

EPLO Statement on reaffirming and safeguarding the EU's approach to Women, Peace and Security

September 2025

In 2025, we mark the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which, together with its follow-up resolutions, forms the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The EU has affirmed its commitment to this agenda throughout its external action in its 2018 **Council Conclusions on WPS** including the **Strategic Approach to WPS**¹ and the corresponding **Action Plan**², in 2022 Council Conclusions³, and as a key thematic area in the **Gender Action Plan III (GAP III)**⁴.

However, the **alarming global rollback on gender equality objectives** - marked by shrinking civic space, rising militarisation, critical funding cuts and growing backlash against women's rights and the rights of marginalised groups - not only jeopardises the implementation of these commitments but also risks undermining the agenda's core principles.

Digital threats such as online gender-based violence and cyber-harassment targeting women activists and human rights defenders, especially in conflict-affected contexts and **climate-related risks**, including increased resource scarcity, displacement, and the intensified exposure and challenges faced by women and girls in fragile settings, further intensify the rollback.

In response, the EU must **reinforce and adapt its approach** to ensure a continued focus on gender equality in conflict-affected contexts, and to uphold WPS implementation as a cornerstone of its external action. At a time when multilateralism is being challenged, the EU's role in fostering a safer, more peaceful world has never been more central. A **principled approach to WPS** is not only a moral obligation but a **prerequisite for lasting global peace and security**. The following statement outlines adaptation strategies to **actively reaffirm the EU's commitment** to the agenda and **safeguard WPS as a priority**.

1. Strengthen localisation and foster partnerships

Prioritise locally-led, community-based partnerships and institutionalise consultations: The EU must embed meaningful, participatory partnerships with local women-led and inclusive peacebuilding actors⁵ throughout all phases of its policies, programmes and interventions.

Engage men and boys and promote positive masculinities: The EU must actively engage men and boys in advancing the WPS agenda not only to foster shared responsibility for achieving gender equality but also to address the drivers of violent conflict, challenge harmful gender norms and promote inclusive, peaceful models of masculinity that benefit all.

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf>

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/11/14/council-conclusions-on-women-peace-and-security/>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2184

⁵ In the following, the term 'women-led and inclusive peacebuilding actors' encompasses women-led peacebuilding organisations, actors, initiatives, and networks, women's peacebuilding movements, women peacebuilders and mediators, women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders, and LGBTIQ+ peacebuilding organisations.

Adhere to the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and survivor-centred approaches: The EU should further build on its important work on SGBV by funding local organisations that support survivors and collect evidence on SGBV and ensuring that accountability measures are complemented by direct survivor support.

2. Break the institutional and policy siloes on WPS

Ensure WPS is discussed across EU external action: WPS should be mainstreamed across all EU policies and actors related to foreign policy, trade, development cooperation, humanitarian action, security, and forced displacement, and be discussed alongside these issues in the Political and Security Committee (PSC).

Maintain EU WPS frameworks beyond 2027: The EU should commit to a long-term vision for WPS, ensuring that frameworks such as the EU Action Plan on WPS and GAP III are renewed and adapted beyond 2027.

Support and draw on Member States' diverse approaches: The EU can build on the broad support among EU member states for the WPS agenda and convene the diverse, often complementary angles taken on the national level.

3. Increase quality funding and improve modalities

Ensure that increased investments in security do not undermine WPS implementation: The EU must ensure that increased investments in security do not come at the expense of commitments to women's rights and gender-responsive conflict prevention.

Prioritise direct, flexible, accessible, core and long-term funding mechanisms to women-led and inclusive peacebuilding actors: The EU should reduce bureaucratic barriers, ensure funds directly reach grassroots organisations and uphold accountability by tracking WPS funding commitments for effective allocation.

Allocate specific funding through EU external action instruments: The EU must leverage all of its external action instruments to strengthen gender-responsive foreign policy initiatives. This includes dedicated funding for gender-inclusive mediation, peacebuilding, and protection efforts in conflict-affected areas.

Encourage Member States to fully finance and strengthen implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs): EU Member States should be encouraged to strengthen the implementation of their WPS NAPs through increased coordination with EU policies, dedicated funding streams to local organisations, peer-learning mechanisms and regular monitoring.

4. A flexible and inclusive agenda

Ensure context-specificity, historical awareness and adaptability: The EU should co-create strategies with local women-led and inclusive peacebuilding actors that are responsive to evolving

local realities. WPS implementation should be historically informed, acknowledging colonial legacies and breaking open their lasting impact on global power dynamics.

Recognise diverse needs: The WPS agenda must respond to the varied ways in which women are affected by conflict and address intersecting identities and levels of discrimination.

Strategically integrate responses to emerging digital and climate threats within WPS implementation: The EU should proactively address digital violence against women peacebuilders and the gendered impacts of the climate crisis. This requires integrating these threats into its peace and security frameworks for an agile, effective response.

Strengthen the prevention aspect of WPS: The EU should reinforce gender-responsive early warning mechanisms, conflict analysis, and conflict prevention and support community-based, gender-transformative initiatives that address harmful gender norms and promote gender equality as a pathway to lasting peace.

Now is the time for the EU to **demonstrate united global leadership in peace and security**. The EU leadership must take a clear stand against this rollback on gender equality objectives, both within Europe, its neighbourhoods and globally, by fully committing to implementing the WPS agenda. We urge the EU to lay the foundation for a more peaceful, inclusive, and gender-equal future.

For further detail under each recommendation, EPLO and its member organisations are available to share more information.

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