



WOMEN ARE FIGHTING FOR PEACE, EVERY DAY, EVERYWHERE

The world needs more women in influential positions to drive peace processes.

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY 2025



Strengthening the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Upholding Women's Rights in Defence, Security and Peace Building

Overview of European Parliament research publications

March 2025

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is key to ensuring that women's voices are central in conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding efforts. Despite global commitments, challenges remain in fully integrating gender perspectives into defence and security policies. The EU is working to strengthen the WPS agenda by upholding women's rights, increasing their participation in peace processes, and addressing gender-based violence in conflict zones. As security threats evolve, a stronger, more inclusive approach is essential to building lasting peace and stability.

[Strengthening the Women, Peace and Security Agenda](#)

Briefing by Georgiana Sandu and Ilena Ambrosio, Policy Department for Citizens, Equality and Culture, March 2025

This year marks the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which established the 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) agenda. This briefing gives an overview of the WPS agenda and the current situation at global and European Union level. It examines women's participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction. It also offers a brief outline of the role of international humanitarian and human rights law in the protection of women and their rights.

[Women in foreign affairs and international security: An increasingly salient debate](#)

Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2025

The debate on the participation and role of women and foreign affairs and security policy began in the 1980s, with the question 'where are the women?'. Forty years on, in a context of rising armed conflict and other evolving security threats, this question is as salient than ever, both because women remain under-represented in these fields and because a growing body of evidence demonstrates the positive effect of including women and a gender perspective in key areas. Women's role in peacekeeping is receiving particular attention, as research has consistently shown that gender equality contributes to peace and higher security, and that peace negotiations involving women have a better chance of being sustainable and effective. The WPS agenda and other approaches being developed at international and EU level aim to increase women's participation and leadership and bring a gender perspective into foreign and security policies and operations on the ground.

[Women's role in peace processes](#)

Study by Christina Bache for the Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, May 2019

Women's meaningful inclusion where they have real decision-making power is important in peace and transition processes. While inclusive peace frameworks lead to more durable outcomes, conflict negotiations still prioritise those waging war over those working for peace. The study examines global conflict trends, arms trade dynamics, and progress on the UN's WPS agenda, assessing EU and national efforts to integrate gender perspectives. Through case studies on Rwanda and Syria, it explores the barriers and opportunities for women's participation in peacebuilding and offers recommendations to shift security policies toward lasting, gender-inclusive peace.

[Women's rights: What is at stake?](#)

At a Glance note by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2025

Thirty years ago, the international community adopted the Beijing Declaration and its accompanying Platform for Action – a broad and ambitious global agenda for action with women's rights at its core. Since then, women's rights have enjoyed

increased recognition, but also faced strong contestation. The EU remains a strong defender of women's rights. To guide its action, the Commission is soon to propose a roadmap on women's rights in the EU, while the European Parliament has called for an EU charter on women's rights.

The gender dimension of asylum claims

Briefing by Anita Orav, European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2025

In recent years, protection needs have continued to rise as millions have been forced to flee their homes as a result of new and ongoing conflicts, climate conditions, violence, persecution and geopolitical unrest. In recent years, the European Union has faced a significant number of asylum applications, with over 513 000 applications received in the first half of 2024 alone. Women and girls make up a substantial proportion of asylum seekers, with one in three asylum-seekers being female. The EU has developed a common European asylum system that has gradually incorporated gender-sensitive elements. Nevertheless continued progress is needed to address the human rights challenges faced by women and girls in asylum procedures.

The EU's new bilateral security and defence partnerships

Briefing by Eleni Lazarou, European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2025

The EU's Strategic Compass, adopted in response to growing security threats, underscores the importance of strong defence partnerships. Since 2022, the EU has signed six tailored security agreements—with Norway, Moldova, South Korea, Japan, Albania, and North Macedonia—each reflecting shared priorities. These include the WPS agenda, where the EU and its partners will work together to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of the cooperation on security and defence. In addition, some of the partnerships cover the external aspects of human trafficking, which has gender dimensions. The European Parliament has highlighted the significance of the Strategic Compass's partnership dimension and called for deeper military and defence cooperation with additional partners.

Human trafficking: The gender dimension

Briefing by Martina Prpic, European Parliamentary Research Service, November 2024

Human trafficking remains a grave human rights violation, with gender playing a significant role in patterns of exploitation. Women and girls are disproportionately trafficked for sexual exploitation, while men are more often forced into labour. Economic vulnerability, violence, and the internet contribute to this growing issue. The EU has strengthened its response with victim-centred, gender-specific policies and increased attention to trafficking's digital dimension. As legislative efforts evolve, integrating gender perspectives is crucial to tackling exploitation and ensuring better protection for victims.

EU missions and operations abroad

Briefing by Bruno Bilquin, European Parliamentary Research Service, October 2024

EU military and civilian missions play a key role in stabilizing crisis regions, promoting security, and upholding EU values. However, despite progress, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles within these operations. Strengthening the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is vital to ensuring gender perspectives are fully integrated into EU security efforts, from peacebuilding to decision-making. Greater inclusion of women in leadership can enhance mission effectiveness and contribute to more sustainable peace outcomes.

Women in politics in the EU: State of play in 2024

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2024

One hundred years after women won the right to vote in elections or were first elected to parliament in some EU Member States, they continue to be under-represented in politics and public life. This is true whether looking at the composition of the European Parliament or that of national parliaments, governments and local assemblies. On the other hand, gender balance in politics benefits not only women and female politicians but also political parties themselves and the rest of society. Women form half the population and deserve to be better represented in power structures. There is now solid evidence about what hinders or enables women's participation and representation, with political parties and the media serving a dual role in this respect. The EU has committed to achieving gender balance in political representation and participation as a matter of justice, equality and democracy.

Russia's war on Ukraine: A gender-sensitive humanitarian response

At a glance note by Rosamund Shreeves, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2022

Even – or especially – in complex emergency situations, a gender perspective is vital in order to take into account the specific needs of women and men and the different risks to which they are exposed. Humanitarian actors are calling for a gender-sensitive response to the Ukraine crisis, to help tackle barriers to accessing vital services, address increased risks of gender-based violence and facilitate the reception and integration of refugees.

Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5): Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls

Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2024

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) – 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' – is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN) that is very likely to be missed by the target date of 2030. Already slow, global progress has stalled, prompting evaluation of which policy measures have been effective, where gaps exist and how to catalyse further action. The European Parliament has taken a strong stance on putting gender equality at the heart of sustainable development policy and has called for concrete steps to accelerate progress towards SDG 5.

Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle

Briefing by Gabija Leclerc and Rosamund Shreeves, European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2024

Since the Taliban regime overtook the country in mid-August 2021, Afghanistan's record on women's rights has been one of the worst, if not the worst, in the world. Despite promises to 'uphold women's rights in line with Sharia law', the Taliban have suppressed the rights of their citizens, with women the main target of restrictions. The European Union (EU) has been engaged in Afghanistan since the mid-1980s and has prioritised the advancement of Afghan women's rights. While changing its terms of engagement, it has continued to provide humanitarian aid and to support civil society. The European Parliament has followed the situation closely and recommended further action to support Afghan women and girls.

Radicalisation and violent extremism – focus on women: How women become radicalised, and how to empower them to prevent radicalisation

Study by the Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, December 2017

The study focuses on Islamist radicalisation and violent extremism in the EU. It explores and assesses the question of women's radicalisation and their involvement in violent extremism in the EU and looks into the mechanisms in place to prevent women and girls from radicalisation. Additionally, it explores potential gendered approaches and best practices to counter radicalisation and identifies women's contribution in this field.

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