

**VIDEOCONFERENCE OF THE U.S.-ADRIATIC CHARTER  
ON WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND SECURITY:  
LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES AHEAD**

**Zagreb, 21 April 2021**



## **CONFERENCE OF THE U.S.-ADRIATIC CHARTER ON WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND SECURITY: LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES AHEAD**

Virtual webinar organized by the Croatian Presidency of the U.S.-Adriatic Charter

**Wednesday, 21 April 2021, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM (UTC+1)**

Format/Participants:

Ministers/High-level representatives of A5 countries & the United States

Representatives of NATO & EU

International & national experts

---

Twenty years ago, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), recognizing for the first time a fundamental necessity of equality between women and men to sustain peace and security. Followed by nine subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security, it makes up an important normative framework (WPS agenda) to support women's meaningful participation and leadership in all matters related to peace and security.

There have been many positive developments since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, not only in terms of commitment, but also in putting in place relevant policies, action plans and structures. However, despite important achievements, the realization of the WPS agenda has been slow. Structural barriers, lack of political will and gender stereotyping still hinder women's full participation and leadership, and the current COVID-19 pandemic only aggravates this situation.

While the primary responsibility for implementing the WPS agenda rests with individual nations, regional organizations such as EU and NATO have significant contributions to make. The EU has integrated the WPS agenda into all EU policies and efforts in support of sustainable peace, security, human rights, justice and development, while NATO – as a regional political and military alliance and a security organization – implements the WPS priorities through NATO's core tasks.

Based on shared values, commitments and priorities, the U.S.-Adriatic Charter (A5) has played and is still playing a leading role in integrating the countries of South East Europe into Europe as a whole and strengthening their alliances with NATO.

The countries of the U.S.-Adriatic Charter have a shared commitment to the WPS agenda and consider its implementation of great importance. It is therefore now considered opportune to exchange views and share experiences of its successes and challenges in implementing this agenda.

Organized by the Croatian Presidency of the U.S.-Adriatic Charter, this event will provide an opportunity to share lessons learned and best practices in order to identify how to address the remaining barriers that women face in order to ensure their full, equal and meaningful contribution to peace and security. Political leaders and policy practitioners will engage in an interactive discussion to highlight leadership and action to address gaps and to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda in A5 countries and beyond.

# CONFERENCE OF THE U.S.-ADRIATIC CHARTER ON WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND SECURITY: LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Wednesday, 21 April 2021, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM (UTC+1)

---

## Welcome addresses (3:00 PM – 3:10 PM)

**H.E. Mr. Gordan Grlić Radman**

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

**H.E. Mr. Mario Banožić**

Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia

---

## Keynote speakers (3:10 PM – 3:25 PM)

**H.E. Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović**

The Fourth President of the Republic of Croatia

**Ambassador Melanne Vermeer**

Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

### High-level Panel (3:25 PM – 4:00 PM)

**H.E. Mr. Gordan Grlić Radman**

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs  
of the Republic of Croatia

**H.E. Mr. Sifet Podžić**

Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**H.E. Ms Radmila Shekerinska Jankovska**

Minister of Defence  
of the Republic of North Macedonia

**Mr. Agron Tare**

Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign  
Affairs of the Republic of Albania

**Mr. Ljubomir Mišurović**

State Secretary,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro

**Ms Laura K. Cooper**

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, United States

Moderated by **Mr. Frano Matušić**

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European  
Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

### Experts panel (4:10 PM – 4:55 PM)

**Ms Clare Hutchinson**

NATO SG's Special Representative  
for Women, Peace and Security

**Ms Charlotte Isaksson**

Senior Gender Advisor,  
European External Action Service

**Ms Irena Petrijevčanin Vuksanović**

State Secretary,  
Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia

**Brig Gen Mirsad Ahmić**

Inspector General,  
Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Brig Gen Gordana Garašić**

Head of the Planning Directorate  
of the Croatian Armed Forces General Staff

**Brig Gen Sandy Best**

Deputy Adjutant General, Minnesota National Guard

**Lt.Col. Antonijela Stankovska-Budimir**

Budget and Finance Advisor at MSSI/MoD of the  
Republic of North Macedonia

**Maj Sanja Pejović**

Gender Advisor at the Supreme Headquarters Allied  
Power Europe – SHAPE

Moderated by **Ms Dunja Bujan**

Defence Policy Director,  
Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia

Short video messages featuring experiences/lessons learned/best practices of A5 countries  
will be shown from 4:00 PM until 4:10 PM

## **Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, the Fourth President of the Republic of Croatia**

---



Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović is a Croatian politician and diplomat who was the Fourth President of the Republic of Croatia (2015-2020) and the first female to be elected to the office. Before her election as president, Grabar-Kitarović held a number of governmental and diplomatic positions.

In 2003, she was elected to Parliament and became the Minister of European Integration from 2003 to 2005 and then the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration from 2005 to 2008. She was the Croatian ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2011 and the first female Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy at NATO from 2011 to 2014.

In 2019, Grabar-Kitarović was appointed Chair of the Council of Women Leaders and remains chair emerita. She is also the recipient of the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Award and has received a number of national and international awards, decorations, honorary doctorates and honorary citizenships.

## **Melanne Verveer, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security**

---



Ambassador Verveer is the Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. She also serves as the Special Representative on Gender Issues for the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

Amb. Verveer previously served as the first U.S. Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, a position to which she was nominated by President Obama in 2009. She coordinated foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic and social advancement of women, traveling to nearly sixty countries. She worked to ensure that women's participation and rights are fully integrated into U.S. foreign policy, and she played a leadership role in the Administration's development of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. President Obama also appointed her to serve as the U.S. Representative to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

From 2000-2008, she was the Chair and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international NGO that she co-founded to invest in emerging women leaders. During the Clinton administration, she served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady. She also led the effort to establish the President's Interagency Council on Women, and was instrumental in the adoption of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. She is the co-author of *Fast Forward: How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose* (2015).

## **Gordan Grlić Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia**

---



Gordan Grlić Radman is Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia (since 2019). Previously, he served in different positions within the Croatian diplomatic service, including as Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany from 2017 to 2019 and Ambassador to Hungary from 2012 to 2017. From 2011 to 2014 he was Secretary and from 2017 to 2021 President of the Danube Commission.

In the early 1990s Mr. Grlić Radman was pivotal in setting up the Croatian diplomatic and consular missions in Bern, Geneva and Zurich. He served at Croatian Embassies in Sofia and Budapest, and was appointed as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999.

Mr. Grlić Radman holds a Ph. D. in political science and is a true European, he speaks German, English, Bulgarian and Hungarian.

## **Mario Banožić, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia**

---



Prior to his appointment in 2020 as the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, Mario Banožić served as Minister of State Property from 2019 to 2020.

In 2018 he was the Head of the State Administration Office in Vukovar-Srijem County. In his professional experience, he was also the Head of the Internal Auditing Service in Vukovar-Srijem County (2013-2014) and the Head of the City Office for Culture and Tourism in Vinkovci (2014-2017).

He has a solid background in economics and rich experience in business administration as well as a number of published publications, research paper and scientific work. Since 2018, he has been a member of the Main Committee of the Croatian Democratic Union. He is the Chairman of the Management Board of the Social Care Centre of Vinkovci and the Chairman of the Croatian Marketing Association (CROMAR).

## **Sifet Podžić, Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

---



Dr. Sifet Podžić graduated from Military Academy in Belgrade, and at the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo, he obtained degree of Master of Political Science in Diplomacy. In 2013 he did his PhD thesis on "Relations between BiH and NATO in a comparative perspective of the Western Balkans."

In his military career, he served various command duties including the First Chief of Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prior to assuming current position of the BiH Minister of Defence in late 2019, he was member of the BiH Parliamentary assembly, House of Peoples, with an active role in Parliamentary Joint Commission for European Integration as a member and in the Joint Commission for Defence and Security as the Commission Chairman.

In addition, he has also served as the Bosnia and Herzegovina Ambassador to Bulgaria.

## **Radmila Shekerinska Jankovska, Minister of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia**

---



Radmila Shekerinska Jankovska was the first elected Minister of Defence in May 2017 and during that term the Republic of North Macedonia became the 30th full-fledged member of NATO, which was the strategic goal of the Republic of North Macedonia since its independence.

In the period 2002 to 2006, Shekerinska served as Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in charge of European Integration and Coordinator for Foreign Assistance. In that capacity, she prepared the candidacy of the Republic of Macedonia for membership in the European Union and guided the process of internal preparations for securing candidate status. At that time, the Republic of Macedonia was granted a status of candidate country for accession to the European Union. In 2009 and 2012 Shekerinska was elected head of the OSCE/ODIHR observation missions for the presidential and parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

In 2006, she was elected President of the Social Democratic Union of the Republic of Macedonia, holding that position until 2008. At that time, she became the only female leader of one of the major political parties in the Republic of Macedonia.

### **Agron Tare, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania**

---



In December 2019, Agron Tare was appointed Deputy Minister to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. From January 2019 to October 2019 he held a position of General Executive Director of the Portal Authority of Durrës.

Mr. Tare served as Consul General of the Republic of Albania in Istanbul, Turkey (2014 – 2019), Member of the Negotiating Group on the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU (2002 – 2006), and Director of Minorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2001 – 2006).

Agron Tare has also contributed to the structures of local government as Councilor in the Municipality of Tirana (2001 – 2005).

### **Ljubomir Mišurović, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro**

---



Ljubomir Mišurović began his diplomatic career in 1996 and he held various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic missions of Montenegro in Washington and London.

In 2013 he was appointed non-resident ambassador of Montenegro to Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia and since January 2016, he performed his function of the Ambassador of Montenegro to Ukraine on a resident basis, in Kyiv.

In December 2020, he was appointed State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **Laura K. Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, United States**

---



Laura Cooper is currently serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia. Ms Cooper is a career member of the Senior Executive Service. She has responsibility for policy concerning Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova), and Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) as well as Conventional Arms Control.

Ms Cooper previously served as a Principal Director in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security Affairs, with responsibility for policies on: mission assurance, defense continuity of operations, critical infrastructure protection, homeland counterterrorism, global antiterrorism policy, and the Council of Governors. She also previously served as a Principal Director in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security Affairs, with responsibility for policies on: mission assurance, defense continuity of operations, critical infrastructure protection, homeland counterterrorism, global antiterrorism policy, and the Council of Governors.

Prior assignments in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy include: Director of the Strategy office, where she helped manage the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review; Acting Director for South Asia; and Afghanistan Team Chief, Stability Operations Office. Prior to joining the Department of Defense in 2001, Ms. Cooper was a policy planning officer at the State Department in the Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism. She has also served as a Junior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



## **Clare Hutchinson, NATO SG's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security**

---



Clare Hutchinson took office as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security in January 2018. She is the high-level focal point on all aspects of NATO's contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with the aim to facilitate coordination and consistency in NATO's policies and activities and to take forward the implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Ms Hutchinson worked as a Senior Gender Adviser with the United Nations for over a decade. She has been instrumental in setting the strategic development of Women, Peace and Security for the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping in New York, Kosovo and Lebanon.

Ms Hutchinson has long been a champion for women's issues, working with women's groups for many years and supporting projects for women's empowerment. She worked in the burgeoning ICT industry as a communications expert for internet start-ups and led projects that helped women and young people utilise technology.

## **Charlotte Isaksson, Senior Gender Advisor, European External Action Service**

---



Ms Isaksson has during her professional career worked primarily with gender equality and WPS in the domain of Security and Defence, including operations and missions. She was Gender Advisor to SACEUR and the functional manager for the integration of gender perspective within Allied Command Operations, NATO at SHAPE in Belgium 2011-2016. She served earlier as GENAD within the Directorate of Operations at the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters as well as prior positions in the Swedish Armed Forces HQ and with the Swedish Ministry of Defense.

Ms Isaksson's main work has been focusing on Gender Equality and Integration of a gender perspective – including UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and related resolutions on CRSV. Ms Isaksson also has been deployed in different international shorter and longer missions and HQs in Africa, Asia and Europe. As an institutional entrepreneur, she has been the originator and prime mover for several transformative projects such as Genderforce, which established and institutionalised structures e.g. the function of a military gender advisor and the Gender Coach Programme. Furthermore, she is the founder of the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. She is currently working within the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels as a Senior Gender Advisor in the EEAS and in this position, she has among other things been the pen-holder for the EU Strategic Approach to WPS and its Action Plan.

**Irena Petrijevc̃anin Vuksanović, State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia**



Prior current position as State Secretary in Ministry of the Interior, Ms Petrijevc̃anin Vuksanović was Member of the Parliament (2014-2020). While in Parliament, among other functions, she was a Chairperson of Parliamentary Friendship Group with the United States, Chairperson of the Education, Science and Culture Committee, and Deputy Chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee.

In 2020, Ms Petrijevc̃anin Vuksanović started to manage a prospective one-year project titled “Enhancing the role and support to women in Armed Forces and in peacekeeping missions” aims to enhance the role and position of women in the military sector. This project is funded by the U.S. Government, and is expected to provide initial analytical insight into the position of women in the armed forces and in peacekeeping missions, as well as facilitate the introduction of gender balance in the activities of the security and defence system, as well as in post-conflict protection and recovery.

**Brig Gen Mirsad Ahmić, Inspector General, Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina**



During his military career from 1992-2021 Brigadier General Ahmić performed various duties such as Staff officer, Chief of Staff and Commander of different level of Military units from battalion to brigade level, as well as the Chief of Human Resources Management Department in J1 JS AF BiH. In addition, from 2010-2013, a period of service in Brussels as the Staff Officer, in Cooperation and Regional Security Division, IMS, NATO HQ Brussels, and from 2014-2018, a period of service in operations as Deputy Commander of Operational Command for Operations of AF BiH.

Finally, in 2018 Brigadier General Mirsad Ahmić was appointed on the position as the Inspector General of Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and he is currently performing that duty.

## **Brig Gen Gordana Garašić, Head of Planning Directorate of the Croatian Armed Forces General Staff**



Brigadier General Gordana Garašić is currently serving as Head of Planning Directorate of the Croatian Armed Forces General Staff. In her professional career she had different assignments, just to mention a few: Advisor in Military Representation to the NATO/EU (Brussels), Chief of the Cabinet of CHOD, Head of Personnel Management Directorate (J1) in the General Staff of CAF, Head of the Military Office in the Cabinet for Defence and National Security in the Office of the President, and Deputy Director of RACVIAC-Centre for Security Cooperation. She served two mandates in NATO-led operation ISAF in Afghanistan, in 2010 and 2014. During her last tour she held the position of the Gender Advisor to ISAF Commander.

BG Garašić graduated from the Law University in Zagreb and holds Master of Science in National Resource Strategy (US National Defense University in Washington D.C.). She was promoted to the rank of BG in May 2015 as the first female general officer in the CAF. Garašić has been awarded the Achievement Medal by Afghan Government in recognition of her engagement in the integration of women into the Special Police in ISAF.

## **Brig Gen Sandy Best, Deputy Adjutant General, Minnesota National Guard**



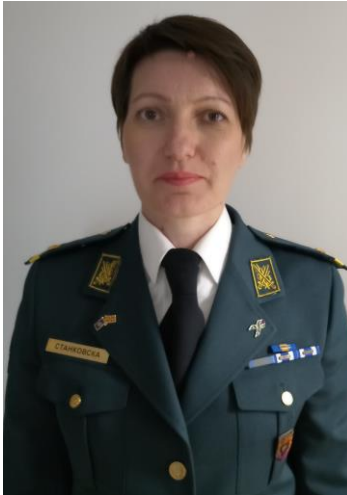
Brig Gen Sandry Best serves militarily as the Chief of Staff, Minnesota Air National Guard, and full-time as the Deputy Adjutant General for the Minnesota National Guard. She advises and assists the Adjutant General on providing guidance, leadership, support, and oversight to the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs where she builds and maintains strategic partnerships with state and federal interagency organizations. General Best is the first woman in the history of the Minnesota National Guard to be promoted to brigadier general.

She represents the Adjutant General for state and government matters as the designated Deputy Commissioner, and also directs, coordinates, and supervises the activities of the Minnesota Joint Force Headquarters Air staff and manages programs in accordance with the Adjutant General's intent and established policies.

General Best has honorably served 37 years in a broad variety of positions. Her assignment locations include Saint Paul, MN, Bagram, Afghanistan, and Washington DC. General Best served as The Interim Adjutant General during the 2020 transition in leadership. Prior to her current assignment, she served as Special Assistant to the Chief, National Guard Bureau for Diversity, where she advised and assisted leaders across the 54 states and territories in institutionalizing diversity and inclusion in order to attract, recruit, and retain a quality, inclusive, and equitable work force that reflects the communities the National Guard serves.

## **Lt. Col. Antonia Stankovska-Budimir, Budget and Finance Advisor at MSSI/MoD of the Republic of North Macedonia**

---



Lieutenant Colonel Antonia Stankovska-Budimir holds MA in Economics and she has been appointed as a Budget and Finance advisor at Military service for security and intelligence in the Ministry of Defence in the Republic of North Macedonia since 2019. Prior to this, she has worked at the Section for budget and finance at all levels in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia from 2002 to 2019.

Lt. Col. Antonia Stankovska-Budimir is active member of the Working Group for implementation of Gender Perspective in MoD and the Army, NATO Certified Gender Trainer and Member of the Body for Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation of Second NAP for implementation of UNSCR 1325-Women, peace and security. Lt.Col. Antonia Stankovska-Budimir has participated actively in the project of Gender Equality in the Military in the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Defence since 2012.

She was deployed in two missions abroad: EUFOR “ALTHEA” in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010, and NATO-led mission “RESOLUTE SUPPORT” in Afghanistan in 2015 as the first female officer from the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia at that mission. She was Head of Section for Budget and Finance in Train, Advice and Assist Command-Capital of Kabul.

## **Maj Sanja Pejović, Gender Advisor at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe – SHAPE**

---



Major Sanja Pejović (OF-3) is currently in a position of a Gender Advisor at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe - SHAPE.

Previous position was a Human Resources Advisor in the Human Resources Directorate and Gender Advisor in the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro. She has been involved in the integration of the gender perspectives at national, regional and international level since 2012.

She joined Armed Forces in 2007. Major Pejović is the first female officer in the Armed Forces of Montenegro. She holds Master’s degree in political sciences.

In addition to her duties in the Army, she was a Coordinator for gender perspective for the Armed Forces of Montenegro since 2013. Since then, she has been participating actively in the gender mainstreaming processes at national level, contributing to the integration of gender perspective in the Defence System of Montenegro as well as at regional and international level through various initiatives, activities, trainings and cooperation with UN, EU, OSCE and Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations.

## **Frano Matušić, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia**



Mr. Frano Matušić graduated at the Zagreb Academy of Music in 1987 obtaining a title of the academic musician – guitar player and guitar professor.

In his professional career he was guitar professor at the Luka Sorkočević Art School in Dubrovnik, member and founder of the Dubrovnik Guitar Trio, member and founder of the Dubrovnik Chamber Choir, prolific composer as well as Head of the Luka Sorkočević Art School in Dubrovnik, Director (Artistic Director) of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival and still is President of the Croatian Association of Music and Dance Pedagogues.

His political career encompasses, among others, positions in the Dubrovnik County Assembly, Croatian Parliament, Deputy Mayor of the City of Dubrovnik, Head of the Delegation of the Croatian Parliament to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, member and/or President of numerous Parliamentary Committees.

Related to his political career, Mr Matušić was State Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of the Republic of Croatia and currently he holds a position of State Secretary for Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. He speaks English and German.

## **Dunja Bujan, Defence Policy Director, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia**



Ms Dunja Bujan holds the position of the Defence Policy Director of the Ministry of Defence of Croatia.

Professional career of Ms Bujan in the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia started in 2005 at the Croatian Military Academy at the position of an English language teacher and language training coordinator. In 2007 she began to work at the Military Security Intelligence Agency where she held several positions until 2016 when she took over the position of the Head of Bilateral Defence Cooperation Department at the Defence Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Defence. In November 2019 she was appointed Acting Defence Policy Director of the Ministry of Defence, and on 14 April 2021 she was appointed Defence Policy Director.

Ms Bujan holds the Bachelor's Degree in English and Spanish Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb. She also holds the degree of Additional Study of Portuguese Language and Literature from the same Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Apart from her formal education, during her career in the Ministry of Defence she participated in various types of specialized training, domestic and international courses and conferences in the field of security and defence, mostly related to NATO and EU security and defence policy, strategic and defence planning, intelligence, counterterrorism, regional and international relations.