

Beijing +25 policy brief: Area E - Women and armed conflict: participation and protection in the EU

Beijing + 25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

 **Area E — Women and armed conflict: participation and protection in the EU**

Introduction

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) underlined the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace. It also recognised that women have the right to protection, as they are at particular risk of being targeted by violence in conflict, such as conflict-related sexual violence and forced displacement. These themes were later incorporated in the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security (e.g. Resolutions 1325 and 1820), which constitute the foundation of the EU's policy framework in addressing Area E of the BPfA.

A number of EU policies acknowledge the importance of women's participation in EU security and defence activities. The newly adopted strategic approach to women, peace and security reaffirms the importance of women's participation in all EU external action, while the 2016 EU global strategy recognises the need to promote women's participation in peace efforts, including among EU personnel. Similarly, the gender action plan 2016-2020 reiterates the need to strengthen women's participation in policy and governance processes at all levels. However, progress has been slow in the actual participation of women in the EU's own security and defence efforts.

A central issue facing the EU concerns the protection of asylum seekers, many of whom are displaced by armed conflict. While there are greater numbers of men seeking asylum, women experience particular challenges compared with men, related to stress and trauma, health complications (particularly for pregnant women), injury, and the risk of exploitation and violence. An important development is the 2020 EU Directive on International Protection, which recognises the need for asylum processes that take into account these differences in needs of asylum seekers. The EU is also taking steps to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which requires that gender-based persecution, such as sexual violence against women, be recognised as a ground for asylum. In practice, however, not all national asylum processes can consider differences in the situation and needs of women and men among the asylum-seeking population.



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Metadata

AREAS: Beijing Platform for Action

BPFA AREA: E. Women and Armed Conflict

AUTHOR: EIGE

PUBLISHER: EIGE

ISBN: 978-92-9470-907-3

DOI: 10.2839/098854

KEYWORDS: [beijing platform for action](#), [women and armed conflict](#)