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A look at the implementation of the WPS Agenda



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# Germany and the EU's pursuit of gender equality in peace and security: A look at the implementation of the WPS Agenda

Ruxandra Nastasa

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## Abstract

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) is an international framework addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in peacebuilding efforts. The Security Council called on Member States to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) to operationalize the four pillars of the Agenda. This study looks at the relevant steps undertaken by both Germany and the European Union. The author calls for improvements on either level and makes four recommendations.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Agenda für Frauen, Frieden und Sicherheit (Women, Peace and Security Agenda, WPSA) ist ein internationaler Rahmen, der sich mit den unverhältnismäßigen Auswirkungen bewaffneter Konflikte auf Frauen und Mädchen befasst und ihre sinnvolle Beteiligung an friedensschaffenden Maßnahmen fördert. Der Sicherheitsrat forderte die Mitgliedstaaten auf, Nationale Aktionspläne (NAPs) zu entwickeln, um die vier Säulen der Agenda umzusetzen. In dieser Studie werden die entsprechenden Schritte Deutschlands und der Europäischen Union untersucht. Die Autorin fordert Verbesserungen auf beiden Ebenen und gibt vier Empfehlungen dazu.

## I. Content, reception and implementation of the WPSA

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA), adopted by the United Nations Security Council in 2000, is an international framework aimed at addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in peacebuilding efforts. The WPSA has been lauded for raising awareness of gender issues in peace and security contexts and advocating for the empowerment of women. However, it has also faced criticisms for its limited focus on addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and for not adequately addressing the intersecting experiences of marginalized groups of women. In response to these concerns, the Security Council called on Member States to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) to operationalize the four pillars of the Agenda. While progress has been made in the adoption of NAPs, with 54% of UN Member States having developed one as of the current date, challenges remain in ensuring effective implementation of the Agenda.

### 1. The Women Peace and Security Agenda

The four pillars of the Agenda are commonly conceptualized as follows:

#### Participation

Women must be equally represented in all decision-making processes related to peace and security, including peace negotiations, conflict prevention, and management mechanisms. The integration of a gender perspective into all UN peace and security initiatives is a fundamental aspect of the agenda.

#### Prevention

Conflict prevention through gender equality and awareness is a crucial component of the agenda. The training of peacekeepers and Gender Advisers on issues related to gender and sexual violence and the implementation of measures to prevent sexual violence are necessary.

#### Protection

The protection of women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict situations is a critical component of the agenda. UN Member States are obligated to implement measures to prevent and protect against such violence and provide support for survivors.

#### Relief and Recovery

Responses to international conflicts must be gender equitable, including provision of appropriate services and consideration of gender-based needs for recovery and reconstruction. The agenda also calls for the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence and the provision of reparations for survivors.

In addition to addressing the pressing needs of women and girls in conflict situations, the WPSA also seeks their long-term empowerment. This includes initiatives aimed at promoting economic empowerment, access to education and training opportunities, followed by increasing political participation through measures such as quotas.

## 2. Global response

The global response to the WPS Agenda varies. While being received with a lot of enthusiasm by International Organizations and Governments all over the world<sup>1</sup>, it is still highly criticized as seen even in the UN Security Council reports<sup>2</sup>.

Its advocates praise the Agenda for its focus on the specific needs and experiences of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Over the years, the Agenda, as well as the nine following resolutions of the UN Security Council<sup>3</sup>, had a positive impact on raising awareness to gender issues, better integrating a gender perspective into daily peace and security efforts<sup>4</sup>. In 2013, an international team of independent experts conducted a review of the implementation of gender policies and plans in NATO-led missions. Their findings revealed “significant progress” in the implementation of Resolution 1325, a landmark resolution on women, peace and security.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a quantitative analysis demonstrated a significant increase in the production of policy documents related to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda over the years, indicating its growing prominence.<sup>6</sup> This increase in policy documents has also facilitated the contextualization of sexual violence by providing statistics and enabling the collection of data on this issue.<sup>7</sup>

Critics on the other hand claim that the Agenda is not going far enough in addressing the root causes of gender-based violence<sup>8</sup> and that there are not enough concrete measures for implementation, leading to inefficiency of the Agenda.<sup>9</sup> For example, according to a research made

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<sup>1</sup> This includes international organizations such as the United Nations, NATO and the European Union, as well as non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, and the International Women's Rights Action Watch.

<sup>2</sup> UN Security Council, 9267<sup>th</sup> Meeting, covered by UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases from 07.03.2023, at [press.un.org/en/2023/sc15221.doc.html](http://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15221.doc.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>3</sup> Resolutions: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

<sup>4</sup> Marriët Schuurman, *NATO and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Time to Bring It Home*, 14 (3) *Connections* 1 (2015).

<sup>5</sup> Helené Lackenbauer, Richard Langlais, *Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions*, Swedish Defense Research Agency (2013), at [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2013\\_10/20131021\\_131023-UNSCR1325-review-final.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2013_10/20131021_131023-UNSCR1325-review-final.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Kirby, Laura J. Shepherd, *Women, Peace, and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem*, 6 (3) *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1 (2021).

<sup>7</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/secretary-generals-reports](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/secretary-generals-reports) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>8</sup> Sahla Aroussi, *Women, Peace, and Security and the DRC: Time to Rethink Wartime Sexual Violence as Gender-Based Violence?* 13(3) *Politics & Gender* 488 (2017); Soumita Basu, Paul Kirby, Laura J. Shepherd: *Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Cartography*, in *New Directions in Women, Peace and Security*, 1-26 (Bristol University Press, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Kirby, Laura J. Shepherd, *The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda*, 92 (2) *International Affairs* 373 (2016); Vanessa F. Newby, Alanna O'Malley, *Introduction: WPS 20 Years On: Where Are the Women Now?*, 1 (3) *Global Studies Quarterly* 1 (2021); Security Council Report, “*Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative*”(2022) at [www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/wps\\_goldenthreads\\_2022.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/wps_goldenthreads_2022.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Vanessa Newby, Clotilde Sebag, *Gender Sidestreaming? Analysing Gender Mainstreaming in National Militaries and International Peacekeeping*, 6 *European Journal of International Security*, 148 (2021).

in 2018, “the [total] number of women signing peace agreements has not increased since UNSCR 1325 has been adopted.”<sup>10</sup> Additionally, it is also argued that it does not sufficiently address the intersectionality of marginalized groups of women, such as women with disabilities<sup>11</sup> or from LGBTI communities<sup>12</sup>.

With the Agenda facing significant criticism early on, it was only natural for the Security Council to realize that the success and actualization of the Resolution required local implementation. In response to this, the Security Council, through a presidential statement in 2004, encouraged Member States to develop NAPs as a means to enhance the execution of the four pillars of the Agenda.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. National Action Plans

UN Women describes NAPs as “[...] national-level strategy documents that outline a government’s approach and course of action for localizing action on the WPSA. These documents outline objectives and activities that countries take, both on a domestic and international level, to secure the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings as well as prevent armed conflict and violence and ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace and security.”<sup>14</sup>

The first NAP was released in 2005 by Denmark, pursuant to the 2004 recommendation of the UN Secretary-General<sup>15</sup>. The implementation of NAPs has been largely led by Northern European countries, with Denmark being followed by Norway, Sweden and the UK. The adoption of NAPs by countries affected by prolonged conflicts has been slower on the other hand, with Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, and Liberia being among the first to adopt such plans in 2008, 2008, and 2009 respectively. As of the current date, only 104 UN Member States, constituting 54% of the total membership, have adopted a National Action Plan in regards to Resolution 1325. A third of these plans have become outdated, having expired prior to or in 2021.<sup>16</sup>

The EU was slow to formally join the WPSA, adopting a “Comprehensive Approach” to it in 2008, and has faced mixed reactions to its WPS Action Plan for 2019-2024.

Germany has also been an active participant in the WPSA, having developed three NAPs since 2013, with the most recent one released in 2021.

On the one hand, this article will examine the EU's efforts and the challenges it faces in achieving its six prioritized objectives, particularly in the context of illiberal and anti-gender tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe.

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<sup>10</sup> Jana Krause, Werner Krause, Piia Bränfors, *Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace*, 6 *International Interactions*, 985 (2018).

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Stienstra, *WPS, Gender, and Disabilities*, in Sara E. Davies, and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Oxford Handbooks 618–627 (Oxford Academic 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Davis, Jessica Stern, *WPS and LGBTI Rights*, in Sara E. Davies, and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Oxford Handbooks 657–668 (Oxford Academic 2018).

<sup>13</sup> UNSC, Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/204/40, Oct. 2004, p. 3. Action plans; Paul Kirby, Laura Shepherd, *The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda*, 92 *International Affairs* 373 (2016).

<sup>14</sup> UN Women, 1325naps.peacewomen.org (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>15</sup> UN Women, www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-2004-814-E.pdf (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>16</sup> UN Women, 1325naps.peacewomen.org (last viewed 27.04.2023).



On the other hand, this article will also discuss Germany's engagement with the WPSA and analyze its Feminist Foreign Policy, which advocates for women's participation in peace processes, strengthening their role in conflict resolution, and promoting gender equality in all areas of foreign policy.

Overall, this article contributes to the understanding of the implementation of the WPSA in Europe and the efforts made by Germany and the EU towards promoting women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding.

## II. Germany

Germany's engagement with the WPSA was relatively delayed, with the country issuing its first NAP in 2012. However, there were no specific political groups or individuals who actively opposed the WPSA and the adoption of the National Action Plan in Germany. Rather, it was a matter of prioritization and political decision-making, weighing resources, political will, and other factors.

In terms of domestic policy implications, the NAPs are an instrument designed to help promote gender equality and the protection of women's rights in all areas of society, with focus the field of peace and security policy. They also call for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence in peacetime, and access to resources and services that address their needs and interests at national and international levels. The NAPs aim to increase the proportion of women among German military, police and civilian personnel as well as work towards dismantling discriminatory and violence-related stereotypes about gender roles, especially among men and boys. Moreover, they aim to strengthen criminal prosecution and sexual criminal law.

The NAPs mainly concentrate on the foreign policy levels and the implementation outside of Germany. At this level, the NAPs aim to ensure that the WPSA is mainstreamed in international cooperation and German foreign policy. The NAPs call for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights in development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding, as well as the participation of women and girls in international peace missions and diplomatic efforts.

Therefore, the NAP has both domestic and foreign policy implications and is intended to help advance the women's peace-security agenda both domestically and internationally.

The current working group includes personnel of The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, The Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, The Federal Ministry of Defence, The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and primary, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs under which three NAPs have been released:

### 1. 2013–2016 NAP

The first German NAP was adopted on December 19, 2012. The plan summarizes existing activities and prioritizes the comprehensive participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, protection against human rights violations and sexual violence, and effective prosecution of crimes against women and girls. Prevention was highlighted as a continuous element of foreign policy, and a gender perspective had to be incorporated in peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures. The government also advocated for greater participation of women in all aspects of crisis prevention and conflict management and proposes measures to protect women and girls from violence, including sexual violence against men, as well as measures for reintegration and reconstruction. The implementation of these measures was to

be coordinated by an interministerial working group and financed from the relevant ministries' regular budgets. The government aimed to expand cooperation with civil society and international actors to implement the WPSA.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. 2017–2020 NAP

With the implementation of its second NAP on January 11, 2017, the German Government sought to further advance the six primary thematic areas addressed in its previous NAP: prevention, participation, protection, reconstruction, preparation of operations, and criminal prosecution on a national and international level. This NAP further emphasized a systematic integration of a gender perspective in the prevention of conflict, crisis, and violence. Additionally, the NAP aimed to expand the participation and leadership role of women in all stages of conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, and reconstruction and to consider the concerns and interests of women and girls in development, peace, security policy, and humanitarian measures. The NAP also prioritized improving protection from sexual and gender-based violence at the national and international level and combating the impunity of perpetrators and aimed to reinforce and promote the WPSA at the national, regional, and international levels. A new aspect is the topic of extremism: The German government aimed to provide support to women peacebuilders as active contributors in countering and preventing extremism. Programs aimed at preventing violent extremism are meant to consider the roles, needs, and rights of individuals of all genders.<sup>18</sup>

## 3. 2021–2024 NAP

The third National Action Plan (NAP), adopted on February 24, 2021, was only met with limited substantive changes compared to the previous NAPs. The six prioritized areas remained unchanged, with slight modifications made in style. The plan introduced a new focus on gender-responsive approaches to climate protection, emphasizing equal participation of women in national and international climate protection processes. The NAP also addressed the inclusion of women's rights and support for LGBTI activists, ensuring protection and support for their work. The Federal Foreign Office recognizes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the advancement of equal rights and addresses this in its efforts to ensure that the German COVID-19 response and recovery strategies are gender-responsive. These strategies aim to implement the WPSA in a transparent, efficient, and effective manner.<sup>19</sup>

## 4. Effectiveness of Germany's NAPs and criticism

This paper will try to assess certain German achievements in the health and financial resources domains, as outlined in the 2022 Gender Equality Index by the European Institute for Gender

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<sup>17</sup> Action Plan of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 for the Period 2013 – 2016 at [www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/156106/ecbd33c71dc1d4e22f1b206669d20917/action-plan-on-resolution-1325-period-2017-2020-data.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/156106/ecbd33c71dc1d4e22f1b206669d20917/action-plan-on-resolution-1325-period-2017-2020-data.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023); English version available at: [1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Germany-NAP.pdf](https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Germany-NAP.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>18</sup> Action Plan of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the Period 2017 – 2020, available at [dserver.bundes-tag.de/btd/17/119/1711943.pdf](https://dserver.bundes-tag.de/btd/17/119/1711943.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>19</sup> The German Federal Government's Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda 2021-2024, available at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/216940/3596859eebe39f90fa327e81ede416a3/aktionsplan1325-data.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/216940/3596859eebe39f90fa327e81ede416a3/aktionsplan1325-data.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

Equality (EIGE). The aim is to examine whether the NAPs have had a positive impact at national level, considering the criticisms and commendations they have garnered:

Germany's efforts in promoting gender equality and women's rights have been recognized by organizations such as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

The latest 2022 Gender Equality Index of EIGE<sup>20</sup> (which is however mostly based on data from 2020) reveals that Germany achieved high rankings in the domains of health and financial resources, scoring 90 and 85.2 out of 100, respectively, which significantly surpasses the corresponding EU averages. In contrast, when considering the overall index score, Germany falls within the range of the EU average, with a score of 68.7, compared to the average score of 68.6, ranking 11th out of all 27 EU Nations. This is due to the low scores concerning gender equality in allocation of time spent doing care and domestic work and social activities (65) and gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres (64,8) as well as in educational attainment, participation in education and training over the life course and gender segregation (54,7). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has acknowledged the consistent and favorable progress that Germany has made in gender equality, with the initial data evaluation in 2010 serving as the starting point for such recognition.

According to this EIGE study, there has been a steady increase in equality from beginning of the study up until 2022, with an increase of 6,1 points. While the concrete correlation with the NAPs is not proven, this data could still serve as an indicator that the efforts were not in vain, although there is still a lot to be done.

The "G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps" from 2022, based on OECD data comes to a similar conclusion.<sup>21</sup> A significant point of criticism here, however, concerns the gender pay gap in Germany, which stands at 14.2%, exceeding the average of 12% across the OECD members.

Consequently, based on the EIGE and OECD data analysis, it can be concluded that the NAPs might have had an impact at the national level, if one compares the data before and after the issuing of the NAPs.

Opposition parties, including "Die Linke"<sup>22</sup>, a left-wing party, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation<sup>23</sup>, which is affiliated with the "Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen" party, have criticized the NAPs, expressing their skepticism toward the use of warfare as a means of achieving peace. Specifically, they have expressed concerns that Germany's participation in armed conflict and the export of arms is incongruous with the goals of the WPS Agenda. These critiques were however voiced prior to the Green party's ascension to a position of power in the federal government and the conflict in Ukraine.

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<sup>20</sup> EIGE, [eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/DE](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/DE) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>21</sup> OECD, G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps (2022) at [www.g7germany.de/re-source/blob/974430/2058072/5eafec9454770407b4f5719778ff7f50/2022-06-28-gender-gap-germany-data.pdf?download=1](https://www.g7germany.de/re-source/blob/974430/2058072/5eafec9454770407b4f5719778ff7f50/2022-06-28-gender-gap-germany-data.pdf?download=1) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>22</sup> Linksfraktion at [www.linksfraktion.de/themen/a-z/detailansicht/frauen-und-friedenssicherung/](https://www.linksfraktion.de/themen/a-z/detailansicht/frauen-und-friedenssicherung/) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Böll Foundation at [www.boell.de/de/2022/07/29/einfluss-feministischer-friedens-und-frauenbewegungen-auf-buendnis-90-die-gruenen](https://www.boell.de/de/2022/07/29/einfluss-feministischer-friedens-und-frauenbewegungen-auf-buendnis-90-die-gruenen) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

Additional criticism is targeted at the essence of the NAPs, contending that although Resolution 1325 presents women as empowered, the NAPs perpetuate a portrayal of women as victims and the weaker gender.<sup>24</sup>

It is also crucial to acknowledge the overarching critique that pertains to the costs associated with the implementation of NAPs, a common issue experienced worldwide that concerns securing the necessary financial resources to realize the objectives of the NAPs.

## 5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Feminist Foreign Policy

During the current (2021-2025) Government administration, there has been no announcement or release of a new NAP on the WPSA. In order to obtain updates on the legislative status and potential plans for a new NAP, an inquiry we made an inquiry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The response received from Danielle Feldstein, the WPS Desk Officer at the Ministry, was prompt and provided valuable insights. The need for prompt action in developing a subsequent NAP for the period after 2024 is critical, as was demonstrated by the issuance of the third NAP by the previous government prior to the 2021 elections. However, the content of the message was somewhat peculiar:

*“The agenda is also a political priority under the current government, as you can see from the coalition agreement, according to which the German government wants to ‘ambitiously implement and further develop the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Resolution 1325’. While we are currently still busy implementing and monitoring the current action plan, we are also doing some initial preparatory work for the conception of the next action plan. So there will be work done on a new action plan during the current legislative period.”*

Based on the final sentence and the unclear content of the message received, we presume that the team responsible for the NAPs is uncertain about the next steps and is potentially encountering challenges in implementing the previous NAP. As there are slightly two years remaining until the next elections, we are eager to observe the evolution of the situation.

The reference to the coalition agreement was fruitful. In it, and even in the same sentence in which the WPSA is mentioned, we can find the reference to the Feminist Foreign Policy, a project which is currently a lot more prominent in the German Foreign office:<sup>25</sup>

The German feminist foreign policy sets similar priorities to the WPS Agenda in that it advocates women's participation in peace processes and the strengthening of their role in conflict resolution and reconstruction. It also includes gender-based violence in its agenda and aims to promote women's rights worldwide.

One difference, however, is that German feminist foreign policy takes a broader approach that includes promoting gender equality in all areas of foreign policy, such as trade, development cooperation, and diplomacy, beyond conflict and security, integrating gender equality into Germany's overall international engagement. The WPSA, on the other hand, focuses mainly on the role of women in peace and security policy, although the nuances are rather insignificant in practice.

The main difference between the two consists in the legal status and binding nature. The WPS Agenda is a legally binding resolution of the UN Security Council and obliges member states

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<sup>24</sup> Sahla Arroussi, *National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security as Tools of foreign policy: reconsidering Gender Security in the West* in Sahla Arroussi (ed.), *Rethinking National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security* (29-39 IOS Press 2017).

<sup>25</sup> [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/ffp-guidelines/2585074?openAccordionId=item-2585076-0-panel](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/ffp-guidelines/2585074?openAccordionId=item-2585076-0-panel); Annalenna Baerbock, introductory speech to feminist guidelines from 01.03.2023, available at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/baerbock-leitlinien-ffp/2585138](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/baerbock-leitlinien-ffp/2585138) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

to take measures to implement the agenda, just as Security Council resolutions are binding under international law. The German feminist foreign policy, on the other hand, is not a legally binding agreement, but a political agenda that is implemented on a voluntary basis. This, however, is also true for NAPs in general.

Also, the resources and institutional support available to both initiatives varies: While the WPSA has a dedicated office and fund to support its implementation and even an entire dedicated institution (UN Women), the German feminist foreign policy is part of a broader foreign policy agenda funded and supported by the German government.

In summary, it can be said that German feminist foreign policy and the WPSA share a similar vision of promoting gender equality and empowering women in peace and security, but German feminist foreign policy has a broader approach that includes other aspects of foreign policy. Also, while they share common goals and priorities, they also have differences in terms of their legal status, target groups, and resources as well as institutional support.

## 6. Criticism of the Feminist Foreign Policy

The Guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy and the Guidelines and the Feminist Development Policy for Sustainable Development<sup>26</sup>, both issued on March 1st, 2023, have generated mixed reactions, particularly in light of recent international conflicts. As mentioned before, the term “Feminist Foreign Policy” was included in the current Government's coalition agreement, spearheaded by Annalena Baerbock, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. Notably, Resolution 1325 is mentioned in the same paragraph, with the Government expressing its intention to “ambitiously implement and develop the NAP.” Based on the response of the WPS Desk Officer at the Ministry, it appears that the development of a new NAP on Women, Peace, and Security may however not be a priority during the current legislative period.

Some NGOs have welcomed the Guidelines with the expectation that it may result in increased funding and greater visibility, as well as Kristina Lunz, who she herself has contributed to the guidelines, stating that “the traditional approaches to foreign and security policy, have only led us to the fact that the number of conflicts worldwide has doubled in recent years”, thus making feminist foreign policies indispensable.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, other voices criticize the Guidelines and even deem them as hypocritical. Several noteworthy criticisms have been raised regarding the German feminist foreign policy, including the following:

First, there is a lack of concrete implementation<sup>28</sup>, which some critics argue is due to the policy's failure to adequately address changing power structures and deeply rooted gender stereotypes.

Second, it has been argued that the German feminist foreign policy places excessive emphasis on Western values and ideas of gender equality, neglecting the specific needs and contexts of

<sup>26</sup> Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development at [www.bmz.de/en/issues/feminist-development-policy](http://www.bmz.de/en/issues/feminist-development-policy) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>27</sup> Interview with „Tagesschau“ from 01.03.2023, available at [www.tagesschau.de/inland/feministische-aussenpolitik-entwicklungspolitik-baerbock-101.html](http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/feministische-aussenpolitik-entwicklungspolitik-baerbock-101.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>28</sup> Anica Heinlein, Carla Dietzel, Sven Harmeling, *Feministische Außenpolitik: Auf die Umsetzung kommt es an* (2023) at [www.care.de/neuigkeiten/feministische-aussenpolitik-auf-die-umsetzung-kommt-es-an/](http://www.care.de/neuigkeiten/feministische-aussenpolitik-auf-die-umsetzung-kommt-es-an/) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Victoria Scheyer, Johanna Braun, Michelle Benzing, Kristin Neufeld, Jennifer Menninger and Andrea Johnston for WILPF, *Statement zu den Leitlinien Feministische Außenpolitik* (2023) at [www.wilpf.de/statement-zu-den-leitlinien-feministischer-aussenpolitik/](http://www.wilpf.de/statement-zu-den-leitlinien-feministischer-aussenpolitik/) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Uta Ruppert, *Ein bisschen Feminismus im Krieg? Über das Paradoxe feministischer Außenpolitik*, 52 (3) PROKLA 499 (2022).

women in other parts of the world, which may lead to cultural imperialism and a disregard for the needs of women in those regions.<sup>29</sup> This is particularly evident in the speech delivered by Annalena Baerbock on the day the Guidelines were adopted<sup>30</sup>, where she cited the construction of sanitary facilities in a Nigerian village as an illustration of feminist thought and practical implementation. However, the use of such an example in a rapidly developing country like Nigeria can be problematic as it perpetuates the stereotype of African countries as backward and in need of Western guidance.

Third, some argue that feminist foreign policy does not sufficiently involve civil society and the voices and experiences of women and girls on the ground in other countries.<sup>31</sup> This was especially true for Afghanistan and Cambodia, conflicts in which no women were involved in the political decisions taken.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, some critics suggest that feminist foreign policy is too focused on symbolic action and rhetoric, and too little on actual change in the lives of women and girls, which could lead to a disconnection from the reality of women's experiences.<sup>33</sup> This again is especially true for how Germany deals with the protests in Iran and the crisis in Afghanistan, just to name the most prominent ones.

As Germany moves forward with the implementation of its feminist foreign policy agenda, it will need to address these criticisms and work towards a more inclusive and effective policy framework.

### III. EU

Notably, the EU exhibited delayed engagement with the WPS Agenda, as it did not formally join until December 2018. However, the EU had previously adopted a “Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820” on WPS as early as 2008.

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<sup>29</sup> Livia Gerster in an interview with Masih Alinejad, available at [www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/feministische-aussenpolitik-masih-alinejad-bat-baerbock-vergeblich-um-treffen-18722488.html](http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/feministische-aussenpolitik-masih-alinejad-bat-baerbock-vergeblich-um-treffen-18722488.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Robin Alexander in an interview with Dagmar Rosenfeld, 02.03.2023, available at [www.welt.de/podcasts/machtwechsel/article244070531/Politik-Podcast-Auf-Schuldenbergen-spielt-man-nicht-und-eine-irrige-Aussenpolitik.html](http://www.welt.de/podcasts/machtwechsel/article244070531/Politik-Podcast-Auf-Schuldenbergen-spielt-man-nicht-und-eine-irrige-Aussenpolitik.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Rebecca Schönenbach, *Der versteckte Rassismus der feministischen Außenpolitik*, Welt, 24.03.2023, available at [www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus244467282/Frauenrechte-Der-versteckte-Rassismus-feministischer-Aussenpolitik.html](http://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus244467282/Frauenrechte-Der-versteckte-Rassismus-feministischer-Aussenpolitik.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of foreign Affairs, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/baerbock-leitlinien-ffp/2585138](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/baerbock-leitlinien-ffp/2585138) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>31</sup> Sonja Katharina Schiffers, *Deutschlands feministische Außen- und Entwicklungspolitik: Zeit für Veränderungen in der Südkaukasuspolitik*, an analysis written for the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27.02.2023, available at [www.boell.de/de/2023/02/27/deutschlands-feministische-aussen-und-entwicklungspolitik-zeit-fuer-veraenderungen-der-suedkaukasuspolitik](http://www.boell.de/de/2023/02/27/deutschlands-feministische-aussen-und-entwicklungspolitik-zeit-fuer-veraenderungen-der-suedkaukasuspolitik) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>32</sup> Robin Alexander in an interview with Dagmar Rosenfeld, 02.03.2023, available at [www.welt.de/podcasts/machtwechsel/article244070531/Politik-Podcast-Auf-Schuldenbergen-spielt-man-nicht-und-eine-irrige-Aussenpolitik.html](http://www.welt.de/podcasts/machtwechsel/article244070531/Politik-Podcast-Auf-Schuldenbergen-spielt-man-nicht-und-eine-irrige-Aussenpolitik.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Jasamin Ulfat-Seddiqzai, *Leitlinien ohne notwendigen Kurswechsel*, Deutschlandfunk Kultur 06.03.2023, available at <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/feministische-aussenpolitik-feminismus-afghanistan-frauenrechte-100.html> (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>33</sup> Livia Gerster in an interview with Masih Alinejad, available at [www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/feministische-aussenpolitik-masih-alinejad-bat-baerbock-vergeblich-um-treffen-18722488.html](http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/feministische-aussenpolitik-masih-alinejad-bat-baerbock-vergeblich-um-treffen-18722488.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Natalie Amiri, *Die Sehnsucht nach einem normalen Leben*, in FAZ 12.10.2022; Jasamin Ulfat-Seddiqzai, *Leitlinien ohne notwendigen Kurswechsel*, Deutschlandfunk Kultur 06.03.2023, available at <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/feministische-aussenpolitik-feminismus-afghanistan-frauenrechte-100.html> (last viewed 27.04.2023).

## 1. EU Action Plan on WPS 2019–2024

The aforementioned WPS-Plan serves as a complementary and reinforcing measure to the existing EU Gender Action Plan for 2016-2020 (GAP II)<sup>34</sup>. It is important to note that the WPS-Plan should not be conflated with GAP III, which was adopted in November 2020.<sup>35</sup>

The Action Plan has six prioritized objectives:

<b>Participation</b>	Increase women's leadership and participation in all areas related to peace and security within the EU services and institutions and globally.
<b>Gender mainstreaming</b>	Systematically mainstream a gender perspective into all EU policies and actions.
<b>Leading by example:</b>	Enhance EU's political commitments and actions for the implementation of the WPS Agenda.
<b>Prevention</b>	Play an active role in conflict-prevention, monitoring and reporting of conflict-related human rights' violations against women and girls, and support legislative and institutional reforms.
<b>Protection</b>	Promote the protection and safeguarding of women's and girls' rights, support institutional mechanisms for their protection, and prevent all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
<b>Relief and recovery</b>	Provide adequate and appropriate relief and recovery in conflict and post-conflict situations that meet the needs of women and girls.

With the exception of the second and third objectives, which present a similar orientation, the EU Action Plan exhibits nearly identical values to those of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

According to the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management<sup>36</sup>, there is a specific achievement plan provided for each objective: *“It presents the detailed actions, the stakeholders involved in their realisation, a timeline, fulfilment criteria and fulfilment indicators.”*

## 2. Praise and criticism

EU's WPSA has received mixed reactions from various actors. While some have praised its implementation, others remain critical.

Among those that have praised the EU's efforts are the United Nations, particularly through the agency UN Women, which has acknowledged the EU's role as a significant partner in promoting the global WPSA and recognized its contributions to advancing gender equality and

<sup>34</sup> Council of the European Union, 11031/19 (2019) at [data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>35</sup> European commission, Press release, at [ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_2184](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2184) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>36</sup> Council of the European Union and EEAS, EEAS(2019)747, at [data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

women's rights in the context of conflict and security.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) has praised the EU's dedication to promoting gender equality and women's rights within the context of conflict and security, while emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach that recognizes the diverse experiences of women.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the European Parliament has demonstrated its support for the EU's WPSA by adopting resolutions that call for greater backing of women's participation in peace processes, as well as the integration of gender perspectives into all EU policies and initiatives.<sup>39</sup>

Scholars have expressed more criticism with respect to the EU agenda, especially concerning these points:

In a briefing note<sup>40</sup>, the ECDPM center for Africa-Europe relations offers criticism regarding the lack of specificity in the drafted text pertaining to gender perspective, its implementation, and responsibility allocation.<sup>41</sup> The evaluation further indicates that the EU's support for the WPS Agenda in the past decade has focused more on strengthening policy frameworks and formulating strategic guidance rather than implementation.<sup>42</sup> They also state that progress in promoting equal participation in peace and security in some conflict and post-conflict countries has been observed, but that evidence for the enhanced role of women as mediators, negotiators, and technical experts in formal conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and peacebuilding was rather limited. Furthermore, it is asserted that the high benchmarks and ambitions of the WPS agenda can propel its implementation, but that the lack of a dedicated budget and clear accountability are key obstacles to improving implementation of the third iteration of the Global Action Plan on WPSA and GAP III. The briefing note also reports member states' resistance towards proposals for a system to measure progress and evaluation. It is also mentionable that there is only an Informal Joint Task Force on the WPSA, which has already been established in 2009.

Other scholars are arguing that it places excessive emphasis on theoretical texts of action plans and strategies, while neglecting practicality and the need to address pertinent issues, especially in the context of refugees and humanitarian aid.<sup>43</sup> They state that while the European

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<sup>37</sup> UN Women at [wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/CH10.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/pdf/en/CH10.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023); Security Council Report at [www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_PV.9064.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PV.9064.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>38</sup> UN Women Lobby at [www.womenlobby.org/European-Women-s-Lobby-s-reaction-to-the-launch-of-the-European-Commission-A](https://www.womenlobby.org/European-Women-s-Lobby-s-reaction-to-the-launch-of-the-European-Commission-A) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>39</sup> E.g.: European Parliament, Resolution of 18 January 2023 on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2022 (2022/2050(INI)); European Parliament, Resolution of 11 February 2021 on the humanitarian and political situation in Yemen (2021/2539(RSP)); European Parliament, Resolution of 14 March 2019 on Iran, notably the case of human rights defenders (2019/2611(RSP)); European Parliament, Resolution of 14 March 2019 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan (2019/2610(RSP)).

<sup>40</sup> Sophie Desmit for The Centre for Africa-Europe Relations, *How the women, peace and security agenda is integrated into the EU's gender action plan*, at [ecdpm.org/work/how-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-is-integrated-into-the-eus-gender-action-plan](https://ecdpm.org/work/how-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-is-integrated-into-the-eus-gender-action-plan) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>41</sup> Jessica Almqvist, *Rekindling the Agenda on Women, Peace and Security: can the EU lead by example?*, for ElCano Royal Institute (2021), available at <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/rekindling-the-agenda-on-women-peace-and-security-can-the-eu-lead-by-example/> (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>42</sup> Mariella di Ciommo, Maëlle Salzinger, Sophie Desmidt, Katja Sergejeff, *Gender equality in EU external action: Leadership from the EU headquarters*, for ECDPM (2023), available at <https://ecdpm.org/work/gender-equality-eu-external-action-leadership-eu-headquarters> (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>43</sup> Paul Kirby, *Sexual violence in the border zone: the EU, the Women, Peace and Security agenda and carceral humanitarianism in Libya*, 96 (5) *International Affairs* 1209 (2020); Maxine David and Roberta Guerrina, *Gender and European external relations*, 39 *Women's Studies International Forum* 53 (2013); Aiko Holvikivi and Aufrey Reeves, *Women, Peace and Security after Europe's "refugee crisis"*, 5 (2) *EJIS* 135 (2020).



Union has shown support for the WPSA and recognized sexual and gender-based violence as a crucial component, the practical application of these commitments to address gender-based vulnerabilities in Europe's border zones has been severely limited, even in the case of humanitarian evacuations. As such, the main critique is that the protection offered remains largely rhetorical without effective implementation or its genuine will.

From an internal standpoint, particularly in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there are new points of analysis regarding the practical implementation on EU level: Although the EU as a whole has adopted the WPSA and has working groups on the matter, some members of the EU are still reticent about the implementation on a national level. According to some scholars, this goes hand in hand with the persistent illiberal and anti-gender tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>44</sup>, posing real barriers to achieving the goals of the EU Agenda. According to them<sup>45</sup>, the NAPs in this region were primarily driven by pressure from international organizations and the desire to demonstrate that these former Soviet countries are reliable partners in the West. However, they merely reproduce many of the same shortcomings of the western WPSA, while also being characterized by a deliberate disregard for domestic gendered insecurities, and instead prioritizing militaristic issues.<sup>46</sup> They highlight that the bureaucratic WPSA approach is insufficient in addressing the needs of Ukrainian refugees, most of whom are women and children.<sup>47</sup> While conservative politicians prioritize hard-security measures in response to the invasion, Ukrainian refugees continue to face violence in Europe. The Agenda appears to be unprepared for and oblivious to the gendered realities experienced by many in the region, including the dangers posed by human trafficking gangs<sup>48</sup> and the loss of abortion rights in Poland even for survivors of rape<sup>49</sup> in the Ukrainian war.

The conflict at the imminent “gates” of the EU highlights even more the half-hearted and overly bureaucratic western approach to the WPSA. With no real sanctions and legal foundations, the NAPs and the female foreign policies remain only empty phrases feminist dreams, serving as artificial “achievements” for political agendas.

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<sup>44</sup> Swati Parashar, *The WPS agenda: a postcolonial critique*, in Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford handbook of Women, Peace and Security* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Toni Hastrup and Jamie J. Hagen, *Global racial hierarchies and the limits of localization via National Action Plans*, in Soumita Basu, Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd (eds), *New directions in Women, Peace and Security* 133–51 (Bristol University Press, 2020); Míla O’Sullivan, Kateřina Krulišová, *Women, Peace and Security in central Europe: in between the western agenda and Russian imperialism*, 99 (2) *International Affairs* 625 (2023).

<sup>45</sup> Louise Chappell, Fiona Mackay, *Feminist critical friends: dilemmas of feminist engagement with governance and gender reform agendas*, 4 (3) *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 321 (2021); Míla O’Sullivan, Kateřina Krulišová, *This agenda will never be politically popular: central Europe’s anti-gender mobilization and the Czech Women, Peace and Security agenda*, 22 (4) *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 526 (2020); Míla O’Sullivan, Kateřina Krulišová *Women, Peace and Security in central Europe: in between the western agenda and Russian imperialism*, 99 (2) *International Affairs* 625 (2023).

<sup>46</sup> Maria-Adriana Deiana, Kenneth McDonagh, “*It is important, but . . .*”: *translating the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into the planning of EU peacekeeping missions*, 6 (1) *Peacebuilding* 34 (2018); Míla O’Sullivan, Kateřina Krulišová *Women, Peace and Security in central Europe: in between the western agenda and Russian imperialism*, 99 (2) *International Affairs* 625 (2023).

<sup>47</sup> Ninety per cent of people fleeing the war are women and children according to UN Women and Care International, *Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine* available at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Rapid-Gender-Analysis-of-Ukraine-en.pdf> (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>48</sup> UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Conflict in Ukraine: key evidence on risks of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants*, December 2022 available at [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/Conflict\\_Ukraine\\_TIP\\_2022\\_137.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/Conflict_Ukraine_TIP_2022_137.pdf) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

<sup>49</sup> Hanna Kozłowska, *Pregnant Ukrainian refugees struggle to get abortion care*, *The Cut*, 3 May 2022, available at [www.thecut.com/2022/05/ukrainian-refugees-struggle-to-get-abortions-in-poland.html](http://www.thecut.com/2022/05/ukrainian-refugees-struggle-to-get-abortions-in-poland.html) (last viewed 27.04.2023).

## IV. Conclusion

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda has gained increasing attention and momentum in recent years, with various countries and international organizations committing to its principles and goals. Both Germany and the EU have somewhat demonstrated their support for the WPSA through their adoption of NAPs. However, one thing that sets Germany and the EU apart is their explicit adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy, which may or may not collide with the NAPs and the WPSA.

Nonetheless, ongoing debates persist on how to enhance and implement the framework effectively. NAPs provide Member States with a policy tool for aligning their responses to UNSCR 1325 in areas such as peacekeeping operations, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes.<sup>50</sup> However, their effectiveness in promoting women's empowerment and increasing access to decision-making has come into question, especially in light of new challenges and conflicts that have emerged, including the refugee crisis, global climate issues, and instability caused by war. Furthermore, despite the existence of NAPs, the policies implemented by the states may be perceived as half-hearted. The WPSA demands sustained commitment and collective action, with full engagement from all stakeholders, to transform the lives of women and promote gender equality in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. The challenges faced by women in such contexts require a comprehensive and holistic approach that recognizes the gendered nature of conflicts and the unique needs of women.

Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy is grounded in the belief that gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security, and it is supposed to promote women's participation in all aspects of foreign policy, particularly in conflict prevention and resolution. This commitment was also reflected in Germany's NAPs, which have consistently included gender-responsive approaches in conflict prevention and resolution efforts. The most recent NAP, issued in 2021, even introduced a new focus on gender-responsive approaches to climate protection and addressing the inclusion of women's rights and support for LGBTI activists, which was long criticized with regard to the WPSA.

Based on the criticism of the WPSA and its implementation in Germany and the EU, there are several improvements that could be made:

First, both the German Government and the EU could work on ensuring greater specificity and accountability in their National Action Plans and Action Plans, respectively. This could involve setting clearer and measurable targets, timelines, and monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the Agenda, as well as allocating sufficient resources to achieve these goals. Moreover, there could be increased involvement of civil society and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Action Plans, to ensure that diverse voices are heard for real and that the plans are grounded in the realities of conflict-affected communities, and not only in western beliefs.

Second, both Germany and the EU should work on addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, ensuring that the intersectionality of marginalized groups of women is adequately addressed in their NAPs and agendas. This could involve, for example, placing greater emphasis on addressing issues such as poverty, discrimination, and inequality in conflict-affected settings, and on ensuring that the voices and perspectives of women from diverse backgrounds are included in all aspects of peace and security efforts, but this time backed up by real commitments and laws. Additionally, it is recommended that further action and clear standing positions are taken to avoid any semblance of hypocrisy. It is crucial to maintain

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<sup>50</sup> Louise Lehmann, *Nationale Aktionspläne im Bereich der Menschenrechte – ein sinnvolles Instrument?*, in MRM – MenschenRechtsMagazin Heft 2 / 2020, 106 (2020).

consistency between humanitarian achievements and feminist guidelines, and to avoid supporting anti-feminist regimes.

Third, both Germany and the EU should work on addressing internal illiberal and anti-gender tendencies, which pose real barriers to achieving the goals of the WPSA and are causing overall internal conflicts. This could involve, for example, using their leverage as donors and diplomatic actors to push for greater protection of women's rights and gender equality, and working to build coalitions with the civil society, minorities and other actors to advocate for these issues.

Finally, both Germany and the EU should work on genuinely strengthening their commitments to feminist foreign policies, by ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed across all areas of foreign policy and that women's voices, who are actually concerned by these very same policies are included in the decision-making processes. This could involve, for example, prioritizing local women's participation in peace processes and ensuring that their needs and perspectives are actually taken into account in all aspects of peace and security efforts. This should go from trade to development of humanitarian assistance, focusing on the actual needs and not western agendas and misconceptions.

However, while challenges and criticism remain, the continued commitment and progress made by both Germany and the EU in this area are essential for achieving sustainable peace and security for all.



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