

We have to admit that 2020 was a year, in which both women and men in the system encountered difficulties in their work. However, in addition to the barriers and challenges faced by women in the Police, there have been those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First of all, these challenges were related to the cessation of the activity of educational institutions, which caused an overload of parents, especially women, more involved in the education of children. Several employees had to identify solutions to leave children either in the care of relatives, acquaintances, or to exhaust their unused leave. Additional expenses were borne by the employees, who used the paid services of some nannies. Some employees had difficulty working remotely, having to apply repeatedly for this right, although their work could be carried out remotely. According to the survey, 47.6% had no difficulty in working remotely, and 37.8% did have some difficulties.

Although circulars on distance work have been sent periodically in subdivisions, no normative act has been drafted to regulate this mode of work and which contributes to reconciling professional and family life.

The provisions of Law no. 69 of 21.05.2020 regulate measures during the state of emergency in public health and the modification of some normative acts. In this connection, it was established: in case of impossibility for the employee to perform the work at the workplace organized by the employer and in order to protect the safety and health of the employee during exceptional situations related to declaration of emergency, siege and war or declaration of a state of emergency in public health, the employer, depending on the specifics of the employee's work, may order, by reasoned order (disposition, decision), the temporary change of the employee's workplace with work at home or remotely, without introduction of the respective changes in the individual employment contract. The order (disposition, decision) shall be provided to the employee in due time, including by electronic means. Thus, **the year 2020 has shown the need to regulate remote work**, a proposal presented by the Association of Women in Police in the 2018 opinion, which, however, was not taken into account.

In March 2020, the reorganization process took place within the Police subdivisions, in which the structure of the General Inspectorate of Police was modified, and some functions were reduced at the territorial level.

Most management positions, with decision-making power, were filled with existing employees (men), they being promoted, without competitions being organized, which limited the promotion of experienced women, who met the requirements. As a result of the reorganization, some of these did not get the management positions or did not get a position in the organizing states.

It is to be appreciated that in the reorganization process, however, 2 departments within the General Inspectorate of Police are headed by women: the Strategic Management Department and the Document

Management Department. And the leadership positions of other subdivisions previously held by women were either liquidated or were taken by men, promoted to these positions.

The reorganization process has identified the necessity of the **creation of equal opportunities for advancement/promotion of women and men, by placing these positions for the competition, their media coverage, as well as the organization of these competitions.**

We mention that 45.7% of the respondents consider the **lack of career opportunities is one of the problems faced by women in the Police**, along with the lack of professional development opportunities (16.5%), discrimination at work (13.4%), unequal treatment (7.9%), harassment (6.3%). These results indicate the latent phenomenon of the presence of various forms of discrimination in the Police.

In this extensive reorganization process, in which the entire workforce was involved, just over half 52.8% of women believe that they have not been discriminated against, 26% have not spoken out and 21.3% of our colleagues believe that women have been discriminated against, and the reduction of some functions/reorganization has generated some situations, in which certain rights of women have been violated. Several experienced colleagues left the Police for good, being disappointed by the consequences of the reorganization. And pregnancy in the case of two other colleagues was either an impediment to be promoted or to be in the reorganization states to the same positions.

A case of discrimination was also reported to the Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality. Thus, on 27 July 2020, the Council found a reduction in the role of press officer of a territorial IP employee as direct discrimination on the grounds of sex in the field of employment and recommended that the petitioner restore the petitioner's rights by identifying and proposing functions similar to those previously held by the petitioner (*Decision No 108/20 of July 27, 2020*).

Reporting any form of discrimination, especially gender discrimination, that Police officers may face is a right that they should be informed about in the workplace. Half of the respondents (51.2%) consider that women are encouraged to report any form of discrimination, 28.3% consider that they are not encouraged and 21% do not know. Regular information to the Police employee on their rights, in case those have been violated by the employer, must be found in the curricula during the training hours.

However, much depends on the form of discrimination. A less talked about topic is sexual harassment at work, some tolerating this behavior and others trying to avoid discussing this topic.

During 2020, at the initiative of the Association of Women in Police, thanks to the financial support provided under the IMPULS Grant Program, funded by Sweden and implemented by the Women's Law Center, the study "Perceptions of Women in Police on Sexual Harassment" was conducted. The study was conducted in the Gender Coordinating Group and will be presented to Police officers, with 215 police women completing a questionnaire consisting of questions about the presence or absence of sexual harassment during their work, the reaction to the situation of sexual harassment, own visions about sexual harassment and how it can be prevented. There were also 5 online interviews with female Police officers, who expressed their willingness to discuss delicate situations, which they have faced.

This study, conducted for the first time in the Police, is important because it is a platform for consultation and dialogue with women in the Police, on exposing their own perceptions of these behaviors and identifying the most effective methods to prevent sexual harassment in the Police. In this regard, the Association of Women in Police encourages **Police managers to reaffirm their commitment not to tolerate any behavior that harms the dignity of women or men and creates an intimidating and hostile environment, including in the Police environment.**

Certainly, they have welcomed the training on the Regulation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on how to prevent, combat and report cases of discrimination based on sex, harassment and sexual harassment, organized by the *Partnership Center for Development, in collaboration with the Entity of the United Nations Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, for members of the gender coordinating group, held between September and October 2020. Thus, the information gathered

must be assessed and transmitted to the Police, by **organizing training sessions to help prevent and combat sexual harassment in Police.**

The change in decision-making factors in the last year has affected the partnership between the Women's Police Association and the General Inspectorate of Police. Although some activities were carried out jointly, it was not possible to implement all the recommendations from previous years, or the dialogue with the Police leaders was not initiated.

In this context, we come with the updating of our main proposals, which are important to improve the situation of women in the Police:

✓ **Recruitment and retention of women in the Police should be a priority even after the completion of the Budget Support for Police Reform;**

✓ Designation of a responsible person within the General Inspectorate of Police, who would coordinate and monitor the integration of the gender dimension and whose job descriptions should include these attributions;

✓ **Involvement of women in the decision-making process**, so that they are consulted in decision-making, equally as men are;

✓ **Adjustment of both existing information systems and the format of statistics produced within the institution**, which will allow the analysis and transparent monitoring of statistical data on staff disaggregated by gender;

✓ **Integration of gender-sensitive budgeting**, relevant action in the context of the Strategy for ensuring equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2017-2021, Action Plan on implementation, approved by the Government Decision no. 259 of 28.04.2017 and the National Program for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security for the years 2018-2021 and the Action Plan on its implementation, approved by the Government Decision no. 259 of March 28, 2018;

✓ **Active involvement of men, especially leaders in supporting and promoting women in the Police.**

In conclusion, the Association of Women in Police reiterates its position that gender mainstreaming in the work of the Police should not only be regarded as a commitment, but also as a guarantee that every woman and man in the Police has equal opportunities to get employed, to work in a safe environment, with their needs and differences being recognized, to be able to reconcile work and family life, to develop and strengthen their professional and managerial skills and to be promoted.

Association of Women in Police

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