

TITLE: National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 'Women, Peace and Security'
COUNTRY: Bosnia and Herzegovina
IMPLEMENTING ENTITY: Agency for Gender Equality / Ministry for Human Right and Refugees
DURATION: N/A



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Summary

The third generation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 ‘Women, Peace and Security’ is now in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The first NAP was adopted in 2010 and, as the first of its kind in the Western Balkans, served as an example to other countries in the region in developing their own NAPs.

The National Action Plan does more than simply advance the UN agenda on Women, Peace, and Security. It also provides a strong example of effective public policy within an increasingly divided political environment.

The systematic coordination of all actors is of paramount importance. Applying the overarching ‘Local–Regional–Global’ approach has proved very useful in implementing UNSCR 1325 at all levels of government in BiH, including cooperation and exchange of experiences and practices at regional level and promotion and recognition at global level.

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Promoting effective public policy

The third generation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of UNSCR 1325 ‘Women, Peace and Security’ (2018-2022) is in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The first NAP was adopted in 2010, following the Directive of the UN Secretary General on the importance of adopting NAPs for UNSCR 1325. As the first such NAP in the Western Balkans, it served as an example to other countries in the region. All of the NAPs were developed in full cooperation with the BiH Agency for Gender Equality (within the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees), competent institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Firstly, the Government Coordination Board was put in place to monitor BiH NAP implementation. The Board is composed of representatives from all institutions in the security and defence sector, together with NGOs. Board members have contributed substantially to the implementation, monitoring, reporting and promotion of the NAP within their institutions, as well as among the general public and internationally.

Secondly, the newly established NGO Coordination Group (consisting of 17 civil society organisations) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government Coordination Board.

Implementing the BiH NAP does more than simply advance the UN Agenda on Women, Peace and Security. It also provides a strong example of effective public policy within an increasingly divided political environment.

Providing human security

The BiH government has used the NAP as a platform to achieve meaningful change at community level. By emphasising human security, the NAP has moved away from the traditional, militarised concept of national security and shifted the focus to civilian safety and protection from all forms of intimidation and everyday threats.

More specifically, the Agency for Gender Equality has worked with civil society actors and local government to pilot the development and adoption of local NAPs in six municipalities. These plans address women’s daily security concerns, including protection from gender-based violence and discrimination, human trafficking, access to legal protection, education, healthcare, natural and economic resources, natural disasters (typically floods) and infrastructure concerns, such as landmines, street lighting and public transportation. These initiatives are an innovative example of how UNSCR 1325 can be meaningfully implemented at local level.

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The considerable regional and international cooperation BiH has made it a recognised good practice example of introducing the concept of human security as a strategic approach.

The BiH NAP was included in the 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, which highlighted the BiH NAP role as a platform for significant initiatives in local communities.

In its previous NAPs, for example, BiH took steps to support women migrants in Serbia in 2014, as well as providing assistance to women in areas of BiH most affected by floods.

Today, the third action plan in BiH (2018-2022) presents an innovative approach to new and emerging security threats and challenges from a gender perspective, including natural disasters, migration, violent extremism and terrorism. These phenomena are common to all countries in the region and beyond, occupying increasing space on the UN’s Women, Peace and Security Agenda. In its new NAP, BiH recognises that more attention must be paid to women’s needs and interests during migration crises and natural disasters, and acknowledges the role of women in combating and preventing violent extremism and terrorism.

Transferability to other contexts

The BiH NAP is applicable across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. It has served as an example of good practice and proved applicable to other countries in the region (e.g. Montenegro), as well as at a broader international level. A good example of transferable BiH practices on UNSCR 1325 localisation is the development and adoption of a Local Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the city of Niš (Serbia). This local plan is in line with the methodology used for local action plans in BiH and is the result of close regional exchange and cooperation.

NAPs are about more than women. At their core, they address fundamental issues of long-term peace, security and reconciliation. Regular cooperation on these issues supports stability and increases the prospects for sustainable reconciliation among the countries in the region.

The concrete results achieved in BiH have been widely promoted at international level. They featured at NAP academies in Vienna and Washington, where more than 20 countries from all over the world gathered to exchange experiences and good practices. Following the academies, BiH was invited to support a number of other countries in drafting their NAPs. For example, the BiH Gender Equality Agency worked directly with the relevant institutions in Finland and Moldova to support them in drafting NAPs inspired by the structure and system of coordination and monitoring in the BiH NAP. The BiH approach to women, peace and security policies is evidently applicable to different cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

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Learning and capacity-building potential

The BiH NAP shows considerable learning potential. Gender equality training has been included in regular training programmes and education curricula in the defence and security sector, strengthening institutional capacity. However, institutions must intensify their efforts to improve the conditions for greater participation of women in professional development training programmes.

The Peace Support Operations Training Centre (PSOTC), which provides education and professional development for the BiH armed forces, offers training to other BiH defence and security sector institutions and agencies. PSOTC curricula include a five-day training programme on ‘Gender Issues in Peace Support Operations’. The Centre also acts as a regional training centre for peace supported operations, in accordance with international compatible standards.

Sustainability of the NAP

The continuity of the BiH NAP since 2010 demonstrates the government’s strong political will and commitment to the UN’s Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This commitment forms an important element of sustainability. The NAP is constantly improving its policy approach and goal hierarchy, and facilitating robust inter-agency coordination. Security and defence sector institutions take NAP implementation seriously within their scope of work. The BiH Agency for Gender Equality provides regular professional support and acts as a helpdesk for competent institutions in the process of introducing gender equality principles and implementing action plans.

In order to ensure high quality groundwork and continued sustainability, the relevant institutions must incorporate NAP activities into their regular work plans and programmes. This includes adopting the necessary measures, such as harmonisation of laws and by-laws with the BiH Gender Equality Law, introduction of affirmative measures to increase interest and numbers of women in the security sector and decision-making positions in general, and awareness-raising (education and promotion) of UNSCR 1325. The progress achieved in the systematic approach to gender mainstreaming within the the scope of work of competent institutions represents another key element of sustainability.

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National plans and strategies

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda and NAP activities are embedded within the BiH Gender Action Plan. This overall national strategy for gender mainstreaming in all areas of public and private life has been periodically adopted since 2006.

Achievements and tangible outcomes

- Most of the institutions have adopted measures to achieve gender equality in accordance with Article 24 of the BiH Gender Equality Law, which defines the obligations of all institutions. Government Coordination Board members are the main initiators of change within their respective institutions.
- The network of gender focal points has been established in the Ministry of Defence, all armed forces units, all sectors of the Ministry of Security and law enforcement agencies in BiH, as well as in BiH contingents in peace-keeping missions.
- There has been a threefold increase in the number of legal documents submitted by security institutions to the Agency for Gender Equality to harmonise them with the Gender Equality Law.
- Affirmative measures and promotional activities have resulted in an increase in the numbers of women interested in participating in the BiH military and police forces, as well as a significant increase in the deployment of women in peace-keeping missions. For instance:
 - The number of women candidates for recruitment in the BiH armed forces increased from 23 in 2008 to around 600 in 2017.
 - The percentage of women participating in peace-keeping missions currently stands at 30%, which is a 6% increase on 2014 and a 14% increase compared to 2010. This is the result of an affirmative measure introduced by the Ministry of Security to reduce the number of years' work experience from eight to five years for women. The current rate is higher than the average among NATO and EU Member States.
- In response to the NAP, there are Networks of Women Police Officers in both the police and the army of BiH. These Networks organise women in the police force and provide a platform for empowerment and support through joint action in the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights in the security sector.

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- Changes were introduced in certain provisions of laws and by-laws of the police service to improve opportunities for women’s career development and prevent indirect gender-based discrimination (e.g. changing criteria for performance evaluation procedures if women took maternity leave in the required period). The same applies to relevant regulations in the defence sector, with changes implemented to increase interest and participation of women in the military forces. Measures taken here contribute to the reconciliation of family and professional life.