



Civil Society Dialogue Network

**Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Security in  
Europe**

June 2023

# Civil Society Dialogue Network

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## Meeting Report

### Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Security in Europe

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#### Civil Society Dialogue Network

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## Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Security in Europe

### 1. Introduction

The objective of this meeting report is to reflect on the discussions at the EPLO Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Conference with Academics on 'Feminist perspectives on Peace and Security in Europe', held in June 2023. The report primarily presents how participants in the conference discussed different pathways to envisioning feminist perspectives on peace and security in Europe, or - as a discussant described it - how a gender lens can be integrated 'into the DNA of peacebuilding'. For this purpose, the report 1) provides a short overview of the state of play regarding existing inclusion of gender dimensions in EU foreign policies, 2) reflects on main challenges to and opportunities for opening up pathways for feminist approaches to peace and security, and 3) presents key recommendations for the implementation of feminist perspectives in EU external action. All recommendations in the report are based on the discussions held in both plenary and working groups.<sup>1</sup> This meeting report does not include everything brought up during the conference but rather offers a reflection on main themes and overarching *motifs* that ran through the discussions.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. State of Play

There has been an EU-wide increase in foreign policies promoting gender balance, women's leadership and the use of gender analyses internally and externally, with the EU's [Gender Action Plan III](#) and the [commitment to the implementation of the WPS agenda](#) being the most prominent. Next to this, the EU has also adopted several [policies against Sexual and Gender Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), the [Diversity and Inclusion Agenda in the EEAS 2023-2025](#) (for both internal and external use) launched in March 2023, and internal gender-responsive leadership policies such as those recently implemented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) in a pilot project. The EEAS has established the Position of [Ambassador for Gender and Diversity](#) and engaged gender advisors in all Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, while also adopting the principle of gender mainstreaming.

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<sup>1</sup> The meeting took place under the Chatham House Rule.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of feminism in theory and practice differed among individual conference participants. The discussions showed that while some interlocutors deemed some EU policy feminist in part or in its original attempts, others argued that EU policy cannot be understood as feminist at all.

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Discussants felt that these policy developments reflect rhetorical changes in existing EU Foreign Policy (FP) that increasingly articulates basic feminist principles and references gender mainstreaming. However, the EU also precludes important feminist principles and values such as empathetic reflexivity, solidarity, accountability, active commitment to peace, and the breaking down of power hierarchies in its approach to FP. If they are mentioned at all, feminist values are often included under the broad term 'gender equality'. The EU still strongly favours security and defence over peace. Much foreign policy addresses the problems in military, defence and political decision-making only through increasing the representation of women, which is not sufficient. The idea behind bringing feminist principles into policy such as the WPS agenda had been not only to increase women's visibility in war and to make war safer for women, but to abolish war in its entirety. Linking feminism to peace and security in the context of contemporary EU practice may therefore be unrealistic: The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is not rooted in feminist principles, and considering the context of the newly increased European Peace Facility (EPF) fund and the current geopolitical situation in Europe, the EU is not on a path to live up to its own expectations as a peace organisation. The [Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#) refers to gender equality only in one short paragraph. While this creates an important incentive to include gender equality more fully into the EU's security and defence policy – particularly through the relevant implementation plans – increasing militarisation in and by the EU risks overriding feminist principles. The EU's lack of dedication is also reflected in the dearth of resources allocated for full-scale implementation and advancement of gender equality in FP, which ultimately thwarts even well-designed feminist approaches.

Discussants stressed the need for a cultural shift to break the vicious cycle that exists between policy ambitions on paper, lack of resources, and significant shortcomings in implementation. While the EU and its member states (MS) have become more thoroughly committed to the implementation of the WPS agenda, the mid-term reviews of GAP III revealed notable gaps in its implementation, and despite the commitment to the [Strategic Approach](#) and to the [Action Plan](#) for the WPS agenda, it is becoming increasingly challenging for the EU to keep its WPS commitment on track and adapt to current geopolitical developments. Discussants mentioned that the Country-Level Implementation Plans (CLIPS) should be harmonised with 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs), and that the NAPs can play an important role in mobilising MS for better implementing the WPS agenda.

Overall, the EU is doing comparatively well next to other regional organisations, and in the face of current international geopolitical developments this position and progress should not be taken for granted. Still, progressive feminist approaches are almost entirely missing from the EU's approach to peace and security. While some feminist principles might be adopted in EU FP, the overall status quo shows the lack

of willingness to engage feminist visions, to transform the current system, and to break down (profitable) power structures.

### 3. Pathways for Feminist Approaches to Peace and Security

This section explores opportunities and recommendations, as well as challenges and ambiguities for feminist approaches to peace and security in Europe.

#### How to Envision Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Security in the EU?

The report first centres the advantages of the adoption of feminist principles in FP: i) the focus on gender equality and women's rights, ii) demilitarisation, iii) the creation of frameworks of accountability, and iv) decoloniality. It sheds light on how approaches to FP can benefit: v) the recognition of misogyny and anti-feminism as security risks, vi) the application of feminism as a methodology, and vii) a systematic challenging of power relations. It also highlights how the feminist perspective to FP can be strengthened through: viii) the formation of transdisciplinary ties with perspectives on climate change and environmental degradation, as well as ix) international trade and finance. It finally lays out x) lessons learned from the comparison of different international feminist foreign policies (FFPs).

#### *i: Gender equality and women's rights as core components of Peacebuilding*

Human rights and gender equality should be considered a core element of FP, not an add-on. To this end, the EU should engage in gender-*transformative* integrated approaches to its FP work and define the term gender-transformative accordingly. It should actively engage in the struggle for gender justice by fighting for new social contracts on the ground, and by increasing its support to women peacebuilders and queer CS organisations through participatory approaches. Diverse women and LGBTIQ+ people should be involved at all stages and on all levels of peacebuilding (PB). Discussants noted that 'gender issues' in PB are frequently conflated with 'women's issues'. However, it was also acknowledged that at a field level, it can sometimes be more conducive for peacebuilders to refer to 'gender' instead of to 'women' or 'feminism', and similarly to discursively prioritise a human rights approach over the WPS approach.

#### *ii: Demilitarisation*

The idea of demilitarisation is deeply inscribed in feminist thinking and struggle. With decision-making spaces becoming increasingly narrow and securitised, and facing increased authoritarianism, populism, militarisation and conflict-escalation, there is a growing need to reflect on a feminist vision for peace and security that works more thoroughly towards demilitarisation. A feminist approach to FP supports

non-violent alternatives to conflict through a) bottom-up approaches to FP, b) creative funding solutions, and 3) amplifying the messages of women's organisations in fragile contexts. Discussants stressed repeatedly that only active and long-term approaches to demilitarisation can bring about sustainable peace. Adopting an all-encompassing feminist perspective to PB thus means a) addressing all parts of the conflict cycle, including the question of “what comes afterwards”, b) considering Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and trauma, and c) methodologically reflecting on the individual.<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to feminist principles, the EU is currently on the way to further militarising its conception of peace. To counteract this trend, feminist perspectives need to be embedded systematically in CSDP missions. Recent updates to the EU's CSDP and the establishment of gender advisor positions in CSDP missions are the first steps to applying a gender lens to militarised policy fields. But their work should not be siloed, neither within the missions nor from discussions on feminism in Brussels. Gender advisors should be participating in political discussions on how to include feminist perspectives on peace and security, and should be given a voice in CSDP missions. Cross-cutting approaches can counter siloing and ensure that all aspects of CSDP missions are influenced by feminist principles. So far, the EU has employed mostly women for the positions as gender advisors. However, the role of gender advisors should not be sex-specific but related to feminist competence.

### *iii: Frameworks of Accountability*

FFP provides a framework of accountability that calls attention to gender inequalities across a range of policy fields, including those not generally thought of as feminist. It ensures that gender equality is engaged with not just through box-ticking exercises, and that accountability gaps in expenditure are closed through increased transparency. It allows the promotion of local ownership and partnership in EU and MS FP in new and in-depth ways, e.g. by prioritising local practices and vocabularies over donor agendas. Substantive feminist participation and accountability are important parts of policy cycles to decolonise the production and sharing of knowledge. Increasing accountability requires greater investment in embodied knowledge in conflict contexts, to incorporate critiques from the Global South and actively inquire into the experiences of people in these contexts. When frameworks of accountability are fully implemented, all sides involved in FFP – the EU, its MS and partner countries – profit from their adoption.

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<sup>3</sup> Feminist covid-19 recovery plans are an example for long term feminist approaches in public health policy. These plans were designed from a perspective of care, and through this included a long term feminist vision for recovery.

### *iv: Decoloniality*

The EU needs to openly acknowledge its imperial past and actively support reconciliation. The EU should co-develop decolonial spaces with its partners in the Global South on the same eye-level, instead of imposing knowledge and normative frameworks with the aim of educating others. Acknowledging one's own past is not only ethically right but double standards are also easily exploitable. Reflecting on the EU's internal imperialism and the risk of 'west-splaining' can thus also strengthen its credibility on the international stage. By listening to and understanding other definitions of security and different security needs, the EU avoids imposing its own concepts in partner countries in the Global South. This also entails reflecting on local ownership of the WPS agenda: The struggle for gender equality and feminism is not a Western idea as demonstrated for example by the UN Charter of Human Rights. In the Balkans and North Africa, many civil society organisations (CSOs) are involved in debates about WPS. So, who is represented in debates on WPS and why? To what extent is the debate on WPS representative of debates in the Global South?

Colonial systems continue to date through the structure of aid and training. Discussants stressed that partnerships need to be based on mutual horizontal relationships, e.g. with municipalities and regional governments, and the need to increase the EU's accessibility to be effective. However, local grassroots organisations often perceive the EU as a distant actor. When a conflict breaks out, international organisations usually correspond with interlocutors that are easily accessible, mostly men based in the capital. The EU should bear in mind intersectional disparities in its choice of interlocutors regarding gender, region and other characteristics. It should also notice other (international) actors in the region to avoid doing harm by engaging in contradictory work. Doing no harm and the question of interlocutors connect to the question of knowledge that the EU engages with. Whose expertise is being valued? Whose expertise is respected and guiding discussions? Is local feminist knowledge taken into account for all policy fields? What counts as the rather ambiguous term 'local voices'? These questions need to be addressed. To date, there is still little to no room for decolonisation and challenging patriarchal power structures in the EU's peace and security framework.

### *v: Recognition of misogyny and anti-feminism as security risks*

Anti-feminism and misogyny need to be considered security risks. They are used as a systematic strategy in FP, causing much damage and limiting discursive spaces. Given the rise of far-right populism, anti-feminist movements also have a strong influence in some EU MS, leading to misogynist attacks and impacting if and how gender inequality is addressed in EU-internal discussions. By enforcing negative attention to the public conversation, anti-feminism radicalises people that had not paid much attention to



gender perspectives before. Both EU internal and external anti-feminist rhetoric poses threats to international security. For example, the Russian regime picks up on gender equality as an ‘authoritarian shortcut’ for its own legitimacy, framing gender equality as an imposed ideology and Western perversion. This not only ignores Russia’s own feminist history and achievements but also the fact that democratisation, gender justice and sustainable peace are intimately related: Gender equality is central for a well-functioning democracy and in turn democratic backsliding always negatively impacts gender relations. The experiences in Afghanistan and Iran show that the support of men to counter misogyny is crucial for political change. While Afghan men are less supportive of the feminist movement, Iranian men by contrast strongly support the feminist struggle in the uprisings. Thus, the EU should engage on gender inequalities with different groups - including men.

### *vi: Feminism as a methodology*

Feminism as an *approach* or *methodology* enables conversations and possibilities for action that are excluded by other dominant methods. Feminist methodology contributes many concepts purposeful to PB. For example, feminist theory has brought the concept of intersectionality on the agenda and foregrounds concepts such as decoloniality (see above), the ‘everyday’ or the ‘3 Rs’ (Rights, Resources, Representation). It questions dominant narratives on peace and security, and particularly raises the question *whose* security is at stake. Feminism is not just about ‘women’s issues’, gender relations or intersectionality. As an analytical tool, it exposes how culture, language, and thought are all set up in binaries. It helps to uncover and challenge powerful sets of dichotomies between the masculine and feminine, nature and (militaristic) culture, and how these artificial constructions have become naturalised and work as a legitimation for militarisation and the securitisation of FP. The application of feminist methodology can educate about these constructions and foster moving towards a less militaristic world.

‘The everyday’ as a core feminist concept should be at the centre of internal and external feminist approaches of peace and security in the EU. Understanding that peace and security are lived realities, requires different expertise and experiences to comprehensively imagine future peace and to engage in feminist context analyses. Dominant understandings of insecurity and conflict are too limited: A robust gender perspective is a prerequisite for any fit-for-purpose conflict analysis. So-called ‘domestic violence’ needs to be included as an indicator in conflict analysis and in early warning systems as part of assessing and tackling SGBV as key early indicators of conflict. Next to this, (institutional) transformation also requires a difference in the *EU’s* ‘everyday’, in the daily work. FFP needs to unfold its transformative elements internally in day-to-day gender mainstreaming practices and shift away from being a ‘by women for women’ policy. This requires time and resources, especially given the disunity among MS regarding



feminist approaches. Despite challenges to translate theoretical thought into policy, policymakers should prioritise bringing the feminist lens into their everyday policy practice.

Feminist approaches also place the '3 Rs', Rights, Resources, Representation in the centre of PB goals, later extended by Reality-check, Research, and Results. Given that most research funding favours security, feminist scholars can use this funding focus by reframing the concept of security. Feminist methodologies reframing security need to be properly funded. Discussants noted that human security has achieved a transformative potential, and is mentioned in the majority of NAPs. Therefore, research connecting to human security frameworks can strengthen feminist research funding.

### *vii: Challenging power relations*

It is the aim of feminism to not only fight for gender equality but also to challenge and abolish traditional power structures. A feminist approach allows to address and deconstruct hierarchies of knowledge production, management and sharing. It helps to understand the EU's power as holding 1) the authority to shape narratives, 2) resources for action, organising, 3) space to and for strategizing and convening, 4) the articulation of ideas, data histories, ideas and 5) the affordability of choice, without repercussions. Centering gender equality singularly in FP is therefore too limiting. Applying an encompassing feminist perspective means unlearning practices and frameworks that reinforce current power structures and instead focussing accountability and learning. Only through transformative work can current power structures be challenged.

### *viii: Climate change and environmental degradation*

Feminist approaches on peace and security help to focus on key linkages with other current crises, importantly climate change and environmental degradation, because they understand humanity as interdependent with nature, not as separate or superior. Climate change is not gender neutral. As a result, the response not only to conflicts but also to natural disasters needs to be feminist. Feminist perspectives challenge infantilising ideas of nature, peace, and care and centre long-term impact assessments and generational effects of policy. Feminist methodology also involves future scenario planning, going beyond recent no-growth and de-growth approaches. It can help to shed light on how liberal hegemonic forms of power have ignored the environmental and climatic impacts of militarisation. On the verge of eco-collapse, the EU needs to comprehensively consider the impacts of its militarisation agenda on the climate and in turn examine how climate change is exacerbating conflict and inequalities through land grabbing, mining, and extractivism. Feminist research has also shown the dangers of extractivist capitalism and shed light on its intersectional implications. To ensure climate-just approaches to PB, the EU should go beyond its European Green Deal approach and address the link between production

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modes, environmental exploitation, gender roles, consumption and peace, and explore alternative economic models that are equipped to deal with those multiple crises. Given that militarisation is a key driver of climate change, slight changes in the EU's CSDP missions are not sufficient but instead risk 'greenwashing' these policies. Only full demilitarisation leads to climate justice and peace. Countries in the Global North should recognize their historical responsibility in driving climate change and challenge existing corporate power. The power of transnational companies should be limited, corporate capture should be exposed and wealth should be transferred to the Global South to combat economic injustice and ensure proper equipment to deal with the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. For this purpose, corporations in the Global North need to provide funding but the EU also needs to invest in technology transfer and knowledge exchange to strengthen the local recovery of ecosystems. Tackling the harmful gendered dimensions of employment and care work exacerbated by climate change, should be addressed through investments in respective infrastructure.

### *ix: International trade and finance*

As the EU is largely a trade and funding actor, discussants also recognised that working in silos is still an obstacle, in particular for attempts of tying feminist goals to international trade and finance agendas. Feminist approaches to FP need to strengthen their trans-disciplinary dialogue and connect to the reality that trade and finance – that significantly contribute to the imminent eco-collapse - occupy large parts of the EU's agenda and practices. In particular, the EU should enable women and LGBTIQ+ people to participate in discussions about economic challenges and solutions, and stress the importance of the participation of women in all climate-justice initiatives through participatory approaches.

### *x: Feminist Foreign Policy in international comparison - Lessons Learned*

Discussions touched upon the different contexts in which FFP has been adopted or discussed. Only a handful of EU MS have adopted an FFP so far and in those cases, feminism is mostly entrenched to development cooperation. However, feminist perspectives should be adopted across the FP spectrum, inter alia to security, defence, migration, trade, and human rights. Otherwise, FFP risks being limited to soft security only and being deemed irrelevant at a time of a full scale war - a misleading idea which needs to be pushed back: FFP can connect to both soft and hard security.

Sweden, the first country adopting an FFP, managed to build on national buy-in based on a wider public recognising the importance of gender equality. Sweden has a history of promoting decolonisation and self-determination and also builds on a tradition of close consultation of civil society, facilitating the adoption of a feminist policy. Discussants mentioned that initial debates about FFP often needed to overcome the 'giggle factor', facing the challenge that some interlocutors did not take FFP seriously and

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were not used to feminist language in political spheres. Disadvantages of Sweden's FFP included the lack of addressing generational shifts and intersectional issues, falling short of important feminist standards. Finally, after pioneering FFP and having inspired other countries to follow its lead, Sweden has now withdrawn its FFP under its current centre-right government. The Swedish approach was flawed in that it was overthrown after the change of government, meaning that there was no mechanism in place to establish the policy for the long-term. This raises questions of how to institutionalise FFP in a lasting manner and raise awareness of the need for robust policy frameworks.

Countries that have adopted an FFP have been perceived differently domestically and abroad. For example, Mexico's FFP was multilaterally recognised but strongly criticised by local feminist movements. Germany announced its FFP while simultaneously advancing its process of militarisation<sup>4</sup>. Both Sweden's FFP and Spain's FFP, have faced criticisms regarding inconsistencies with their policies on arms trade and migration. Such lack of policy coherence is neither consistent nor feminist. National policies that also turn inwards and focus on internal gender equality within their FP institutions by aiming for gender parity in external representation - as was the case in Germany - have been deemed useful and credible in the discussion. Discussants observed that many countries that have been adopting an FFP more recently, such as Finland, focus more heavily on defence than in previously adopted FFPs. The Dutch FFP revolves centrally around the '3 R's'. In Scotland, feminist civil society tried to push for a more ambitious FFP and go beyond the '3 Rs' towards '3 As' (Ambition, Authenticity [policy coherence], and Accountability). However, discussants raised the worry that more ambitious FFP goals carry the risk of falling short in implementation. An increase in ambition should therefore be a long-term goal. For this purpose, it is not necessarily needed to frame work as 'feminist'.

### Challenges and Ambiguities

The EU reproduces hegemonic forms of power as an institution. Given the low opportunities of entry points for feminism in FP and the still precarious situation for feminist issues globally, maintaining the minimum of 'women's issues' on the table is already challenging. The EU still largely understands gender equality as a binary between men and women. Intersectionality is often misconceived as 'identities', instead of being approached through addressing different layers of oppression and inequalities (including, e.g. socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation). This section discusses main challenges, with a particular focus on i) ambivalences between feminist theory and practice, ii) the lack of long-term investment and funding, iii) controversies about adopting the label 'feminist' and iv) the risk of 'pink washing'.

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<sup>4</sup> German Federal Ministry of Defence (2022): ['Over EUR 100 billion for the Bundeswehr - and for our security'](#)

### *i: Ambivalences between feminist theory and practice: Facing increasing militarisation*

Discussions also touched upon the importance of investigating and accepting disagreements within feminist discursive spaces about adequate responses to war and about how to appropriately engage in conflict prevention without adding onto global trends of militarisation. Facing the EU's increasing involvement as an arms producer, the disparity between the investment in arms and efforts to PB need to be addressed. The question whether to engage in arms trades, and military interventions to protect some feminist principles while (temporarily) suspending other central pacifist principles that feminism is rooted in, reflects larger dilemmas of long-term versus short-term (feminist) solutions to violent conflict. Ambivalences in feminism exist. Feminist approaches to peace and security can benefit from embracing those ambivalences and allowing the possibility to uphold multiple ideas at once, ultimately balancing idealism and realism. Discussants noted that feminist discursive spaces should tolerate such discussions and allow debates on whether and how to accommodate interim adaptations of the feminist concept of security. However, they also raised the concern that FFPs are particularly quickly held accountable for inconsistencies in its frameworks. In Sweden, for example, FFP faced accusations of double standards in the light of continued delivery of weapons.

The EU's increasingly militarised conceptions of peace, reflect not only in its highly securitised migration policy but also in the question how to react to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, illustrating the practical consequences to the above discussed feminist theoretical crises. Discussants stressed that Ukraine's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2022 was one important nonviolent means to support feminist principles during peace and conflict. However, being aware of the dangers of militarism, some Ukrainian feminists also ask for a temporary - not permanent - military intervention and an interim increase in the delivery of arms in the face of their struggle for survival. Discussants reflected on the ambivalences in reacting to this situation in the EU's close neighbourhood and also raised the challenge how to engage with the greater attention given to that conflict, compared to other conflicts worldwide similarly affecting millions of women and men.

### *ii: Lack of long-term investment and funding*

An earlier accommodation of feminist approaches throughout the entirety of conflict cycles may have been able to prevent current crises because feminist approaches do not understand conflicts as singular instances in time. Adopting feminist analysis to PB means opting for the application of approaches to peace throughout the entire conflict cycle - the period from conflict prevention until recovery from conflict. It also means opting for exploring all nonviolent ways of conflict resolution first. For a long-term and

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sustainable investment in PB and security, diverse women, local voices but also marginal voices from within the EU should be integrated in peace negotiations. While research has demonstrated that the inclusion of women in peace negotiations contributes to their success, discussants also stressed that the risks and costs of *excluding* women should just as thoroughly be investigated. Importantly, EU funding falls short in matching its ambitious long-term target of gender mainstreaming. Only under 1% of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) goes to women-led and queer-led organisations<sup>5</sup> engaged in feminist work on the ground. Funding policies are often strict, limiting local autonomy and ownership. Funding for feminist approaches as well as tangible funding for organisations on the ground is important and needed.

### *iii: Feminism and Feminist Foreign Policy - the label*

Participants discussed how the use of the label 'feminism' may open some discursive spaces, and close others. On the one hand, using the label feminism may not be useful when a policy is in fact not in line with feminist principles (label vs. content). A feminist label also means having to live up to the promised feminist values. On the other hand, the label is extremely important because it creates a benchmark for measuring, and communicates shared values through a shared language. It forces discussions to move beyond gender mainstreaming and binary understandings of gender towards power dynamics. The use of the label can also function as an ambition: It can motivate other actors to use and engage with the term theoretically and practically and also be a means for civil society to hold international actors accountable. Beyond the theoretical adoption of the label, discussants recognised that some international actors may be reluctant to explicitly label their work feminist, however, their practice could still be based on feminist principles.

The translation of feminist values into standard operating procedures of a bureaucratic organisation such as the EU is a challenge. While working from within institutional procedures becomes increasingly relevant, introducing new wording on the EU level into the current complicated situation might not be beneficial. A successful adoption of the label requires openness and transparency, so when the label is used it needs to be explained properly and resourced accordingly to unfold its effective potential. Otherwise, it risks disillusioning feminists and angering anti-feminist actors. Especially in the contexts of CSDP missions, it is very difficult to work with the word 'feminist'. Changes in those contexts need to be taken step by step and ensure to take everyone on board. Trying to find the balance between increased feminist ambitions but at the same time maintaining a stable platform to act was identified as good practice by discussants.

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<sup>5</sup> The Guardian (2019): [Only 1% of gender equality funding is going to women's organisations – why?](#)

The establishment and recent strengthening of the EPF as well as broader geopolitical developments further complicate the translation of feminist values to EU procedures. Crises complicate wider advocacy for feminism. It is easier for governments to announce an FFP (with capital letters) in 'calmer' times or when FP is separated from defence. As soon as a crisis hits, FP often reverts to traditional methods. Announcing FFP in the EU in this particular environment may therefore not be constructive: Instead policymakers should address the need for cultural shifts in multilateral institutions which can then in turn feed into a provision of resources. Otherwise, feminist approaches risk becoming stuck in a vicious circle.

*iv: 'Pink washing' - Gender as an empty signifier?*

Discussants raised the risk of 'pink washing' of FP, the risk of emptying the term 'feminism' by masking the gap between an individual policy ambition and practice. Charges of 'pink washing' draw attention to inconsistencies of FFP with other policies such as arms trade or an increase in military spending. Feminist approaches theoretically have implications for all policy areas. Why engage only in feminist *foreign* policy, and no other policy areas? Ideally, feminist perspectives and gender analysis should be included at the core of decision-making in all policy areas, also those that are not explicitly about gender. But discussants also worried that if the gender and feminist labels are applied too widely too soon, they could lose their meaning entirely and become empty signifiers. Until feminist principles can become adopted more widely, it is important to preserve their meaning where the labels 'gender' or 'feminist' are applied.

## 4. Recommendations for the Implementation of Feminist Approaches to EU External Action

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations can be drawn for EU officials, academics and civil society in order to build robust *Feminist Triangles* between different social actors and engage in resilience, cohesion and feminist PB.

### European Union

- The EU should ensure **long-term investments and flexible funding** for peacebuilding, especially for local feminist, women-and queer-led organisations, and ensure **policy coherence** in all external action.
- The EU should close **implementation gaps** between policy and practice.
- The EU should engage in active listening to **local feminist voices** throughout the conflict cycle.
- The EU should engage in decolonial approaches and **mutual horizontal partnerships**.

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- The EU should engage in knowledge management and exchange, prioritising **local ownership** and local resources and shifting funding accordingly.
- The EU should engage in **bottom-up, community-centred approaches**.
- The EU should address **disparities between its investment in militarisation and efforts to peacebuilding**.
- The EU should actively invest in and engage with concepts from **feminist research and methodology**, reflecting also on its own 'everyday' practices and challenging power relations internally and externally.
- The EU should develop clear **quantitative and qualitative indicators for gender equality**.
- The EU should provide **funding for women in research on the economy and climate change** to foster transdisciplinary exchange and informed conversations.
- The EU should actively engage in the struggle for **gender justice**.
- The EU should recognise **anti-feminism and misogyny as security risks and recognise SGBV, including so-called 'domestic violence' as key conflict indicators**.
- The EU should strengthen its engagement with the civil society sector, in particular with diverse, geographically and demographically varying local CSOs.
- The EU should assess the **accessibility** to its discussions and consider how migration and visa issues may limit participation, in particular of single, young women.
- The EU should embed feminist perspectives into the work of CSDP missions in a systematic way and engage in **cross-cutting approaches for gender advisors in CSDP missions**.
- The EU should ensure the translation and operationalisation of commitments to **WPS and GAP III**.
- The EU should improve transparency for accountability mechanisms.

### Spaces engaged with Feminist Foreign Policy

- Political and social actors engaged with FFP should apply **empathetic reflexivity**.
- Feminism should be understood as an ambition to enhance in political culture, not an end goal.
- While realising the role of nation states, feminism should focus on **human security**.
- Political and social actors engaged with FFP should **engage with a diversity of feminist, women and queer interlocutors**.
- Ambivalences and dilemmas in feminist debates should be sustained and tolerated.

### Civil Society and Academia

- Civil society and academia should work on **better internal organisation**.



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- Civil society and academia should move away from identity based inclusion and instead address different layers of oppression and inequalities (including, e.g. socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation).
- Civil society and academia should link their conversations in Brussels to those at delegation levels.
- Civil society and academia should reflect on the loss of the EU's idealism on human rights and gender equality.
- Civil society and academia should build **constituencies for peace**.
- Academia should bring together feminist and economic perspectives.
- Academia should advocate for **decolonising the curriculum**.
- There should be a better link between research and those perceiving the results of research.
- Academia should engage in **academic humility**: Answers to policy challenges can also be found beyond academics in poetry, music, or storytelling.
- Academia should engage in **reframing the concept of security** given that most funding for research is for security.

Opening up discursive and practical spaces for feminist approaches all over *Feminist Triangles* can enable the integration of gender in the 'DNA of peacebuilding'. While the adoption of an official European FFP may still be a long way off, the time to be jointly envisioning conceptual pathways, opportunities and practical ways forward for feminist approaches in the making of peace and security is now.