Women in foreign affairs and international security
Still far from gender equality

SUMMARY

The debate on the participation and role of women in foreign affairs and international security is a timely and relevant one, and is being raised with increasing frequency at both national and international levels. In particular, there is growing attention to the imbalances in the representation of women in leadership and other key positions in the area of foreign and security policy, as well as to the growing body of evidence regarding the positive effect of including women in several key areas of foreign and security policy. While gaps persist, women’s representation at management and ministerial levels in the areas of foreign affairs and security has increased whether in the European Union (EU), the United States (US) or at the United Nations (UN) level.

Among these issues, women’s role in peacekeeping receives particular attention, as research has consistently shown that gender equality contributes to peace, and that peace negotiations involving women have a better chance of being sustainable and effective. Gender-equal societies enjoy better health, stronger economic growth and higher security. The UN and the EU have put pronounced emphasis on the issue in the past two decades. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 established the ‘women, peace and security’ (WPS) agenda in 2000. Since then, more WPS-related resolutions have been adopted, widening the scope and breadth of gendered peace and security. These resolutions have been instrumental in changing the philosophy and rhetoric focused on conflict and gender equality, thereby challenging the international community to do more. Several initiatives are also being implemented at EU level, including through the 2018 EU strategic approach to WPS. However, critics underline that a lot remains to be done, as women continue to be underrepresented in the field of foreign and security policy across the world.

This is an update of an EPRS briefing published in September 2019.
Introduction

The topic of women in foreign affairs and international security is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of new paradigms and approaches to global affairs. Scholars, policy-makers and civil society are engaging in innovative ways to promote the participation of women in these domains of policy-making and on all levels on the ground, ranging from conceptualisation to implementation.

The debate on women and foreign policy is not new. In the 1980s, scholars working on public opinion and foreign policy pointed to a gender gap on foreign policy issues and put forward the idea that the increased participation of women in foreign policy would lead to new and innovative paradigms, particularly with regard to peace and security. Yet, almost 40 years later, the debate on the extent to which foreign policy can be substantially transformed by the increase of women's presence in relevant government structures, or rather by their influence, is an ongoing one, not least because women continue to be under-represented in the area. Today, this debate has expanded to a number of inter-related issues, including, but not limited to:

- the representation of women, including at the top level of policy-making, the armed forces, diplomacy, and foreign policy analysis (think-tank communities and other experts);
- the content and approach of foreign policy and how this is affected by women’s participation, including by the emergence of a ‘feminist foreign policy’ agenda;
- the research agenda on women in peacekeeping and crisis management, which focuses on the policies enabling women’s participation in such activities, and on the impact that women’s participation in the armed forces (especially in peacekeeping operations) can have on local societies and on the effectiveness of peace-building and reconciliation.

Key issues

The representation gap: Numbers speak for themselves

A growing body of evidence points to the beneficial effects of having women represented in social, political and economic life on an equal footing with men, and of fostering gender diversity. Research has shown, for example, that gender diversity, ‘when supported by gender-supportive norms and regulations within an industry, leads to better productivity and better exchange of diverse viewpoints’. There is, in addition, solid evidence that women’s status, including their representation in decision-making, is an important predictive factor of state peacefulness.

Public opinion is also shifting in favour of more representation of women in politics and leadership...
roles. According to the 2017 special Eurobarometer survey on gender equality, 61% of EU citizens believe that ‘politics is dominated by men who do not have sufficient confidence in women’. The majority of respondents (54%) think there should be more women in political decision-making. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey in the United States revealed that a majority of respondents would like to see more women in leadership roles. Interestingly, 22% of respondents believe that women ‘have a better approach to leadership’, while 15% say that men do. At the same time, a majority of respondents believe that gender discrimination is a major obstacle in the professional arena and that men have an easier path to leadership positions, in both business and politics.

In spite of these findings and of relative progress made in several countries and multilateral organisations across the world in recent years, women remain largely under-represented in politics, particularly in the area of foreign policy and international security. In the national militaries of EU and other G20 countries, women make up a small minority ranging from less than 3% in Finland to slightly under 20% in Hungary (see Figure 1). In EU military CSDP missions, women represent 7% of military personnel, which is above the level in UN peacekeeping at only 3.9%. Women are better represented in the diplomatic services, but at level of ambassadors no country in this group (for which there are available data) had reached parity in 2019 (see Figure 2).
Globally, numbers speak for themselves. At the beginning of 2020, only 60 out of 190 countries surveyed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union had a woman as foreign affairs minister, while in many fewer still, only 22, did women hold the defence portfolio - still a rise compared to previous years. In 2018, only 15% of the world’s ambassadors were women. Out of the 47 Council of Europe member states, only 10 have women as foreign ministers. Among the 29 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, there are only 8 female defence ministers (a large percentage however, compared to the 12% women defence ministers globally). Within the EU-27, there are currently six female defence ministers and only five female foreign ministers (Figure 3), an increase only in the number of foreign affairs ministers compared with 2019 (three at the time).

Within the United Nations, while gender gaps remain, significant progress has occurred as a result of the UN Secretary General's gender parity strategy. Gender parity has been reached in the senior management group of the Secretary General (which brings together the heads of UN departments, offices, funds and programmes), and among Resident Coordinators (representatives of the UN Secretary General in UN member countries and leaders of UN country teams). In the area of UN peacekeeping, there has been progress as well. As of 2020, 41% of the senior leadership of special political missions and peacekeeping operations were women, an increase from 21% in 2017 when the strategy was launched; ten peacekeeping missions had gender units; and 5.4% of UN military and 15.1% of police personnel were women, compared to 3% and 10% respectively in 2015. Since its reorganisation on 1 January 2019, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, which had existed under different names/formats since 1952, has had its first female head in its history.

The lack of balanced representation across political professions has also been identified in data regarding the make-up of the scientific community in the field of foreign affairs. The Gender Scorecard of Washington DC Think Tanks 2018, produced by Women in International Security, a global non-governmental organisation dedicated to advancing the leadership and professional development of women in the field of international security, illustrates that the gap goes well
Women in foreign affairs and international security

beyond the government sector. According to the scorecard, 68 % of the heads of top Washington think-tanks and 73 % of experts in the same organisations are male. Only one of the 22 think-tanks reviewed had a significant gender programming component. There are, in February 2021, no comprehensive data on this same issue in the EU. In addition, according to a report by the Carnegie Endowment, only 30 % of scholars in the domain of international relations are women.

Concerns about work-life balance and lack of the right administrative infrastructure to enable women to pursue high-level careers while building a family, have been highlighted as factors that contribute significantly to the problem. Anne Marie Slaughter, a prominent figure in the debate, emphasised in 2012 the importance of creating the right social policies, but also of closing the leadership gap by ensuring that women are equally represented in the ranks of politics, corporate executives and judicial leaders. While representation alone will not solve gender-based foreign policy issues, it is perceived as one of the many necessary steps in that direction.

The feminist foreign policy agenda

Sweden: A ground breaker in 'feminist' foreign policy

In 2014, Sweden became the first country to present the concept and implementation plan for a feminist foreign policy under then Swedish Foreign Minister, Margot Wallström. This concept, which has subsequently gained momentum, places women’s rights, human security and equal representation at the centre of diplomatic action. It is based on the premise that gender-equal societies enjoy better health, stronger economic growth and higher security as well as on the evidence that gender equality contributes to peace. A concern for the individual and human security instead of state security is a defining aspect of this policy agenda.

The three starting points for this feminist foreign policy are:

Rights: The Swedish Foreign Service shall promote all women’s and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, including by combating all forms of violence and discrimination that restrict their freedom of action.

Representation: The Swedish Foreign Service shall promote women’s participation and influence in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas, and shall seek dialogue with women representatives at all levels, including in civil society.

Resources: The Swedish Foreign Service shall work to ensure that resources are allocated to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all women and girls to enjoy human rights. The service shall also promote targeted measures for different target groups.¹

Sweden’s feminist foreign policy also supports the establishment of peace ministries, demonstrating that peace is as important to foreign policy as is national defence. Since 2014, 79 other states have created national plans of action to better include women in foreign policy and in peace and security processes. In that context, interesting developments continue to take place in the EU and in countries as diverse as Australia, Brazil, Canada, or Norway. In June 2019, the United States administration released its Strategy on Women, Peace and Security.

Other countries follow

Sweden’s model has been followed by other countries. Since March 2018, France has integrated ‘feminist diplomacy’ in its foreign policy. In November 2020, the French High Council on Gender Equality presented its report on feminist diplomacy, which clarifies the concept, taking over the three principles proposed by Sweden and adding three more: a transformative long-term approach, institutional coherence, and international solidarity. Some other EU countries have announced their intention to develop a feminist foreign policy.

Outside the EU, Canada launched its feminist international assistance policy (FIAP) in June 2017 and is expected to publish a document outlining its broader vision of a feminist foreign policy in 2021.
In 2019, Canada appointed its first ambassador for women, peace and security. In January 2020, Mexico also launched its feminist foreign policy, which, among other things, strives to ensure gender parity in its foreign service, but critics point out that this policy is in stark contrast with the internal reality in the country characterised by widespread gender violence and inequality.

The implementation of such a novel policy approach is not easy. In practice, Sweden’s strong feminist approach to diplomatic relations has elicited negative reactions from some third countries, which have erected trade barriers or cancelled diplomatic encounters and dialogues (such as when the Arab League cancelled a speech by Sweden’s foreign minister because of her stance on human and women’s rights in the region in 2015).

Women in international security

Including women in international security-related processes and high-level peace negotiations, as well as offering them senior diplomatic posts means more than just equal representation. There is an increasing body of evidence illustrating that women’s participation in peace and security processes can play a significant role in determining the success and sustainability of peace agreements, as well as the durability and quality of peace. Studies also show that peace agreements signed by female delegates have a higher implementation rate.

Data show that women are often perceived as ‘honest brokers’ during peace negotiations and therefore are able to achieve more sustainable and equitable peace, as seen, for example, in the conflict resolution in Northern Ireland in the years up to 1998. Furthermore, thanks to their societal roles and responsibilities, women also have the capacity to initiate inclusive cross-community dialogues, as for example in Northern Ireland, or to gauge security risks in violence-prone situations such as in Afghanistan. According to a study by the US think-tank, the Council on Foreign Relations, substantial inclusion of women and civil society groups in a peace negotiation makes the resulting agreement 64% less likely to fail and, according to another study, 35% more likely to last at least 15 years. These, among other statistics, clearly show that gender diversity and women’s inclusion in peace negotiations produce longer-lasting and better results.

Longer-lasting peace agreements, improved human security and equal representation are just a few of the results of feminist foreign policy and the inclusion of women in the security field. Women often take a collaborative approach to peace-making and organise themselves across cultural and sectarian divides. It has been argued that such an approach – which incorporates the concerns of diverse demographic groups (for instance, religious, ethnic and cultural ones) affected by a conflict and having an interest in its resolution – increases the prospects of long-term stability and reduces the likelihood of state failure, conflict onset and poverty.

Scientific inquiry regarding the impact of women’s participation in international security is expanding. Research from 2019 has also shown that women’s participation in the resolution of nuclear issues is beneficial, in that it reduces the potential for risk-taking behaviour and increases the likelihood that negotiated agreements would hold, while also contributing innovative ideas. Yet women represent only about a quarter of delegates to international non-proliferation talks, less than the threshold indicated for group dynamics to change enough so as to lead to better outcomes.

Beyond emphasising the role that women can play in decision-making, peace negotiations and peacekeeping, the WPS agenda also focuses strongly on the protection of women and their rights in situations of conflict. In societies facing conflict, women and girls are exposed to heightened risks of violations of their human rights, as discrimination tends to become more acute. Conflicts often result in higher levels of violence against women and girls, including arbitrary killings, torture, sexual violence and forced marriage. The necessity for gender-sensitive language and gender provisions as well as their implementation within peace agreements is a key challenge. Experts have shown that ‘the presence of gender provisions in peace agreements affects women’s participation in post-conflict societies as well as the chances that a post-conflict society will move towards gender equality’ and that ‘peace agreements are significantly more likely to have gender provisions when
women participate in elite peace processes' and are better represented in national parliaments and civil society.

The importance of women's participation in civil society is illustrated by several examples in the Middle East. Israeli and Palestinian women have long built coalitions across national, ethnic, and religious lines in order to lead non-violent efforts to promote security and access to basic services. In Syria, the Women’s Advisory Board to Syrian negotiations, a group of independent civil society representatives, has raised matters missing from the agenda and helped develop policy positions, made recommendations to assist the peace talks, and proposed gender-responsive perspectives. Successful local efforts led by Syrian women include monitoring and documenting human rights abuses, establishing ceasefires, creating local political councils and distributing humanitarian aid. Similar observations about the role of women's civil society organisations have been made in conflicts in Colombia, Liberia and Tunisia. The Council on Foreign Relations has put together a database on the inclusion of women in peace negotiations across the globe, and on the role their contribution (or lack thereof) has played. Despite the evidence that women's participation is beneficial, there are still glaring inequalities both in representation in international peace negotiations, and in aid and development policies for women in fragile states.

Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. These numbers, even if still low, represent an increase compared with previous years. Between 1995 and 2019, the proportion of peace agreements with gender equality provisions also increased from 14% to 22%. Similarly, despite the role that local women’s groups could play in preventing and resolving conflicts, such groups receive only a small percentage of the aid allocated to fragile states by major donors. A 2017 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study attributed this to significant 'blind spots in donors' understanding of the links between gender equality, conflict and fragility'.

The EU perspective

The topic of women in foreign affairs and international security has gained increased visibility across EU institutions. In 2008, the Council adopted the comprehensive approach for EU implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security; in 2010, it adopted a set of indicators to monitor the implementation of this comprehensive approach in the areas of prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery. Among others, the indicators include the number and percentage of women mediators and negotiators as well as the number of women's civil society groups involved in peace negotiations supported by the EU. The indicators were reviewed and revised in 2016.

Starting in 2010, three successive gender action plans (GAPs) for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through EU external action have defined the general framework for EU external policies with respect to gender. The third EU gender action plan (GAP III) published in

Women, peace and security agenda

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was unanimously adopted on 31 October 2000 and established the ‘women, peace and security’ (WPS) agenda. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and equally in peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts related to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It urges all players to increase the participation of women and to incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflicts to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. As of August 2019, 81 UN member states (42% of all UN member states) have UNSCR 1325 national action plans.

Since 2000, nine additional resolutions related to the WPS agenda have been adopted, widening its scope. The resolutions on WPS aim to change the philosophy and rhetoric around conflict and gender equality, and to challenge the international community to do more.
November 2020 proposes several priorities to support these objectives, of which some are relevant for the representation of women in foreign affairs and in security policy. For example, the EU will strive to enhance women’s capacity as political leaders in governments and parliaments. Another key priority for EU external action is to increase the participation of women in all matters related to peace and security. GAP III seeks to integrate the WPS agenda as defined in the 2018 Council conclusions into broader EU action. The plan proposes a series of concrete actions, including:

- capacity-building on women’s leadership for women negotiators and mediators;
- at least 33% of women participating in all EU activities and projects related to peace;
- consultation with grassroots women activists and civil society organisations, both in Member States and in conflict-related settings;
- mandatory training on mainstreaming gender perspectives for all EU diplomatic staff and common security and defence policy (CSDP) missions;
- strengthening of the rule of law and the criminal justice system, to address sexual and gender-based violence and providing various forms of support to the victims of this type of violence.
- a leadership role for the EU, by making substantial progress on gender parity in management positions in the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), CSDP missions, and through improving gender knowledge and expertise in EU institutions.

In 2018, the Council welcomed the new EU strategic approach to WPS. In its conclusions, it recalled the commitments of the EU and its Member States to the full implementation of the WPS agenda, ensuring that ‘it is fully integrated into all EU policies and efforts in promoting the important role of women’s engagement in support of sustainable peace, security, human rights, justice and development’. The new approach places particular emphasis on the need to ‘engage, empower, protect, and support women and girls in order to help all countries achieving sustainable and lasting peace and security as intrinsic components of human rights and sustainable development’. The promotion of the women, peace and security agenda is also a priority of the joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation. Based on this strategic orientation, in July 2019, the EU Council adopted an EU action plan on women, peace and security (WPS) for the period 2019-2024, which lists concrete actions to be undertaken by the EU and on a voluntary basis by its Member States as well. These aim to increase women’s leadership and participation in all areas related to peace and security both internally and externally, and to mainstream gender in all EU policies.

In 2015, the mandate of the EU/EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender (PAG) and on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was created, with Ambassador Mara Marinaki the

Combating violence against women

In 2008, the EU Council adopted guidelines on violence against women and girls, and combating all forms of discrimination against them. They focus on a commitment by the EU and its Member States ‘to promote and protect the rights of women in third countries’. The adoption of these guidelines, though they are not mandatory, gives a signal about their importance in all EU external action. They are the only guidelines among some 13 sets of human rights guidelines adopted by the EU that address a women-specific issue. They propose a very comprehensive set of actions combining diplomatic efforts and political dialogue at bilateral and multilateral levels with development aid and, urge that women’s rights be integrated in the mandates of EU special representatives and envoys, as well as in the EU delegations reporting.

Source: EU Council, Guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them.

In September 2018, the EU and Canada hosted the first ever women foreign ministers conference, at which 17 countries were represented. The meeting focused on topics such as women’s empowerment and leadership, conflict prevention, democratic growth and the elimination of gender-based violence. Participants pledged to work together and with partners to build a network of governments and civil society organisations to advance gender equality and women’s rights, and to work towards implementing existing commitments.

In 2015, the mandate of the EU/EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender (PAG) and on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was created, with Ambassador Mara Marinaki the
first to serve in the post. However, there has been criticism about the position lacking a clear mandate and sufficient resources. Among the achievements of Marinaki’s mandate is the update of the comprehensive approach, which led to the EU strategic approach to women, peace and security, adopted in December 2018 (see above). While her term ended at the end of 2020, the seat has still to be filled. The procedure has been open, but only after concerns were expressed that it would not be renewed.

Progress in EU institutional settings

At EU institutional level, there has been progress in women’s representation in foreign policy and security fields. The current Commission has the ambition to be gender balanced, and one external action portfolio (International Partnerships) is currently held by a woman, Jutta Urpilainen. The EEAS is in the process of implementing its gender and equal opportunity strategy 2018-2023 (endorsed in November 2017), which aims to achieve sustainable gender balance at all levels in all functions and all job categories in the EEAS, both in the Brussels headquarters and in EU delegations. Based on a 2019 Commission report on equality between women and men in the EU, the overall gender representation in the EEAS is close to equal. However, criticism has pointed to areas that could be improved. For example, only one of the eight EU special representatives for troubled regions and countries is a woman, in spite of the aforementioned evidence of the beneficial effects of women in mediation.

According to a study commissioned by the European Parliament and carried out by Women in International Security (WIIS), women’s participation in EU civilian crisis management missions increased by approximately 10 percentage points in the decade from 2007 to 2016, reaching around 30% of personnel. In addition, the EU’s CSDP missions currently include gender advisors who provide strategic advice on gender mainstreaming. The study identifies several ways in which the EU and its Member States, as well as the Parliament, can make EU crisis management more gender-sensitive and simultaneously more effective and efficient.

European Parliament position

The Parliament has been an ardent supporter of the WPS agenda in its annual resolutions on the CSDP. On 12 March 2019, it adopted a resolution on building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation, with a strong emphasis on women, peace and security and particularly on enhancing gender capacities in the EU in this area. Among other things, the Parliament called for the EU to lead efforts in the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and for the incorporation of the principles contained therein at all stages of EU conflict prevention and mediation activities; for full gender equality and participation of women across the conflict cycle; and for gender sensitivity in training and intervention.

In an October 2020 resolution on gender equality in the EU’s foreign and security policy, the Parliament calls on the EU and its Member States to advance towards a ‘foreign and security policy that mainstreams a gender-transformative vision’, and encourages all Member States to adopt a feminist foreign and security policy. It calls on the EU institutions and Member States to systematically mainstream gender into the EU’s foreign and security policy. It also emphasises the need for a gender focus in the EU institutional culture. This presupposes that the EEAS pays more attention to diversity and inclusion in its staff hiring policies and that gender-responsive leadership becomes part of middle and senior management objectives. To achieve this kind of leadership, it is necessary to introduce mandatory and tailored training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for all managers in the EEAS, staff of EU diplomatic posts and heads of CSDP missions and operations. With regard to the EU’s CSDP missions, it calls for the appointment of a gender adviser on all the military CSDP missions, as is already the case with civilian missions, and for sufficient training on gender equality and WPS for all staff of these missions. It supports the objective of increasing the number of women in the EU’s crisis management missions and operations.
With regard to representation and leadership posts, after the 2019 elections, women made up slightly over 40% of elected members of the Parliament (2019-2024), continuing a progressive trend from previous legislatures. When looking at the five committees and sub-committees that deal with external affairs, their number drops to 35.7% (see Figure 4). This is largely due to the low representation of women in the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (in spite of the subcommittee being chaired by a woman), an observation that is consistent with the research findings presented in previous sections. With regard to delegations for relations with third countries and international organisations, only 14 delegation chairs out of 44 delegations are women. Rule 15(2) of the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure establishes the ‘need to ensure an overall fair representation of political views, as well as gender and geographical balance’ in leadership positions; this also applies to the distribution of the posts of committee chairs and vice-chairs by virtue of Rule 213(3) of the Rules of Procedure.

![Figure 4](https://example.com/figure4.png)

**Figure 4 – Women in external affairs in the European Parliament, (%) during the 2019-2024 term**

Table: Percentage of women in the parliament's external affairs committees (EP 2019-2024)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEDE*</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFET</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROI*</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTA</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVE</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EPRS, February 2021.

**Criticism and challenges**

Experts have strongly criticised the fact that commitments and declarations about promoting the WPS agenda and equal representation of women in foreign and security policy often amount to rhetoric more than actual implementation, leading to limited progress on the agenda’s goals worldwide. While, as mentioned above, a high number of states have adopted national action plans for WPS (86 states, representing 45% of all UN members), only 33% of those include an allocated budget for implementation. This is exacerbated by the general decline observed in global foreign aid.

There is a need to clarify the novel concept of a ‘feminist foreign policy’ and its added value in relation to a foreign policy that focuses on gender equality and mainstreaming, as well as on women’s empowerment through many of its strands, without necessarily calling itself feminist (as is the case with EU external policies). Such a conceptual clarification would be helpful for decision-makers, but also for scholars, the public and other stakeholders who wish to assess this policy, taking into account the complexities surrounding women’s rights.
With regard to gender balance, while administrative, institutional and training structures may have evolved, they are far from being able to act as true enablers of gender balance in leadership positions. Moreover, some experts posit that equality among the genders has yet to be considered a top priority, a prerequisite for it to become a leading aspect of foreign policy.

A big challenge is reconfiguring public perceptions. While the WPS agenda is focused on human security and civil society roles, traditional security is linked primarily to military action and economic stability. A shift in the public’s thinking about what the meaning of security truly is, with a strong emphasis on human security, could be the key to a more inclusive and well-rounded security agenda. Raising more awareness of gender imbalances, including through the way in which women are portrayed in the public space; addressing institutional culture and underlying sexism; and encouraging mentorship and role models for women, are some of the main challenges ahead.

MAIN REFERENCES
Neumann, H., Hopgood, L., The #SHEcurity Index, 2020

ENDNOTES
1 See Handbook on Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden.

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT
This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

Photo credits: © theevening / Adobe Stock.
eprs@ep.europa.eu (contact)
www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu (intranet)
www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (internet)
http://epthinktank.eu (blog)