

Civil Society Dialogue Network Background Paper

EU Support to Women Mediators: Moving Beyond Stereotypes

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Civil Society Dialogue Network

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*The EU will also foster inclusive governance at all levels through mediation and facilitation. At the same time, we will develop more creative approaches to diplomacy. This also means promoting the role of women in peace efforts – from implementing the UNSC Resolution on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU’s internal gender balance.*¹ European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), 2016. p.31

The European Union is committed to promoting the role of women in peace efforts. It has made strong commitments to supporting women mediators, from the grassroots and community level to the highest diplomatic circles, through its funding instruments and, most recently, through the Council Conclusions on Women Peace and Security (WPS), and the accompanying EU Strategic Approach to WPS, in December 2018.

Women’s groups have long campaigned for women’s inclusion in peacemaking. The adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions, and the EU commitments to implement these through the Comprehensive Approach to UNSCR 1325 (2008) and the EU Strategic Approach to WPS (2018), are one aspect of this. While some groups claim women’s inclusion in peace processes as a right, many also point to the greater sustainability of peace deals arrived at through inclusive processes: inclusion is not only an expression of women’s right to participation, it is also more effective peacemaking.

While we can point to progress on the policy level, implementation of the UNSCRs on WPS, including by the EU, has been challenging.² Myths surrounding the challenges of including women in peacemaking may have been debunked, but many persist.³ It is not enough to simply have women involved in peacemaking; there is a positive correlation between the strength of women’s influence and the likelihood of agreements being reached.⁴

In spring 2019, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is organising an expert meeting of women mediators from different types of processes from various geopolitical situations through the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN). The mediators will gather catalytic analysis and recommendations on *how to strengthen EU mediation by working more effectively with women mediators*.

The intention of the meeting is to suggest ways in which the EU can support women mediators systemically and sustainably rather than to build the capacities of a limited number of individuals or to set up a network of women mediators, which would risk duplicating the work of numerous existing networks. This emphasis on systemic and sustainable support leads us to consider two aspects of women’s engagement in peacemaking: the process-related questions – how to engage more women mediators, the focus of this paper – and, separately, the content-related questions – how to include the views and needs of women outside the room in mediation processes.⁵

This background paper intends to provide a jumping-off point for the meeting and not to pre-empt its reflections or recommendations. It draws on academic and practitioner literature, and limited interviews with EU officials and civil society experts, to identify trends related to:

1. The practical challenges that women mediators face, and
2. Potential EU capabilities available to support (women in) mediation.

A. Challenges facing women mediators

There is little analysis of EU mediation in general, and even less of women's roles in EU mediation.⁶ This section lays out common challenges women mediators face in participating in peace processes, which we can assume are also relevant for peace processes that the EU is engaged in, or that the EU supports. These challenges have emerged and shifted as conflicts are increasingly complex and require sophisticated analysis and interventions.

1. **Women mediators are routinely excluded from high-level peace processes**, not because they are not capable – the evidence suggests otherwise – but often because of selection processes.⁷ This is directly relevant to the EU as Member States propose candidates for key high-level diplomacy positions and, according to officials, regularly fail to present women candidates.⁸

Networks of women mediators (NWM) have created platforms to profile women mediators, and for women mediators to share experience, generate lessons learnt and best practices, and train other mediators.⁹ However, the challenge remains that women from diverse backgrounds are still not systemically included in mediation teams, and there may be a risk that NWM run in parallel to mediation processes, just as women's associations tend to be sidelined or invited in a tokenistic manner in broader consultations during peace processes.

2. **Resistance to women mediators**, and women's participation more generally, by parties and mandating organisations cannot be overlooked. This may be due to the under-recognition of women's roles in conflict, including in combat, which mirrors their unequal responsibility and agency in peacebuilding and mediation processes.¹⁰ This resistance routinely takes the form of not wanting to 'overload' a process or sacrifice 'effectiveness for the sake of inclusion'. The UN's Global Report counters these claims by suggesting that organisations re-examine what effectiveness means for mediation processes, and in particular by considering the sustainability of agreements.¹¹

Resistance may also take the form of dismissing the lack of women mediators as a general problem common to the whole international community, not particular to the EU.¹² Others may believe there should be more women mediators¹³ but are not necessarily positioned to bring about change or willing to advocate internally for change. Even when women are appointed to a mediation team, they may face hostility from other members of the team.

3. **Lack of access to resources.** Women are likely to find it more difficult to access the necessary funding, as well as the political/diplomatic and technical support necessary to participate in processes. About 2% of global peacebuilding support funding is earmarked for gender equality and women participation.¹⁴
4. **Women-led community-level mediation is not valued as much as high-level, diplomatic mediation.** Women mediators at the community level tend to be characterised as 'peacebuilders' rather than mediators, with the suggestion that those 'soft skills' are less relevant, and those processes less important than those that happen at the (male-dominated) Track I – whereas in fact these distinctions may be overplayed and should be re-considered.¹⁵

5. **Lack of diversity in mediation, mediation teams and mediation support.** Conflict and power dynamics involving class, religious affiliation, race, generation and ethnicity present in wider society tend to be reflected in mediation support and peacemaking. A simplified narrative around support to women mediators can entrench conflict dynamics and dismiss the wealth of perspectives which could greatly benefit the outcomes of peace processes.¹⁶
6. **Assumptions around skill-sets for different types of mediation.** There may be many stereotypical views about what, or who, should participate, and how, in different kinds of mediation. The insistence on ‘capacity building’ for women mediators, based on a series of assumptions about necessary skills and appropriate behaviour, perpetuates the erroneous view that women mediators lack skills and justifies excluding women from processes.¹⁷
7. **Practical and logistical challenges in position** – women may face a host of additional challenges to taking up mediation positions, including domestic/family responsibilities, limits to their ability to travel, additional or different security concerns from other team members. Stereotypical notions about what men/women may/not address or who may speak may disadvantage women.¹⁸

Other actors, including other mediators, may assume that a woman mediator is there to represent women, or women’s interests, or that her participation is limited to so-called ‘women’s issues’. This may be particularly problematic where the tasks given to different members of a mediation team may not be clearly divided from the outset, or the mandate of the group as a whole lacks clarity.¹⁹

B. Potential EU capabilities in support of women mediators²⁰

EU support to mediation goes beyond simply funding processes. Sometimes, and usually in cooperation with other international actors, the EU is directly involved in Track I processes. It may also support Track II and III processes financially, politically and technically. EU mediation can therefore be understood as ‘multi-track’, engaging in formal, diplomatic negotiations (Track 1) through to supporting grassroots mediation efforts (Track 3), and addressing multiple layers of conflict in a given situation. EU mediation is also shaped by the multilateral environment, meaning it is bound by several international standards and norms, including the UNSCRs on WPS, as well as other international actors who may be active in (or against) a given process.²¹

This section reviews the EU’s *capabilities* for mediation in order to identify (potential) resources that the EU could use to support women in mediation. The importance of each of these capabilities varies somewhat between the Tracks – funding is more important for EU support to Track III for example than the availability of EU diplomat-level mediators – but there are common components that are necessary for the EU to be able to engage in mediation. *Funding* is an important capability, but it is not the only one. The EU needs to be able to *engage* by having the right policies, instruments and tools in place, personnel to mediate or support mediation efforts, and technical expertise to guide its interventions. It also needs to be able to *coordinate and cooperate* between its own instruments and with other international actors, including the parties to the conflict.

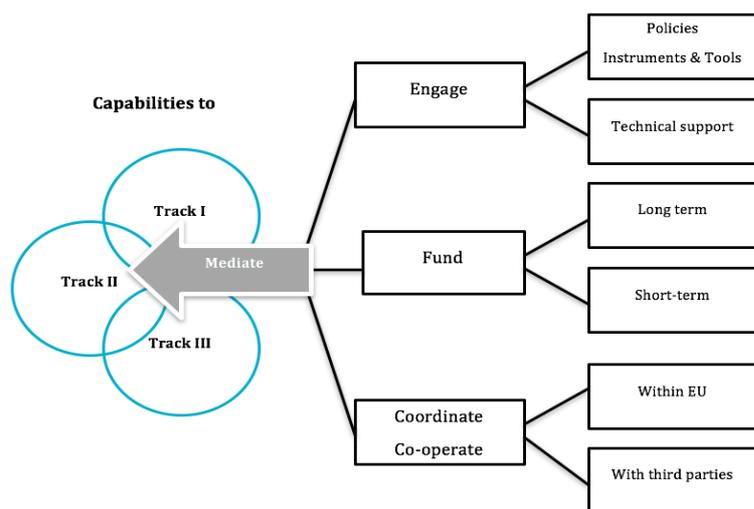


Figure 1: The different capabilities the EU needs to mediate. Adapted from Davis (2018).

1. Policies

As noted above, the EU Global Strategy commits the EU to ‘promoting the role of women in peace efforts – from implementing the UNSC Resolution on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU’s internal gender balance.’²²

The Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in December 2018, state that ‘the WPS Agenda is universally applicable and must therefore be implemented internally within the European Union and its Member States, as well as in the external action... This will be achieved by integrating a gender perspective and women’s participation in all contexts, from conflict analysis to subsequent actions, including dialogue facilitation, mediation, peace negotiations and other conflict prevention and resolution tools.’²³

The Conclusions are clear: the EU is to ensure women’s participation both through its own structures and externally in all forms of peace mediation. The accompanying EU Strategic Approach to WPS explains that this requires ‘systematically incorporating gender considerations into peace and security-related matters’ and ‘the importance of women’s meaningful and equitable participation in all forms of conflict prevention, not just those directly related to women or gender-related matters. This includes conflict prevention, mediation ...’²⁴ The Strategy also notes that ‘women leaders and women’s groups are often effective in peacemaking at community levels and therefore should be strongly linked to the high-level mediation process... The EU should therefore support the meaningful participation of inclusive civil society and women’s associations in peace processes.’²⁵

The Strategy also commits the EU to ‘promote the implementation of international standards of gender-responsive mediation support. Continue to consider peace processes as opportunities to promote women’s empowerment, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, the meaningful and equitable participation of women and respect for women’s rights in negotiations and the resulting peace agreements.’²⁶ It also states the need to ‘Promote training for all EU mediation actors, including those supported financially or technically by the EU, on how to conduct and use gender analysis and integrate a gender perspective into mediation support.’²⁷

There is, therefore, a policy framework in place for the EU to support more women mediators, both from within its own architecture and from third parties. We might, however, bear in mind that the *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities* of

2009 stated that ‘The EU will seek to identify female mediators, promote the representation of women and the availability of gender expertise from an early stage of mediation processes.’²⁸ In 2019, it is yet to be demonstrated how the EU has systematically sought out female mediators, suggesting that this policy commitment has yet to be implemented. At the time of writing (February 2019), the EEAS is preparing an Action Plan to accompany the EU Strategic Approach to WPS, and this may provide the opportunity for the EU to implement its policy commitments in this regard.

2. Instruments and tools

The EU has a whole range of tools that have been directly engaged in different types of mediation that engage different actors, whether they are regional, national, or ‘grassroots’ or other informal mechanisms. The main ones are summarised in table 1:

Table 1: EU mediation tools by track²⁹

	Tracks	Direct
Regional/international conflict and/or stakeholders	Track I	High Representative/ Vice President (HRVP) Commissioner EU Special Representative (EUSR)
	Track II	EUSR Geographic desks Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)
	Track III	Not applicable
National stakeholders (including security system)	Track I	HRVP Commissioner EUSR Heads of Delegation/ Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission
	Track II	EUSR Heads of Delegation / CSDP mission Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)
	Track III	Not applicable
‘Grassroots’ and other informal (non-state) mechanisms	Track I	Not applicable
	Track II	EUSR Heads of Delegation CSDP mission
	Track III	Not applicable

The EEAS noted the lack of EU women mediators was noted in its ‘Factsheet on Women’s Participation and Gender’ in 2012.³⁰ According to the EU’s own reporting, the percentage of women senior managers remained constant at 14% between 2013 and 2015, while the percentage of women Heads of Delegation fell from 23% to 20%.³¹ While both HRVPs have been women, to date only four women have been appointed EUSRs, Special Envoys or

similar, of 54 such posts since 1996, and two of these are currently in post.³²

The HRVP has chosen to meet and give visibility to women peacebuilders and mediators on several occasions, e.g. at the EU-hosted high-level dialogue between Syrian and Yemeni Women representatives in December 2018.³³ However, in contrast to the creation of the post of Principal Advisor on Gender, the institutions' increasing in-house gender expertise and the individual actions of committed officials at various levels, the EU's policy commitments to increasing women's participation in mediation through its own peace and security architecture do not yet appear to have been systemised.

It is important to note that although these tools constitute mediation capability as seen from the outside, EUSRs, for example, are not consistently considered mediators or part of the EU's mediation capacity by some insiders, indicating a lack of an internal common vision around EU mediation. The EU also has a considerable reserve of experienced and senior diplomats, former foreign ministers, and other potential high-level mediators from its Member States, but has arguably not used this resource to anywhere near its full potential. There is no equivalent to the UN Standby Team of senior officials to be sent by the HRVP at short notice according to need.

3. Technical support

The Mediation Support Team (MST) in the EEAS can provide technical support to EU actors engaged in mediation, as well as to third parties. It includes two senior advisers to EEAS senior management and a focal point on women's participation in peace processes.³⁴ The position of the MST within the EU's mediation structures remains somewhat fluid, and is regularly repositioned with changes to the EEAS organigramme. The MST and previous mediation support structures as they have developed since the Concept was adopted, have not prioritised gender inclusivity.³⁵

The EU can also rely on a certain amount of outsourced technical support from framework contracts and projects, such as the European Resource for Mediation Support (ERMES), although it is unclear to what extent this project supports women mediators.

4. Funding

The EU has long-term funding to support peace processes, notably through the European Development Fund (EDF), and thematic funds, usually for shorter-term support. The Instrument contributing to Security and Peace (IcSP) and, less often, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) are particularly important sources. The European Parliament's Comprehensive Democracy Support Approach (CDSA) supports parliamentary mediation and dialogue.³⁶ Examples of funding for supporting women in mediation are included in Annex 1. The challenge for identifying EU funding for supporting women in mediation is the same as for other aspects of the WPS agenda – as gender equality has been 'mainstreamed' it makes gender-specific activities hard to identify.³⁷

5. Coordination and Cooperation

Officials note a disconnect between the political ambitions of the EU regarding mediation, as reflected in the EU Global Strategy, for example, and the resources dedicated to it.³⁸ We have already seen that there is no internal agreement as to who is, and who is not, an EU mediator.

The Mediation Support Team could, in principle, coordinate the different EU actors to ensure the best possible combination is in place in a particular context. In practice, however, it does not have a truly coordinating role in that it needs to sell its services internally, and there is no obligation on other parts of the EEAS or the EC to engage with it. That is not to suggest that coordination does not happen: anecdotally there are numerous examples where individuals, including EUSRs, have sought to coordinate with MST, and that in several geographic examples, different services, including CSDP missions, have worked closely together on developing joint analysis and comprehensive approaches to particular conflicts.

The MST manages around 40 mediation projects worldwide, which, apart from a small number of exceptions, are in support of other mediation actors, such as the UN, regional actors and NGOs, and focus on capacity building for Track III and some Track II processes. Some specifically target women's groups and training women mediators.

Even if there may be fewer senior diplomats engaged in mediation than are necessary, the fact that the EU is active in Tracks II and III, usually in supporting other actors, means that it can, in principle, contribute to coordinating peacemaking between the tracks and to providing resources in one Track that might complement needs identified in another.³⁹

C. Outstanding questions

The objective of this paper is not to draw conclusions but to help draw out questions to inform the CSDN meeting to be held in March 2019. Questions arising from this paper, for further discussion, include:

1. The challenges to women's participation in mediation are well-documented. What concrete actions can the EU, and others, undertake to mitigate them?
2. What examples can mediators give of ways in which these challenges have been overcome in different settings?
3. How do women mediators from across the world perceive the EU as a mediation actor? How do they perceive the EU's role in supporting women, or not, in mediation worldwide?
4. The EU has a wide array of mediation resources. What recommendations do mediators external to the EU have for making the best use of these resources in ways that support greater participation of women in mediation?
5. Are there challenges to women's participation in mediation that are specific to the EU? How can they be overcome?
6. Is the EU's mediation policy framework fit for purpose? What modifications, if any, should be made? Do participants have specific recommendations for the draft EU Action Plan on WPS?
7. How can the EU engage more women systematically and sustainably in mediation?

Annex 1: Examples of EU funding to supporting women in mediation

(Projects identified through the Financial Transparency System)

Project	Amount (€)	Timeframe	Implementing Partner / Beneficiary	Action Location
Women Weaving Networks to End Violence	300,000	2014-2017	SOS Corpo	Brazil
Femmes et jeunes pour la paix	320,000	2018-2021	CCS Italia	Tunisia
Women Building Peace: Promoting the Role of Afghan Women in Peace and Security Processes in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (CPAU)	590,807	2016-2018	Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU)	Afghanistan
Cooperation and Women in the Teresopolis Garden: Promoting Peace and the Role of Women	286,380	2017-2016	Fondazione AVSI	Brazil
Empowering Women for Peace: Towards Implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820	485,000	2015-2018	CCS Italia	Nepal

EIDHR

Project	Amount (€)	Timeframe	Implementing Partner / Beneficiary	Action Location
Across Generation and Gender Borders: Communities Combatting Gender-Based Violence in Kyrgyzstan	657,397	2017	Helpage International; Change Agents/Agents of Change; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Kyrgyzstan

Endnotes

¹ European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), 2016. p.31

² On mainstreaming the WPS agenda more generally, see: C. O'Rourke (2014). Walk[ing] the Halls of Power - Understanding Women's Participation in International Peace and Security. *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, 15, 128-154; S. Kouvo (2014). *Making Just Rights? Mainstreaming Women's Human Rights and a Gender Perspective*. Uppsala: Iustus Forlag; H. Charlesworth (2005). Not Waving but Drowning: Gender Mainstreaming and Human Rights in the United Nations. *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 18, 1-18. On the EU: L. Davis (2018) *Kissing the frog: Gender equality in EU conflict prevention and other fairy tales* EU-CIVCAP Preventing and Responding to Conflict: Developing EU CIVILIAN CAPabilities for a sustainable peace Available at https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/eu-civcap_deliverable_3-4_web.pdf

³ A. Nderitu and J. O'Neill (2013) '7 Myths Standing in the way of women's inclusion' Women Waging Peace. Available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Seven-Myths.pdf>

⁴ T. Paffenholz, N. Ross, S. Dixon, A-L. Schluchter, and J. True (2016). 'Making Women Count – Not just counting women. Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations' Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies) and UN Women. Available at <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IPTI-UN-Women-Report-Making-Women-Count-60-Pages.pdf>

⁵ J. Palmiano Federer (2016) 'Essential on Gender: The Role of Norms in International Peace Mediation' Swisspeace/NOREF .Available at https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Publications/Essentials/1_2016_online.pdf

⁶ On EU mediation, see the Special Issue of *International Mediation Vol 23 (2018)* 'The European Union as International Mediator.' Research into women and EU mediation is underway as part of the GLOBUS project <https://www.globus.uio.no/events/workshops/wp5-gender-and-security.html>

⁷ United Nations (UN) (2016) *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* available at [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf) p. 45; see also C. Turner (2017) *Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and Global*, ETHZürich Centre for Security Studies available at <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/322d4421-e57b-43c8-a0e0-d915f23c7740/pdf> ; interview, civil society expert 18 February 2019.

⁸ Interview, EU official 4 February 2019.

⁹ I. Limo (2018) *What do Networks of Women Mediators Mean for Mediation Support in Africa?* Accord. Available at <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/what-do-networks-of-women-mediators-mean-for-mediation-support-in-africa/>

¹⁰ S. Cook (2017) *Women in mediation: promoting participation*, Wilton Park Conference report, December 2017 available at <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/event/wp1570/>

¹¹ UN (2016) *ibid*

¹² Interview, EU official A, 29 January 2019

¹³ Interview EU official B, 31 January 2019; interview EU official C 4 February 2019

¹⁴ S. Cook *ibid* (2017)

¹⁵ C. Turner *ibid* (2017)

¹⁶ S. Cook *ibid* (2017) p. 5

¹⁷ UN (2016) *ibid* p.56

¹⁸ R. Gasser and J. Palmiano Federer (2017) *Readout: a masterclass with Prof. Miriam Coronel Ferrer*, swisspeace. Available at

https://www.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Activities/Events/Readout_Masterclass_Prof._Ferrer_Nov_2017.pdf

¹⁹ Interview, civil society expert 18 February 2019

²⁰ This section draws on the framework developed in L. Davis (2018) 'The EU as a multi-mediator: the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo' *International Mediation* 23 pp.177-198

²¹ L. Davis (2018) *ibid*

²² European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), 2016. p.31

²³ Council of the European Union (2018) *Women, Peace and Security – Council Conclusions (10 December 2018)* 15068/18 p.4 §6

²⁴ Council of the EU *ibid.* (2018) p.15 §8

²⁵ Council of the EU *ibid.* (2018) p.32 §33

²⁶ Council of the EU *ibid* (2018) p.48

²⁷ Council of the EU *ibid* (2018) p.52

²⁸ Council of the EU (2009) *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities 15779/09* p.12

²⁹ Adapted from L. Davis (2014) *EU Foreign Policy, Transitional Justice and Mediation: Principle, Policy, Practice* p.190

³⁰ EEAS (2012) *Factsheet : EEAS Mediation Support Project - - Knowledge Product Women's Participation and Gender* available at http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/features/features-working-women/working-with-women/docs/13-eeas-mediation-support-factsheet-women-participation-and-gender_en.pdf

³¹ Council of the EU. (2017). *Third Report on the EU Indicators for the Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security* p.13

³² Various sources on www.europa.eu, and not including the EUSR for Human Rights.

³³ *EU hosts a two-day High-Level dialogue between Syrian and Yemeni Women representatives*, 5 December 2018, available at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54900/eu-hosts-two-day-high-level-dialogue-between-syrian-and-yemeni-women-representatives_en

³⁴ P. Urrutia, M. Villellas and A. Villellas (2016) *The Role of the EU and Other Third Parties in Promoting the Gender, Peace and Security Agenda in Mediation and Dialogue Processes* WOSCAP Project, p. 10. Available at

<https://woscap.eu/documents/131298403/131299900/WOSCAP%2bD4.9%2bBest%2bPractices%2bReport%2b-%2bGender%2b-%2bFinal.pdf/WOSCAP%20D4.9%20Best%20Practices%20Report%20-%20Gender%20-%20Final/index.pdf>

³⁵ T. Hastrup (2018) 'Creating Cinderella? The Unintended Consequences of the Women Peace and Security Agenda for EU's Mediation Architecture' *International Negotiation* 23 (2018) 218–237, p. 231

³⁶ Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/globaldemocracysupport/en/mediation-&-dialogue.html>

³⁷ Council of the EU *ibid* (2017) p. 22

³⁸ Interview with EU official B 31 January 2019; Interview with EU official C, 4 February 2019

³⁹ Interview with EU official C, 4 February 2019