

Portugal

Portuguese Platform for Women’s Rights, EOS – Association for Research, Cooperation and Development, and Alliance for Parity Democracy (May 2016)

Overview

Portugal’s first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was launched in 2009 and covers the period 2009-2013.¹ The second NAP, which was launched in 2014, covers the period 2014-2018.² Both NAPs focus on strengthening women’s participation and representation in all efforts to promote peace and security by means of mainstreaming gender equality in the sectors of diplomacy, security, the military, justice, and development co-operation.

Both NAPs keep the same strategic aims and there are few differences between the two (see Table 1 below). Nevertheless, it must be stressed that different ways of approaching the subject may have an important impact on the NAP’s outcomes. For instance, one of the aims set out in the first NAP was to increase the participation of women at all levels of decision-making whereas the equivalent aim in the current NAP is to encourage the participation of women in the processes of promoting and maintaining peace and security. However, unlike its predecessor, the second NAP does not mention the participation of women in decision-making positions.

Table 1 – Comparison of the strategic aims of Portugal’s first and second NAPs

First NAP (2009-2013)	Second NAP (2014-2018)
(1) To increase the participation of women and integrate gender equality into every phase of peacebuilding, including all levels of decision-making	(1) Encouraging the participation of women in the processes of promotion and maintenance of peace and security
(2) To ensure the training on gender equality, gender-related violence and other relevant aspects of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 of personnel involved in peacebuilding processes	(2) Ensuring training for the people involved in processes for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security
(3) To promote and protect the respect for the human rights of women and girls in areas of conflict and post-conflict, regarding the need for (a) the prevention and elimination of gender-related violence against them, and (b) the promotion of the empowerment of women	(3) Promoting the goals of UNSCR 1325 in the Portugal’s external actions
(4) To deepen and diffuse awareness of women, peace and security, including training and awareness-raising of decision-making entities and public opinion	(4) Deepening and disseminating knowledge about the ‘women, peace and security’ (WPS) agenda, and raising awareness among decision-making stakeholders and the community
(5) To promote the participation of civil society in the implementation of UNSCR 1325	(5) Promoting the participation of the civil society in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325

¹ See: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/6.pdf> (in Portuguese).

² See: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/II-National-Action-Plan-for-the-implementation-of-UNSCR-1325-2014-2018.pdf>

The current NAP takes a comprehensive approach in which actions are focused on conflict-affected and post-conflict countries but also on peaceful countries (i.e. Portugal). At international and national level, it emphasises:

'the need to promote gender equality dimension mainstreaming in the prevention, management and resolution of armed conflicts and in all stages of the peacebuilding processes, understood here in their broadest and structural senses, to be enforced not only in countries affected by armed conflict and in post-conflict reconstruction, but also in peaceful countries. (...) aim to ensure the integration of the gender dimension in diplomatic, military, security, justice and development activities, both at the national and international level.'

The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) is responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the current NAP. A working group comprising representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFA), national defence, internal affairs and justice assists the CIG. This working group meets twice a year in a restricted configuration and twice a year in an extended configuration in which civil society organisations (the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights is also included in the extended configuration of the working group). From the first NAP to the second NAP no changes have been made regarding the Ministries involved in the NAP or the configuration of the CIG.

By the end of January each year, all of the above-mentioned ministries are required to present their own plans for implementing the NAP. The CIG produces an annual assessment of the NAP implementation which it publishes on its website.³ The NAP will also be subject to an independent external evaluation at the end of the implementation period. A final evaluation of the first NAP was undertaken by the research centre of a Portuguese University and published in 2014.⁴

The NAP does not explicitly address men or masculinities nor does it include any priority countries (but the Portuguese cooperation policies are more focused towards the Portuguese Speaking African Countries). The internal component of the current NAP is quite similar to the internal component of the first NAP and is primarily focused on: (1) public campaigns aimed at strengthening women's participation in the Portuguese military and security forces; (2) training the staff in the fields of justice, security and gender equality, (3) combating violence against women (VAW), including sexual violence, gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking in human beings; (4) national debates on UNSCR 1325 and (5) awareness raising programmes on health and human rights issues, including on sexual violence and GBV.

It also highlights the importance of Portugal's participation in the EU Task Force for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Portugal is currently represented on the Task Force by the MFA but the actual impact of its participation is difficult to assess by CSOs.

The design

The design of the current NAP was based on both the recommendations, which resulted from the external evaluation of the first NAP, and on the outcomes of an internal assessment of the Plan. The external evaluation of the first NAP found that significant effort was made in relation to raising awareness and providing training for military personnel and other actors on gender equality and VAW. However, it also highlighted the lack of coherence between the Plan's strategic aims, specific objectives and activities, and the absence of a specific budget. In addition, it included specific references to the persistence of gender stereotypes amongst male military personnel and its impact on the marginalisation of this topic in the armed forces.

It must be stressed the current NAP shares a number of the weaknesses which were identified in the external evaluation of its predecessor, including the lack of a dedicated budget.

³ See: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/planos-nacionais-areas/rcsnu-1325/>

⁴ See: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Relatorio-de-Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o-PNA1325.pdf> (in Portuguese)

CSOs were somehow involved in the design of the current NAP through an online public consultation. A draft document was posted on the CIG's website for a 10-day period in July 2014⁵ but no working group was created to this purpose. Therefore the current NAP coordinating body considers that CSOs' contributions were duly taken into consideration. However, the fact that there was only approximately one month between the end of the consultation period and the Council of Ministers's approval of the NAP has caused some CSO representatives to doubt this. The NAP was publicly presented in December 2014 at a conference, which was notable for having only government and armed forces representatives as speakers.

The NAP refers to a number of UNSCRs (i.e. 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122). However, it does not include any references to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or to the Beijing Platform for Action despite their relevance to the national context and to Portugal's development co-operation policies.

The implementation and monitoring

Implementation and monitoring of the NAP is undertaken by the CIG with support from the Inter-ministerial Working Group referred to in the first section. The Ministry of National Defence implements its own Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2014-2018) in parallel with certain branches of the armed forces which have their own annual action plans. This is somewhat confusing and could result in ministries having several plans to implement UNSCR 1325 with weak integration into the overall ministerial annual working plan (i.e. not mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 into the regular working plan but designing and implementing isolated plans). This could have a negative impact on the implementation of the NAP.

Within the framework of the current NAP, as in the first NAP, the Portuguese Government co-operates with Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor Leste on areas such as national strategies on security and development, combating and investigating organised crime, elimination of gender violence, and education and training. As a consequence several ministries are involved and therefore policy coherence must be reinforced.

Regarding monitoring, the CIG is responsible for preparing annual monitoring reports to which CSOs are invited to contribute reporting on their own initiatives which are relevant to the implementation of the current NAP. The first monitoring report, which was published in March 2016, provides very detailed information about the number of training actions and exchanges of good practices (particularly with the Portuguese-speaking African Countries) but there is insufficient evidence of their correlation with UNSCR 1325.⁶ The monitoring report includes a summary of the activities carried out by the main stakeholders (i.e. the armed forces, the police and the CIG), a summary of activities carried out by CSOs' (e.g. information about CSO-led development co-operation projects). It ends with a brief assessment of the achievements made but it does not include any critical reflection or recommendations for further improvements. The monitoring report is then presented to the Secretary of State of Citizenship and Equality.

The NAP was designed and is implemented on the basis of a very broad approach to UNSCR 1325. For example, one of its main activities is attracting young women and men to the armed force careers. According to the 2015 monitoring report, 862 half-day campaign events were organised in schools in order to inform young people about careers in the armed forces. In addition, several media campaigns about careers in the armed forces were also implemented. Although this shows commitment to implement the current NAP, the impact which the

⁵ See <https://www.cig.gov.pt/2014/07/consulta-publica-ii-pna-1325/>.

⁶ See: <https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Relatorio-Intercalar-de-Execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-do-current-PNAI-1325-2015.pdf> (in Portuguese)

campaigns had in terms of increasing the number of women in the military overall and in international peace and post-conflict missions specifically remains unclear.⁷

Although the current NAP states that ‘the execution of the measures contained in the current NAP 1325 must be coordinated with other sectoral policies that may be relevant’, the monitoring report⁸ presents several actions resulting from implementation of other strategies and actions plans (i.e. the fifth National Plan to Prevent and Combat Domestic and Gender-based Violence (2014-2017) and the National Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2014-2017)). This situation can be misleading when looking into the effectiveness of the different plans.

The review

As stated in the previous sections, the first NAP was subject to both internal and external evaluations. The current NAP is in its second year of implementation. This concern is frequently raised in public debates. NAPs require a certain degree of flexibility so that situations and conditions, which are not foreseen or anticipated during the drafting period, can still be identified and addressed (such as the current refugee crises). Beyond the annual monitoring reports, which are basically activity reports without any review aims, no other mechanism is foreseen for the revision of the current NAP during its implementation period. CSOs can play a useful role in such a revision process if it is based upon an impact assessment of the previous NAP. Although CSOs are referred to as ‘stakeholders’ in the current NAP, there is no evidence that CSOs critical reflection is included into the monitoring exercise. The current NAP’s monitoring report was not shared with CSOs.

Conclusions

The current NAP continues to be very government-centred. CSOs, although included in the extended configuration of the Inter-ministerial Working Group, are still ‘distant’ partners, participating in one or two meetings per year. As such, they are unable to exert much influence on NAP implementation or monitoring outcomes. The inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of specific measures (e.g. giving training, raising awareness among military personnel, being consulted as experts, etc.) could improve the implementation of the NAP.

Women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions, particularly within Portugal’s armed forces. Gender experts, specifically those whom are working for CSOs and who work from a feminist, women’s human rights and gender equality perspective, should be actively and continuously involved in the NAP processes (and funding should be available to facilitate their participation).

There is also a strong need to review the NAP in order to take into account the refugee crisis which Europe is currently facing. Moreover, relevant measures should be taken to tackle the GBV and discrimination which refugee women are experiencing and to prevent and combat violence against women and girls in their escape from conflict-affected areas, in refugee camps, in their access to asylum in Europe and in their daily lives (e.g. intimate partner violence).

CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence are key frameworks to be implemented alongside UNSCR 1325. A number of CSOs has noted that a great deal has been achieved regarding the implementation of the NAP and that the Portuguese government is making visible efforts to fulfil Portugal’s international commitments. However, policy coherence must be at the core of national, European and international actions to empower women and girls, to push for respect for

⁷ In 2015, of the 560 members of the Portuguese Air Force who participated in international missions, only 7% of them were women.

⁸ Data from 2015; published on March 2016 (reference on note number 4).

women's human rights and to prevent and combat violence against women and girls. A zero tolerance policy must be applied towards all those that do not comply with all of the above-mentioned frameworks.

Finally, key factors to improve Portugal's implementation of UNSCR 1325 are: (1) to deepen and develop civil dialogue and CSOs' role; (2) to allocate a dedicated budget, including for consulting CSOs and for CSO-led actions; (3) to include a certain degree of flexibility to the NAP and (4) to ensure coherence of the policies.