



Women in peacebuilding: the EU & others

by Michaela Šimáková

Since the 1990s, the EU's gender mainstreaming strategy has spread to its foreign policy, including its CSDP. Influenced by the UN-led agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as a reference framework, the EU has developed its own, ambitious WPS policy and a toolbox on gender mainstreaming in its crisis management policy.

It has also increasingly become a practice that an EU representative delivers a speech in the UN Security Council (UNSC) on the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on WPS. In the context of growing criticism over the real impact of the WPS resolution, its 15th anniversary became an opportunity to embrace new initiatives and boost its implementation. On the occasion, and upon the adoption of UNSCR 2242 (2015), the EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 – a new post created by HR/VP Mogherini – reaffirmed the commitment of the EU to UNSCR 1325 in its external, as well as internal policies.

UN, OSCE, NATO – and EU

In 2010 the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) adopted a specific yet comprehensive Policy on Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations, which *de facto* has no equivalent in the *acquis* of other regional actors. Since mid-2006, the UN has published monthly gender-disaggregated data pertaining to the different categories of its uniformed personnel.

However, while this simple and exhaustive overview gives a clear idea of the absolute numbers of various categories of UN personnel, a qualitative distinction – in terms of grades of positions held, for example – is still missing. The latest statistics for December 2016 show that while women account for 3.34% of military experts and troops, they constitute 9.6% of the individual and formed police units; projected onto all the 21 UN operations deployed, this accounts for 4.14% of overall police and military personnel.

These low numbers reflect the fact that increasing the number of women in missions and operations is determined first and foremost by the extent of the integration of gender perspectives into those missions (including in terms of human resources) by participating countries and regional organisations. This is all the more important as there is a proven positive correlation between the level of such integration and the efficiency and effectiveness of peace operations on the ground.

The EU, the OSCE and NATO differ in terms of policies, operationalisation and results in this domain. The driving force for change at the EU level continues to be the EEAS-chaired EU Informal Task Force on UNSCR 1325. Set up in 2009, the Task Force brings together different EU bodies, member states and other stakeholders (NATO, OSCE and civil society organisations) and meets three to four times per year, at both working and ambassadorial level.



Furthermore, work is currently underway to create a virtual European network of Gender Focal Points, connecting existing networks of gender experts from EU headquarters, Delegations and missions. Once in place, its purpose is to break silos and facilitate the exchange of ideas, good practices and lessons learned among experts and practitioners.

At policy level, a working group of WPS ‘champions’ from among EU member states has recently been set up. The Task Force is linked to the decision-making levels through the Principal Advisor, who regularly debriefs the Political and Security Committee (PSC). In order to provide greater clarity to the implementation process, the PSC has tasked the Principal Advisor to develop a roadmap to assist in prioritising and assessing how to mainstream WPS in external action more effectively – as well as how to produce more coherent internal and external messaging.

By comparison, in NATO and the OSCE consensus takes longer to build or might not be achievable at all. At a national level, the principal tool to increase the participation of women in armed forces and to integrate a gender perspective into activities of any mission or operation is the drafting and adoption of National Action Plans on the implementation of WPS resolutions (NAPs).

The OSCE has an Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, dating back to 2004 but has to cope with greater diversity – compared to the EU or NATO – among its participating states (this became apparent recently when Russia blocked efforts at gender balancing for the Monitoring Mission in eastern Ukraine). Consequently, it limits itself to facilitating national processes and knowledge sharing, e.g. through the organisation of workshops for its participating states.

For its part, NATO adopted its own Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security in 2014, subsequently updated in 2016, which includes 55 NATO partner nations. The NATO Action Plan represents an ambitious roadmap but is also a labour-intensive endeavour, currently overseen by the Office of the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for WPS.

The EU has no such specific action plan in place, although it actively promotes NAPs and is pushing the ten member states that have not adopted one yet to do so. Since 2016, a staff document called a Gender Action Plan serves as a framework for comprehensive gender equality promotion and women’s empowerment.

Boots on the ground

Differences exist, of course, between the missions and operations conducted by the UN, the OSCE, NATO and the EU – with tangible implications for their ability to implement the WPS agenda internally and externally.

The impact of EU gender policy on EU CSDP missions and operations is difficult to measure due, *inter alia*, to the comprehensive nature of the EU’s stabilisation efforts.

What can be said is that the proportion of women in EU civilian missions has gradually grown since 2013, from approximately 25.5% to almost 30% in 2016. With regard to military personnel, it is difficult to provide exact data on the participation due to the fact that the turnover is significant and data is limited. But the number of female personnel at the end of 2016 in the ongoing EU military operations ranged between 9 and 69 per deployment (less than 7% on average).

Yet, despite calls for gender-sensitive force generation strategies (e.g. creation of national and European pools of deployable senior female personnel and experts), human resources policies and the provision of personnel remain the prerogative of the member states.

However, a case of good practice is the operationalisation of the new structures of Gender Focal Points in EULEX Kosovo, while the EUMM in Georgia serves as an example of transparency, accountability and advanced implementation of good practices. These positive lessons learnt could be shared beyond annual meetings, once the planned European Network of gender focal points is established.

In January 2017, the EUMM’s Special Annual Report on Gender Mainstreaming (2016) was made public for the first time – a document which has no equivalent in NATO or the OSCE. While EUMM is among the leading EU missions in terms of gender balance, it is still conditioned by the way in which gender mainstreaming is understood in relation to the mandate and by relatively low participation of women, particularly at senior management level. These are challenges which need to be specifically targeted through systematic and tailor-made capacity-building efforts.

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