

BRIEFING NOTE No. 162

## **Gender equality in EU external action: The gender action plan and the women, peace and security agenda**

April 2023

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### **Summary**

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been integrated into the EU's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), as a key component of gender equality commitments in EU external action. Two years following the adoption of GAP III, this brief looks at its impact on the implementation of the WPS agenda.

GAP III has not had any direct significant impact on how WPS is implemented, although it provided further momentum for WPS and gender mainstreaming. At the delegation level, programming requirements have stimulated more deliberate consideration of gender, but the WPS agenda is included selectively in Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs), often depending on partner country priorities. Women's diverse roles in conflict, men's roles in the WPS agenda and intersectionality are not consistently recognised, while gender focal points in delegations lack the resources and seniority to fully support GAP III.

For Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, GAP III created a momentum, but WPS implementation is spurred mainly by internal parallel efforts at the HQ and mission level and reference documents like the Civilian Compact and the Strategic Compass. These have provided a stronger impetus to reinforce guidance, planning documents and cross-learning via networks of gender advisors and focal points.

Room for improvement remains in coordination between delegations and CSDP missions and gender-responsive training for leadership. Member states should also consider increased funding for full-time CSDP gender advisors across missions and technical support for seconded gender advisors. Further, we recommend mandatory WPS expertise or training for gender focal points in conflict-affected countries.

## **Introduction**

The EU Gender Action Plan III – an ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU external action (GAP III) was launched in 2022. It provides an ambitious plan for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in EU external action. Achieving the objectives of GAP III requires the full engagement of different components across the EU (both at HQ and at delegation level) and extensive support notably from EU leadership.

This brief is part of a series of briefing notes, which looks at the implementation of GAP III two years after its release. In this series, we paid special attention to three main issues, namely institutional leadership including the role of the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity (Di Ciommo et al. 2023); the implementation of GAP III’s priority on women economic empowerment (Sergejeff and Di

Ciommo 2023 – forthcoming), as well as the implementation of WPS which is also a GAP III priority.

This briefing note **focuses on how the Women Peace and Security agenda (WPS) is applied at the country level in the context of the implementation of GAP III** with examples from selected EU partners countries, i.e., Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Kenya. We assess whether GAP III allows for a more integrated approach to support gender equality across a range of situations of (protracted) crisis and in conflict affected countries.

The WPS agenda, institutionalised by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (adopted in 2000) and nine subsequent resolutions, promotes a gendered perspective on women's diverse roles in peace and security processes across four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery (USIP 2023). The EU has a long track record of policy commitments and efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the WPS agenda (Desmidt 2021). This includes the two EU Council Conclusions on WPS in December 2018 and November 2022, and the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019–2024). One key novelty with the adoption of GAP III is the full integration of the EU's commitments to WPS into GAP III as a dedicated area of work. This raised expectations for a stronger implementation of WPS considering the renewed political impetus provided by GAP III, as well as stronger coordination between the political, development and security sections at EU delegation (EUD) level to achieve joint progress on GAP and WPS objectives.

Close to the mid-term implementation of GAP III, we asked what effects the integration of WPS into GAP III has had at the level of delegations on the one hand (with a focus on experiences from

Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Kenya), and across EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions on the other hand. The briefing note is based on desk research of policy documents and literature<sup>1</sup>. We complemented our desk-based work with key informant interviews of relevant policy-makers and stakeholders<sup>2</sup> as well as a number of informal conversations with key experts and policy makers in the field, held between September and March 2022.

In the following section (Section 2), we present the findings of the research focused on the integration of WPS into GAP III and how this has played out at country level. In Section 3, we present detailed recommendations for EU institutions and member states on how to steer the WPS Agenda forward as part of the EU GAP III.

## **GAP III implementation and Women Peace and Security**

**The adoption of GAP III is an opportunity to strengthen the EU's approach to and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda**, by integrating WPS as a thematic area. GAP III includes many elements of the WPS agenda as thematic focus areas like for instance, the protection of women and girls against conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), as well as the WPS indicators of the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024 (Desmidt 2021).

In the first instance, this section looks at how the WPS agenda (and the wider 'women in crisis' perspective) as part of GAP III has been integrated thus far at country level **in EU programming**. We use examples from Bangladesh, Mozambique and Kenya. These three countries face varying levels of conflict and face distinct challenges

that inform the governments' priorities. Secondly, we look at what the adoption of GAP III has meant for the implementation of EU gender equality objectives and in particular its WPS agenda, in **EU CSDP missions**.

### **EU's support to WPS at country level**

**Overall, GAP III has not brought about significant change in the way the WPS agenda is implemented at the country level.** Based on our research of key analysis and EU programming documents<sup>3</sup> with a focus on Bangladesh, Kenya and Mozambique, **GAP III did not help overcome existing challenges to WPS implementation such as limited internal expertise, coordination and financing.** Still, EU programming processes and requirements, such as updating or conducting Gender Country Profiles (GCPs), and the development of Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) on gender, have encouraged certain EU delegations, in dialogue with partner countries, to rethink objectives and interventions on WPS more explicitly. The CLIPs, based on Gender Country Profiles, aim to translate GAP III into country-level priorities and actions for the EU's programming period 2021–2027. They are prepared by EU delegations, in most cases jointly with EU member states (following the Team Europe approach) and other relevant organisations including CSOs (EU 2022).

#### *Challenges faced by EU delegations to implement WPS*

There have been commitments at the policy level to promote WPS within the EU (Council Conclusions, Action Plan) but the financing has been insufficient for EU delegations to play a strong role. In addition, EU delegations face challenges like limited in-house expertise on gender equality and WPS. Some organisational structures also tend to silo how these aspects are addressed. This includes limited

exchanges and coordination between cooperation and political sections as well as between cooperation staff, military staff and security advisors. Several interviewees also noted that gender focal points often lack the level of experience and seniority to liaise with the EU delegation leadership. Because gender focal points have limited time and resources (Di Ciommo 2021) and are not necessarily specialised in WPS topics (Desmidt 2021), they may not always be able to push this agenda forward and identify multiple dividends between gender-focused projects and the WPS agenda.

Therefore, alongside the need for additional time and resources for WPS, gender focal points selected by EU delegations should be equipped to draw on existing WPS experience and institutional memory available across the EU, or have access to a dedicated WPS training (for example during onboarding). This would also help them to liaise more effectively with the CSDP gender advisors, and advance the EU's WPS work across the EU's development, political and civil-military engagements, including CSDP missions. **WPS could be an explicit part of the job description of all gender focal points, especially those in conflict-affected countries, to ensure the gendered dynamics of peace and security are not set aside in these contexts.**

**In Bangladesh, Kenya and Mozambique, the EU is not a strong player on WPS (relative to other areas of gender equality, and other actors, such as EU member states or UN agencies) and the EU's level of engagement has not changed since the adoption of GAP III.**

EU delegations engage with WPS and support certain WPS activities in Kenya and Mozambique, with a focus on election-related violence and gender training for peace and security officials, respectively. In Bangladesh, the EUD does not include WPS as an area of work. By contrast, several EU member states take the lead in promoting WPS

in their external action. This is the case for Finland, which supports the policy-making process on WPS via national action plans on UNSCR 1325 in Kenya and Mozambique. In Kenya, where the EU co-leads the gender working group, interviewees stressed that **the EU could take a more proactive role, for example by more actively supporting the government-led NAP policy process and its monitoring,** complementing the efforts of Finland (which is investing in localising action plans on UNSCR 1325 at county level) and other EU member states.

Interviewees mentioned other such cases beyond the three case studies, such as Ukraine (before the war) where the governments of Ukraine, Sweden and Canada led donor coordination structures including on gender (for instance, on the Istanbul Convention and gender-based violence) while NATO coordinated a taskforce on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (WPS).

*Integration of WPS in Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) and country level implementation plans (CLIPs) on gender*

Looking at a sample of MIPs 2021–2027 for 16 African countries, the WPS agenda is most often part of wider priority areas. Specific references to the UNSCR 1325 are mostly missing from MIP documents and references to WPS-related measures are selectively integrated. Most references focus on women's representation, participation in decision making, and protection against gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict settings, but there is **room for greater attention to the diverse roles of men and women in conflict** (See also box 1), **men's role in the WPS agenda, and intersectionality**, considering GAP III promotes an intersectional approach to gender, including WPS.

The lack of intersectionality in the way gender and WPS are approached is a broader issue which is also apparent from European policy events and discussions – that mainly focus on women as a homogenous category – as well as in the programming documents we analysed for this study. An intersectional approach to WPS would consider how gender intersects with other factors like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, etc. to shape individual and group experiences of conflicts, peace and security. For instance, Fulani women in Mali may be impacted by compounding challenges due to stigmatisation and violence targeted at the Fulani ethnic group and structural gender inequality. A better integration of diverse gendered conflict roles and intersectionality in EU programming could harness fuller analysis of gendered peace and security dynamics, encourage men's support for the WPS agenda and help advance a whole of society approach.



### **BOX 1: Examples of gender references in selected MIPs**

The MIP of the Central African Republic mentions that women and girls are among the most vulnerable to conflict, and promotes stronger women's participation in decision-making. The MIP of Côte d'Ivoire stresses the importance of women's active participation in conflict resolution including intercommunity dialogue, and of paying more attention to the rights of women migrants at risk of trafficking. These are important points which will require gender norm change, as well as the support and participation of both genders to materialise. Men hold more decision making power at community and country level and are therefore indispensable actors to advance gender equality and WPS. However, in none of the MIPs analysed was men's participation emphasised to promote the WPS agenda.

In addition, the MIP for Cameroun mentions that women are disproportionately impacted by the conflict, but does not look at the gendered forms of violence that also impact men. Overall the MIPs tend to overlook that men are also victims, not just perpetrators, of insecurity and conflict. Men are most likely to die from violent attacks during conflict, and they are also victims of cruel forms of conflict-related sexual violence alongside women (UN 2022). These omissions prevent the MIPs from truly engaging men in gender programming that can lead to increased security for both women and men.

Our findings suggest that the shortcomings of the MIPs in fully integrating WPS are reflected in the CLIPs. **In the CLIPs of Mozambique, Kenya and Bangladesh, gender-based violence is given the main spotlight while women's roles in peace and security processes are not strongly emphasised.** Several interviewees confirmed that few CLIPs overall had integrated WPS extensively, even in countries where the context justified a WPS focus. It seems that commitments to support women's diverse peace and security contributions formulated at HQ level are not so easy to translate into actionable goals aligned with partner country priorities. This is

because political traction and buy-in from the partner country is crucial for the implementation of WPS objectives and priorities.

In Bangladesh for instance, political traction to implement the full WPS agenda (its four pillars) was low compared to more selective areas such as gender-based violence (GBV). WPS was identified as a relevant area of work in an updated EU gender country profile/analysis. The country profile noted that Bangladesh had adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS, which in addition to the prevention of violence against women and children, also included human trafficking, development, and disaster management as areas of attention. Yet, WPS was not included in the EU's priority areas in the CLIP for Bangladesh. The CLIP focuses the EUD's resources on measures that have government support, namely gender-based violence (GBV). Other areas were left out too, such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), women in armed forces and/or conflict and women in political decision-making.

While important, work on GBV does not necessarily tackle structural factors that allow gender inequalities to persist in many areas of society. As one interviewee based in Kenya pointed out, the WPS agenda remains relevant in all its aspects, even in countries that are not affected by active conflict. The example from Bangladesh shows, however, that to find viable entry points for gender equality work, EU delegations often have to consider political barriers and leverage areas where there is at least a degree of government buy-in.

To look at the position of women and girls across a range of situations beyond violent conflict, the concept of "women in crisis" is sometimes used by policy makers. The assumption is that this concept could help generate attention for a gender-sensitive analysis of women's perspectives in crisis situations which include

humanitarian crises or (natural) disasters, for example. Although the concept of “women in crisis” does not feature in the MIPs and CLIPs, this does not undermine the implementation of WPS since it is part of a more clearly defined, longer term agenda (see Box 2 below).

**BOX 2: Women, Peace and Security agenda and “Women in Crisis”**

The vocabulary of “women in crisis” is not present in the MIPs or CLIPs analysed for this study (Bangladesh, Mozambique and Kenya). While women tend to be particularly vulnerable to various types of crises due to the structural inequalities they face, the concept of ‘women in crisis’ may not be the best-suited to advance gender equality and women’s rights, at headquarter level and in partner countries. This term presumably encompasses a number of different crises (conflicts, climate disasters, pandemics, etc.) but risks conflating them and failing to account for the longer term trends that play into such crises. For instance, the WPS agenda does not promote better women’s participation only when conflicts happen, but rather aims to ensure a better inclusion of women in decision-making and peace processes at all levels in order to improve social cohesion and help prevent more conflicts in the long run. In addition, gendered responses to natural disasters should be complementary with, not replace, long term support for women’s climate adaptation activities and for their resilience to climate change impacts (Salzinger and Desmidt 2023).

*Good practices of integrated approaches under GAP III*

**Some limited but promising experiences of integrated approaches to WPS and gender equality exist.** In **Yemen, the EU Commission, EEAS and EU Member States sought to implement an integrated approach to conflict that includes WPS.** In Council Conclusions on Yemen, WPS was included, is now built into the regulation and has been highlighted again in the EU’s initiatives on Yemen, for example in the Middle East/Gulf Working Party and EU Parliament exchanges and discussions with women’s organisations and members of

parliament. This was facilitated, according to an interviewee, by the fact that the EU's Gulf Strategy includes WPS as a key element.

In **Mozambique, the EU delegation is making efforts to follow an integrated approach focusing on WPS and human rights**. It aims to do so by providing training to security and defence forces and engaging in political dialogue against human rights violations, including those that tend to specifically target women like sexual violence in conflict and displacement settings like Cabo Delgado. Under the Governance, Peace and Just Society priority of the country's MIP, the EU also aims to support civil society that work on gender equality issues, including in conflict situations and to bridge humanitarian and development work (EC 2021). In Mozambique, the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is being implemented to combat gender-based violence; notably in three Mozambican provinces (Gaza, Manica and Nampula). In addition, aspects of GBV and protection are also included in reconstruction and resilience programmes envisaged for Northern Mozambique, bridging elements of gender-based violence with longer-term service provision, health services and education.

Further, the EUD Mozambique will establish a Technical Cooperation Facility, intended to, amongst others, support the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III through training, supporting gender mainstreaming, communication and reporting (EC 2021). This is in line with GAP III requirements, according to which CLIPs should specify whether they will use a technical facility and/or financial resources to support the implementation of GAP III. Therefore, the EU delegation in Bangladesh too is aiming to set up a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Facility to enhance internal gender capacities and build capacities of the Bangladeshi ministries,

while the EU delegation in Kenya will rely on its Dialogue facility and a dedicated work stream that will support policy dialogue on gender.

### **Implementing GAP III in CSDP missions**

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is an essential part of the EU's peace and security engagements, which allows the EU to deploy 30+ civilian and military missions globally to support conflict prevention, peacekeeping, crisis management, disarmament, military advice and assistance, stabilisation etc (EEAS 2023). As such, they play a key role in advancing the WPS agenda, including addressing the role of women and men in conflict as well as in conflict resolution.

**At the level of CSDP missions, the adoption of GAP III did not bring about the biggest change in how gender and WPS are addressed in missions, although it created a momentum to strengthen existing efforts and improve monitoring** according to interviewees. Especially for EU military staff and EU member state military staff deployed in EU CSDP missions, GAP III is not the main reference document. The integration of WPS as a full component of GAP III has not been the main driver of the recent changes in how CSDP missions approach gender mainstreaming or implement the EU's commitments to WPS.

Following the publication of GAP III, a number of initiatives have been taken to 'translate' GAP III into operational guidance for civilian and military CSDP missions. For example, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) developed specific instructions for CSDP missions which were sent to missions' commanders. This also included a GAP III monitoring framework for all civilian missions and operations, including a range of indicators from GAP III (especially but not limited to those stemming from the WPS Action Plan). These

instructions and monitoring framework were another way to raise the profile of GAP III, WPS, and gender mainstreaming on the agenda of CSDP missions. The recent adoption of an EU Gender Action Plan for military CSDP missions (2022-2025) (based on GAP III) might also further lead to future improvements on how gender is mainstreaming in military CSDP missions (see below).

Beyond GAP III, **efforts to improve the level of gender mainstreaming across civilian and military missions stem from a range of (internal) parallel efforts**, to provide planning and guidance documents on gender and women's participation for civilian CSDP missions via the work of the CPCC and the Civilian Compact, and for military CSDP missions via the operationalisation of the Strategic Compass (launched in March 2022).

To date, progress was perceived to be somewhat more limited in military CSDP missions compared to civilian ones. An interviewee from the EEAS linked this to the fact that EU member states are considered to have more sovereignty over military issues, compared to civilian CSDP missions where the CPCC has clearer authority to coordinate and provide guidance on gender mainstreaming and WPS efforts. Still, the independent status of CSDP missions from the EEAS provides certain constraints to implement and monitor WPS and gender mainstreaming in both military and civilian CSDP missions, as these are mainly led by member states.

#### *Current state of play*

**EU programming requirements have not strengthened the integration of GAP III into CSDP planning documents.** For example, in theory, the consultations to inform the CLIPs required to involve CSDP

mission staff. According to interviewees, this happened on a case-by-case rather than a systematic basis, and depended on good personal working relationships between delegation and mission staff. For example, in Mali, CSDP mission staff attend meetings organised by political sections from the EUD. But this is not necessarily the case in other countries. More broadly, the quality and extent of exchanges between EU delegations and CSDP missions (including between the gender advisors and focal points) depend very much on existing working relationships between delegation and mission staff, as well as on the needs within a given country context.

Overall, according to interviewees, **the CLIP process has not, or only marginally, translated into improved integration of WPS commitments across CSDP missions.** This resonates with a recent EEAS baseline study, which found that references to gender in CSDP planning documents tend to be too generic and do not pay enough attention to what financial, technical and human resources are needed to support the integration of gender (and WPS), while CSDP mission strategic reviews tend to ‘be silent’ on gender (EEAS 2022).

Despite this, there have been **notable improvements to how CSDP missions take into account gender equality in recent years,** according to interviewees. This seems to be, to a considerable extent, the result of a number of parallel (internal) processes both at HQ level and at the level of CSDP missions. In this context, the **EU Strategic Compass on Security and Defence** (more so than GAP III) is considered to have been a ‘game-changer’ for improving the integration of gender and women’s participation in military CSDP missions. The Strategic Compass (launched in March 2022) includes a commitment to deliver EU objectives on WPS and to “promote gender equality and systematically mainstream a gender

perspective, based on gender analysis, in all civilian and military CSDP planning and actions” (EU, 2022).

According to an interviewee, **the uptake of the Strategic Compass compared to GAP III has been stronger, as this document can be seen as speaking more to the language and reality of military staff.**

The adoption of the Strategic Compass led to the development of an implementation plan on WPS and gender mainstreaming commitments. EEAS staff is required to report on this plan every three months. The Civilian Compact too, is seen as more directly speaking to civilian CSDP missions and specifically targeted to their activities compared to GAP III.

Beyond the implementation plan of the Strategic Compass, a **number of incremental changes have also supported gender mainstreaming and the implementation of the WPS agenda in CSDP mission.**

**First**, due to efforts preceding the adoption of GAP III, such as the EU Action Plan on WPS (2019–2024) (Council of the EU 2019) and the work of senior gender and WPS advisors, **WPS has become an accepted component in CSDP missions overall**, and there is little (explicit) resistance to it, according to interviewees. Overall, the WPS agenda is well known across EU and EU member states’ civilian and military staff (with most EU Member States also having National Action Plans on WPS/UN Security Council Resolution 1325).

However, **EU member states have not set a concrete target so far**, and despite some increases in numbers, women remain chronically underrepresented, making up only 6.9% of military personnel and 24% of civilian personnel as of December 2021 (Smit 2022; Pfeifer



2022). As one interviewee noted however, with an average representation of around 10% in national militaries, increasing the number of women in CSDP missions will remain an uphill battle. Still, more effort could be made to better understand why women do not decide to join CSDP missions and what conditions could be improved to support women's deployment.

**Second**, most civilian CSDP missions have a **dedicated gender advisor who reports to the Chief of Staff and who can conduct gender analysis to inform the mission planning** (intelligence, operations, etc.) as well as organise gender training for CSDP staff. This evolution was supported by an increase in resources and supported by two key policies, the Civilian Compact and a Revised mission model structure which defined separate roles for human rights and gender advisors. In several cases, the positions of gender advisors in civilian CSDP missions are contractual positions, which according to interviewees, helped attract well-equipped candidates and lengthened the overall deployment of gender advisors compared to military CSDP missions. In addition to gender advisor positions, civilian CSDP missions now also have gender focal points from different sectors who support the work of gender advisors.

**In military CSDP missions, the picture that emerges is much more fragmented.** There, gender tends to be the responsibility of non-expert focal points which are often deployed short-term (in most cases six months) and can only dedicate part of their time or less to gender considerations (EEAS 2022). This short rotation also hampers establishing effective working relations with EU delegation staff, notably gender focal points.

The presence of full-time gender advisor or expert in CPCC at HQ level has made a difference to coordinate gender mainstreaming and WPS efforts at HQ level, as well as to support gender advisors and focal points in the missions. Following an organisational change at CPCC, the gender expert position is no longer situated within the Civilian Operations (CIVOPS) Commander office, adding an additional layer of authority to access the CIVOPS Commander directly. Going forward, it will be key to ensure that the gender expert retains access to CPCC leadership, and get their continued buy-in in supporting CPCC's gender mainstreaming track record.

**Third, CSDP missions have to report on their WPS activities,** which has contributed to WPS becoming an accepted component of mission planning and management. For instance, when a mission is briefed before CIVCOM, as part of strategic reviews, gender tends to be addressed and if not, some member states will likely ask for information and follow ups. According to interviewees, this has been key to introduce better accountability for WPS and gender, even though such briefs remain rather short and generic on how gender was addressed in the mission.

Interviewees stress that reporting guidelines, in theory, request mission reports to describe gender mainstreaming activities such as gender training. However, this is not mandatory and **in practice, there is no unified reporting** from missions on gender training before and during CSDP missions, and no systematic data on how missions cooperate with EU delegations, for instance. Still, heads of missions must provide information on their WPS and gender mainstreaming activities when requested by member states, which can create more pressure.

**Fourth**, efforts have been made to create a **clearer institutional framework on gender mainstreaming. In the past 18 months, this has been particularly the case** for EU Military Staff and for military CSDP missions, through the adoption of a set of key documents. This includes:

- **‘Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on gender expertise and networking’** have been developed, including the establishment of a monitoring team/network and dedicated terms of reference for gender focal points and a Senior Gender Advisor embedded within EU Military Staff. These SOPs established the Missions and Operations Gender Monitoring Team (MOGMT), which has become an important forum to discuss gender and WPS related cooperation for EU Military Staff. The MOGMT is led by the Senior Advisor on Gender, and includes EU Military Staff Gender Focal Points, as well as gender advisors and focal points from military CSDP missions. The Senior Gender Advisor has direct access to EU Military Staff leaderships and is responsible for organising monthly meetings of this network. These meetings, where guest speakers are invited and joint exercises held, carry an important socialisation function of gender mainstreaming analysis and tools, while also supporting cross-learning for gender advisors across military CSDP missions. In addition, for both civilian and military CSDP gender advisors, annual meetings are organised with joint sessions where they can exchange learnings across CSDP missions.
- A **Gender Action Plan for EU Military Staff (2022–2025)**, based on GAP III, has been developed and proposes key gender-related activities relevant for CSDP missions but also for EU partnerships (for example with NATO). It contains five key areas of work, each including internal and external objectives.

- **EU Operational Guidance documents on Gender**

**Mainstreaming for military CSDP missions** were developed in 2022. They built on existing guidance from within and outside the EU institutions, including notably the 2016 Operational Guidance for civilian CSDP missions. These guidelines cover the basics of gender analysis and gender and sex-disaggregated data collection amongst others. The new military guidelines on gender mainstreaming were presented to the EU Military Committee in February 2023 under the Swedish EU presidency.

- A **Code of Conduct for EU Military Staff** was developed. A similar document existed for civilian CSDP missions; but EU military staff fell out of the remit of this document.

According to interviews, this institutional framework (part of which is still recent) is expected to make a significant contribution to the uptake of gender mainstreaming across EU military staff, and provides important support for gender focal points and gender advisors in civilian and military CSDP missions.

**For civilian CSDP missions, the update of the Civilian Compact, expected this Spring during the Swedish presidency of the**

**European Union, will be an important moment.** The current version (adopted in 2018) sets out the shared objectives for civilian CSDP missions and their capabilities. The update is expected to integrate GAP III as well as good practices developed through the implementation of WPS in civilian CSDP missions, while strengthening commitments on gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive leadership and WPS. This would align the new Compact with objectives contained in other strategies. One interviewee underlined the qualitative difference between the Civilian Compact and, for

example GAP III, which is agreed upon with EU member states and thus has a high level of political buy-in.

For example, the Strategy and Action Plan to enhance Women's Participation in civilian CSDP missions (2021–2024) includes an ambitious target of 40 per cent women across missions and personnel categories by 2024, while acknowledging that gender parity remains the long-term objective (Smit 2022). Another important initiative in the pipeline is updating the CPCC's 2018 Operation Guidelines on gender mainstreaming 2018. According to interviewees, there is a need to capitalise on the use of these guidelines and the experience and best practices to date to truly benefit from them.

#### *Challenges with regards to WPS/Gender and CSDP missions*

**However, there are some persisting challenges.** First, there are reporting requirements on WPS for all CSDP missions (see above). But interviewees note that so far, there has been a **lack of integrated monitoring and evaluation**, including of how gender and WPS policies and activities have improved the effectiveness of missions and the situation of women and men within, and of those who interact with, the missions. This stems, in part, from continued challenges in collecting data. In a recent EEAS study, only 30% of gender advisors reported collecting sex-disaggregated data, and sex-disaggregated data collected by CSDP military operations does not specify the positions held by women and men including leadership positions (EEAS 2022). The collection of data on CSDP missions is not homogenised between the EU and EU member states, and data is not systematically shared (EEAS 2022).

The considerable extent of restricted communication, due to security considerations, hampers a certain level of information exchange between CSDP missions, between CSDP mission and delegation, and with Headquarters. This prevents learning and a common understanding of what needs to be done to improve the effective integration of gender and WPS in CSDP missions. While restricted communication will remain a reality, it would merit some thoughtful consideration to assess how lessons learned and experiences from missions could be captured and distilled better. For instance, handover mechanisms between old and new gender advisors could be envisaged.

Related to this, **a proliferation of guidelines and action plans (on GAP III, the Strategic Compass, the Civilian Compact, etc.) risks making monitoring and reporting quite complex.** There is a need for sustained efforts to make sure the information flows join up at some level and are captured well to give a full, integrated picture of what is happening across EU missions, delegations and at Headquarter level. This would also support the EU's external communication on GAP III and WPS to reflect the extent of efforts undertaken to push the gender equality agenda forward.

Second, **budget allocations for gender and WPS in CSDP missions reveal that this remains a rather low priority for EU member states.** Indeed, there is no dedicated budget to implement the EU Action Plan on WPS, no EU budget line for financing gender advisors across all CSDP missions (who are mostly seconded from the so-called "like-minded" EU member states), and no structured gender-budgeting approach to track all gender-related spending in CSDP missions within the EEAS (EP 2017; EP 2022). In a recent EEAS survey, senior CSDP management staff, gender advisors and gender focal points

estimated that less than 1% of the mission budget was allocated to gender and WPS-related activities (EEAS 2022).

While EU CSDP missions and operations need to have a gender advisor, in practice, it remains an add-on which relies on the ability and willingness of EU MS to second competent staff to such positions. In addition, gender advisor posts in military CSDP missions sometimes remain vacant for long periods of time (EP 2022). Therefore, while the promotion of gender mainstreaming and WPS in CSDP missions is also a political process pushed by motivated staff and by leadership, the limited budget for implementing gender commitments is impacting the selection of CSDP gender advisors and their ability to perform effectively.

At the same time, **WPS should not be understood and disseminated only as an Agenda for conflict-affected countries**. Women's participation in the security forces and security decisions are key elements of WPS, both for EU member states and partner countries affected by conflict. One important avenue to shift this perception and to strengthen both internal and external commitments to WPS, would be for the EEAS continue calling on EU member-states themselves to uphold their internal WPS commitments (in line with their own National Action Plans on WPS), the EU Strategic Approach to WPS and its Action Plan, and the 2018 Council Conclusions on WPS.

Increased capacity and understanding of WPS across EU member state institutions and relevant ministries (Foreign Affairs, Defense, etc.) will support the EU's overall contribution to the WPS agenda, both internally and externally. This challenge of advancing WPS both internally and externally also underlines the important interplay and complementarity needed between EU HQ, EU Member States, and EU

CSDP missions to ensure WPS efforts are coherent and self-reinforcing across EU interventions and activities. According to an interlocutor from the EEAS, the appointment of gender focal points or gender advisors by EU member states in their Embassies could also support better cooperation between EU member states, EU HQ, CSDP missions and EU delegations on gender and WPS.

Third, there is also **room for improvement when it comes to gender training for CSDP mission staff before and during missions, especially for military commanders and mission managers** who are well-placed to promote an environment and work culture conducive to gender equality. As interviewees noted, despite a growing buy-in for gender mainstreaming, there remains a lack of acknowledgment of its importance and even passive resistance in some cases, among delegation and mission staff as well as leadership. This is often based on a lack of knowledge, affinity with gender issues but also a perceived sense of competing agendas and the absence of strong accountability mechanisms (for example through job evaluation or appraisals).

The push to invest in gender-responsive leadership (FBA 2023) and 'leading by example' aims to tackle this shortcoming. The concept of gender-responsive leadership will likely be integrated in the updated Civilian Compact and has been identified as a priority for the EU Ambassador on Gender and Diversity. As part of this endeavour, a portion of senior management in the EEAS but also in the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA) have received training on gender-responsive leadership.

Beyond efforts to instil gender-responsive leadership, including in CSDP missions, further investing in strengthening the capacity and



expertise of EU gender experts is also necessary, including through continued training. As one interviewee noted, there is not just a lack of thematic gender expertise, but also context-specific or regional expertise on pertinent gender issues within a given country or regional context.

Additional training is particularly needed for gender focal points in CSDP missions, who unlike gender advisors, do not always have gender-specific expertise. That gender training also takes place during deployment in CSDP missions, is key because a number of CSDP staff do not receive gender training prior to their deployment. In most cases, this is due to the fact that they are seconded staff from member states<sup>4</sup> that do not provide gender training (EEAS 2022).

### *Opportunities for further improvement*

Two interconnected areas for further improvement emerge. There is room for **improving training and the development of skills and expertise** to conduct gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. This should be supported by a **push to institutionalise existing expertise and strengthen learning on gender mainstreaming across CSDP missions**, combined with gender-sensitive leadership, including across EU military staff and mission commanders.

According to interviews, gender training for CSDP missions tends to focus on introductory information such as definitions of gender approaches and gender-based violence, human rights, as well as basic safeguarding requirements. While this approach is partly understandable (due to time and resource limitations, frequent rotation of staff, low awareness of the basic concepts of gender equality among some trainees, etc.), **staff could be encouraged to**

**engage more with ways to integrate gender equality in their day-to-day work and in the planning of the missions.** Such hands-on training could also encourage men to feel more connected to gender considerations, as this remains limited currently according to our interviews. For mission commanders in particular, who have multiple responsibilities but whose role is crucial to promote WPS, gender training may be of more added value if it is linked clearly with concrete challenges they face on the ground.

An example of targeted training which operational staff could receive includes **how to interact with civilian populations in a gender-responsive manner**, including how to assist women and girls in conflict situations who may need protection or access to restorative justice (Almqvist 2021). This is key considering the low proportion of women in operational staff who interact directly with local populations, around 20% in civilian CSDP missions for instance (EEAS 2021). According to interviewees, gender training should also include cultural awareness around gender equality language and approaches in the country of intervention.

During the training, **staff should also be encouraged to contribute to creating a positive work environment for both female and male staff.** CSDP missions remain marked by a rather non-inclusive workplace culture affecting the retention of female staff, which is marked for instance by a lack of female role models, and the non-family policy which has been a barrier for both women and men (EEAS 2021).

Furthermore, **better exchanges between civilian and military CSDP missions could help improve training curricula**, so as to benefit from the gender initiatives put in place in the civilian CSDP missions

which have a longer gender mainstreaming track record and higher proportion of female staff than military CSDP missions (EP 2022).

The Standard Operating Procedures on gender expertise and networking have reinforced the ability of military CSDP missions' gender advisors to have regular exchanges and cross learning on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. But (seconded) CSDP gender advisors are deployed for a very short time and their gender expertise highly depends on their prior training. Moreover, resources to conduct gender analysis are limited, and there is an overall lack of geographic gender expertise meaning that EU staff approach gender analysis in a generalist, methodological manner. To ensure stronger institutional anchoring of gender mainstreaming in EU CSDP mission, gender mainstreaming should be made part and parcel of CSDP mission, planning, management, and operationalisation, with a shared responsibility for gender mainstreaming including from military leadership.

The **development of an 'EU Concept of gender mainstreaming' for CSDP missions via a consultative process** (with gender focal points, technical military experts, etc.), which is currently being discussed at the EEAS, **is a promising opportunity**. Amongst other things, this could institutionalise the conduct of a gender analysis prior to the planning of missions, which does not happen automatically at the moment while it is an essential step to ensure gender is mainstreamed throughout the key provisions and procedures of CSDP missions. Another **key momentum lies ahead with the update of the Civilian Compact later this Spring**, which provides an opportunity to capitalise on existing experiences, build on a wide range of efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming and upgrade the capabilities of (civilian) CSDP missions.

## Findings & Recommendations

This brief is part of a series of briefing notes, where we paid special attention to three main issues, namely institutional leadership including the role of the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, the implementation of GAP III's priority on women economic empowerment, as well as the implementation of WPS which is also a GAP III priority.

In this briefing note, we looked at whether the EU's Gender Action Plan III has made a difference with regards to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in partner countries, with a specific focus on Kenya, Bangladesh and Mozambique. We also assessed the impact of GAP III on CSDP missions. Our research shows that overall, GAP III has not helped to overcome existing challenges to WPS implementation such as limited internal expertise, coordination and financing.

### *Our findings:*

1. To a certain extent, **the EU's new programming processes and requirements** under the NDICI-GE, such as conducting Gender country profiles and developing country level implementation plans (CLIPs) on gender, **have encouraged certain EU delegations, in dialogue with partner countries, to rethink objectives and interventions on WPS more explicitly.** However, current programming documents like the MIPs and CLIPs show a limited understanding of WPS which **does not consistently recognise women's diverse roles in conflicts, men's role in the WPS agenda, and intersectionality.**
2. Our research shows that in most cases, **gender focal points in EU delegations are not well equipped to tackle WPS issues,**

and that coordination between the work of gender focal points and advisors in EU delegations and CSDP missions remain very limited. Gender focal points in EU delegations often miss the expertise, seniority and experience to address the full GAP III agenda including WPS, and push them to the delegations' leadership. EU delegation focal points and CSDP gender advisors also have very different deployment terms, with extremely short rotation for military CSDP gender advisors. The GAP III and the CLIP process were expected to stimulate more exchange and coordination on gender and WPS but they did not lead to tangible improvements so far.

3. While programming requirements have encouraged EU delegations to think about gender equality and WPS issues more explicitly, **political traction and will from partner countries often shape the extent to which the full WPS agenda can be addressed in EU programming.** In many cases, gender-based violence (GBV) is selected as a priority area, but GBV activities often fail to address more structural factors and root causes of gender inequality. Still good examples emerge, such as the integrated approach to WPS, resilience building and human rights developed by the EU delegation in Mozambique to address security and development needs in the north of Mozambique.
4. For the EU's CSDP missions, **GAP III has provided an impetus but has not made a direct, tangible difference as to how WPS is addressed thus far. Notwithstanding, there have been a number of improvements in recent years.** WPS has become an accepted component of CSDP missions, despite the chronic underrepresentation of women to date and enduring obstacles to institutionalise knowledge and experience on gender mainstreaming and WPS. Most CSDP missions have a gender

advisor or focal point responsible for gender analysis, and gender training is organised for CSDP staff. Reporting on gender and WPS has been strengthened for CSDP missions, including in Council Working groups, but has so far not provided a comprehensive picture of the WPS activities implemented and their impact.

5. **Persistent challenges remain, such as lack of data on gender integration efforts and women's participation in CSDP missions, and weak monitoring and reporting mechanisms.**

The budget for gender and WPS in CSDP missions remain low and highly dependent on whether this is seen as a priority by EU member states, considering gender advisors are most often seconded staff from EU member states (often from the so-called "like-minded" countries).

6. Finally, in line with the push for gender-responsive leadership promoted by the EU Ambassador on Gender and Diversity, **gender training for CSDP mission staff can be further improved, notably for military commanders and mission managers**, to integrate gender in their day-to-day work and in the missions' planning.

*Recommendations for the EU and EU member states:*

Based on our findings, we put forward the following recommendation to improve the implementation of WPS and its integration in efforts to implement GAP III:

***The EU and its member states should take the necessary steps to fully integrate a gender equality perspective incorporating WPS in their peace and security engagements including programming and CSDP missions, by involving mission leadership and***

***strengthening working-level exchanges on WPS and gender equality, especially in conflict affected countries.***

More specifically:

- 1. The EU and member states should consider providing increased funding for full time CSDP gender advisors in all EU CSDP missions.** The EU should provide sufficient funding and technical support (structures) to ensure that gender advisors can address gender meaningfully, and that there is dedicated and regular training on gender issues including for military commanders and mission managers. Indeed, leadership plays an important role in signalling commitment and creating a conducive environment to promote gender equality and WPS.
- 2. WPS should be part of the job description of all gender focal points, in particular those working in conflict-affected countries.** This means making clear that gender focal points have a responsibility to advance WPS and requiring them to either have WPS experience or commit to following training on WPS. This training could put a strong emphasis on women's diverse roles in conflicts, men's participation in WPS efforts, cultural awareness around sensitivities to gender in the partner country, and intersectionality. This can help ensure that EU programming documents like the MIPs and CLIPs better reflect these realities. Gender advisors and focal points should be guaranteed sufficient access to senior management and leadership. Handover mechanism for incoming gender advisors and focal points should be envisaged, as part of a broader reflection on how to ensure information exchange and cross-learning, especially in CSDP missions, given the limits of security requirements.
- 3. The EU should further support the institutionalisation of a gender network,** which should function as an internal

community of practice of gender advisors and focal points, to disseminate existing knowledge and best practices. This network should support stronger exchanges between gender focal points in the EU delegations and gender advisors and focal points in CSDP missions, while keeping sufficient space to address targeted training and networking needs of each group (i.e., respectively for civilian, military and EUD advisors/focal points). This could build on the annual meetings of EU delegation and CSDP missions human rights and gender advisors, while also including non-gender focused EU staff such as political staff. The progress report on GAP III should pay special attention to such best practices and give quantitative and qualitative information on WPS implementation including at the political level.

4. **EU Heads of Delegations and Mission commanders should actively support and strengthen coordination** between CSDP staff including the gender advisor, and EUD staff working on gender equality including gender focal points. They should also stimulate exchanges among other staff beyond gender advisors and focal points. Together, they can explore ways to reinforce the analysis and design of activities, for instance via monthly meetings where motivated staff share experiences on gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and WPS in their respective fields of work.
5. **Cooperation on WPS and gender mainstreaming between EU delegations, EU CSDP mission and EU member states needs to be reinforced**, especially in countries where EU member states have gained long-term expertise in implementing WPS. For this improved cooperation to happen, EU delegations should play a more proactive role in WPS coordination mechanisms, and establish more regular bilateral exchanges on WPS with



member states. Moreover, EU member states could appoint gender focal points in their own embassies more systematically, which would open a channel for cooperation on gender issues between the gender focal points (or advisors) of EU delegations, EU member states, as well as CSDP missions.

6. **EU member states, especially those strongly committed to gender equality, should further fulfil their responsibility to request heads of EU CSDP missions to report** (notably, in the relevant Council working groups) on the WPS-specific activities (including training and cooperation with EU delegations) and reporting tools they have set up. This will help strengthen the accountability and impact of missions on WPS and gender mainstreaming.

## Acknowledgements

This brief is one of a three-part series produced under the partnership between ECDPM, the Centre for Africa-Europe relations, and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2023. The views are the authors' and do not represent those of the Swedish Presidency, the Government of Sweden or ECDPM. We are grateful to everyone who shared views and insights during the interviews, as well as to ECDPM colleagues Lidet Tadesse, for her feedback and guidance, and Joyce Olders, Virginia Mucchi, Nina Thijssen, Isabell Wutz and Yaseena van 't Hoff for their work on layout and communication. Comments can be sent to Sophie Desmidt at [sd@ecdpm.org](mailto:sd@ecdpm.org).

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## Endnotes

1. To get an overview on how the EU approaches WPS at country level, we reviewed the Multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs, Annual Action Plans (AAPs) and GAP III's Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) for 16 African countries. The sample countries were chosen based on regional representativeness and to include a diversity of countries, including in terms of fragility and socio-economic conditions. The countries included in the analysis are DRC, Congo, Central African Republic, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Chad, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
2. For this brief, some 19 interviews were held that covered WPS and CSDP related issues. Interviewees included representatives from various EU institutions (EEAS, INTPA, EU delegations), representatives from selected member states active in EU council working groups (PSC, Military Committee, etc.), representatives from European MFAs and NGOs.
3. Including Gender country profiles, Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) and Multiannual Indicative Programming (MIPs) Based on available information, very few Team Europe Initiatives seem to include WPS. with exceptions in [Zimbabwe](#). Other TEIs on security include a gender component, including in [Burkina Faso](#), [Niger](#) and [The Great Lakes region](#).
4. According to interviewees, there is pre-deployment training on gender for staff contracted by the EU. The EU has approved extensive training for gender advisors and focal points (3-5 days), force commanders and other staff officers responsible for planning (1-2 days), and a basic training for other staff. They have provided guidance on such trainings to EU member states but lack clarity on how different EU member states are applying it.