

Università Sapienza – Dipartimento Scienze Politiche
Corso di Alta Formazione “Donne Pace e Mediazione” - VII Edizione (a.a. 2023-24)
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*“Consolidating a roster of experts to further advance the Italian efforts
in the area of Women, Peace and Security.”*

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November 2024

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Abstract

The paper examines the advancement of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, with a particular focus on the “participation pillar.” Focusing on the Italian National Action Plans (NAPs), the document considers the re-establishment of a national roster of experts as a valuable tool to: (i) develop an inclusive WPS policy through an open and comprehensive process; (ii) ensure diverse, relevant and readily accessible WPS expertise for implementing the NAP; (iii) promote the active participation of WPS experts, specifically women, in line with WPS commitments. This reasoning is bolstered by international practices like the UK’s WPS Helpdesk, Norway’s NORCAP, and Sweden’s Folke Bernadotte Academy, which integrate WPS expertise into the efforts of institutional and civil society actors implementing NAPs. These examples underscore the importance of consolidating WPS expertise to foster inclusivity and participation as essential elements of a truly transformative WPS approach.

1. Introduction

1.1 The United Nations Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

Traditionally, women have been viewed as passive victims of war and conflict. However, during the 1990s, this perspective began to shift, challenging the conventional view and acknowledging that women play diverse and active roles in armed conflicts¹. Furthermore, women's peace movement worldwide contributed to demonstrate that “*more often than not, women are among the first to speak out collectively against war and try to prevent escalation.*”²

In light of the above, the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) - adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000 - is a landmark document as it acknowledges the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and stresses the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. The UNSCR 1325 affirms that sustainable peace and security efforts entails the participation and the inclusion of women in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace³.

At this stage, it should be noted that the UNSCR 1325 was the result of the combined efforts of civil society and UN member states to acknowledge the policy gap of counting the role of women in peacebuilding and the long-term impact of conflict on their lives. As such, civil society actors played a pivotal role in bringing this important issue to the attention of the Council thus advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) policy related framework⁴.

Key pillars of the UNSCR 1325 include:

¹ María Vilellas Ariño, *The Participation of Women in Peace Processes: The Other Tables*. Available at: <https://www.cawtarclearinghouse.org/storage/AttachementGender/The%20Participation%20of%20Women%20in%20Peace%20Processes.%20The%20Other%20Tables.pdf>.

² Sanam N. Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference*. New York: UNIFEM, 2000. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2000/1/women-at-the-peace-table-making-a-difference>

³ United States Institute of Peace. “About UNSCR 1325”. Accessed September 10, 2024. https://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325.

⁴ Louise Olsson, and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis. *An Introduction to Resolution 1325: Measuring Progress and Impact*. Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2013. Available at: https://fba.se/contentassets/692e74c7fc95456db35af18f9c9e38ea/9781138800021_intro.pdf

1. **Participation:** The resolution emphasizes the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures. This includes increasing their representation at decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions.
2. **Protection:** It calls for the protection of women's and girls' rights, particularly in conflict zones. This includes safeguarding them from gender-based violence, such as rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and ensuring their safety, such in refugee and displacement camps.
3. **Prevention:** The resolution highlights the necessity of adopting a gender perspective on conflict prevention. This involves recognizing the different impacts of conflict on women and men and addressing the root causes of gender inequality.
4. **Relief and Recovery:** The UNSCR 1325 equally emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive approaches in the design and implementation of relief and recovery programs. This includes addressing the specific needs of women and girls in post-conflict settings, and ensuring their contributions to reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.

Following the UNSCR 1325, the Security Council (SC) has adopted nine additional resolutions on WPS, the most recent in October 2019. These resolutions are often referred to as belonging to two sets of categories, one promoting women's active and effective participation in peace-making and peacebuilding, and the second focusing on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. As noted in the *Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325*, and with the exception of UNSCRs 1889 and 2122, the WPS-related resolutions largely focus on sexual violence and other protection issues, and “*this [...] has meant a stronger focus on the protection of women and girls [...] and a less consistent recognition and systematic inclusion of their participation in the agenda.*”⁵

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to highlight that UNSCR 2122 (2013) places a strong emphasis on deepening the understanding of gender dimensions in peacebuilding. Importantly, it advocates for the availability of gender expertise and experts, and further

⁵ Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325*. New York: UN Women, 2015. Available at: https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

encourages the appointment of women mediators and female members of mediation teams. As summarized by the Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security⁶, this UNSCR specifically focuses on breaking down actual barriers, creating opportunities, and ensuring women have a seat at the table.

Altogether, the UNSCRs “package” on WPS not only promote gender equality and strengthen women’s participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle, but also paved the way for subsequent resolutions and initiatives aimed at integrating gender perspectives into peace and security efforts. Importantly, the resolutions led to the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) by various countries to implement the resolutions’ objectives at the national level. Globally, 108 countries have adopted WPS NAPs since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000⁷.

Nowadays, and despite multiple achievements, challenges continue to hinder women’s participation and contributions to peace and security. As an example, data gathered by the Council on Foreign Relations highlight that in 2022, women represented only 16 percent of negotiators in active peace processes led or co-led by the UN, a decline from 23 percent in 2020.⁸

As argued María Vilellas Ariño, persisting “*women’s absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in dialogue and negotiation. Women have wide ranging experience in dialogue processes including many wars and post-war contexts, but there has been a deliberate lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes.*”⁹

⁶ Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security, Accessed October 05, 2024.

<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/>

⁷ NATO, “Deep Dive Recap: Advancing Women, Peace and Security through National Action Plans”.

Accessed August 10, 2024.

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_224856.htm#:~:text=Ms%20Williams%20Bright%20traced%20the,of%20NAPs%20across%20108%20countries.

⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, “Women’s Participation in Peace Processes.” Accessed August 10, 2024.

https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data?_gl=1*137dun4*_gcl_au*ODA5MjU5NTI4LjE3MjUwOTU4ODk.*_ga*MTgzMDMwMDYyNC4xNzI1MDk1ODg5*_ga_24W5E70YKH*MTcyNTA5NTg4OS4xLjEuMTcyNTA5NTg5MC41OS4wLjA

⁹ Vilellas Ariño, María, *The Participation of Women in Peace Processes: The Other Tables*, Barcelona: Institut Català Internacional per la Pau, 2010. Available at:

<https://www.cawtarclearinghouse.org/storage/AttachementGender/The%20Participation%20of%20Women%20in%20Peace%20Processes.%20The%20Other%20Tables.pdf>.

Considering this, understanding the resistance to inclusion of women in peace processes¹⁰ is essential to develop adequate strategies and approaches, such as NAPs, to fully implement the UNSCR 1325. As part of this document, and with the aim of directly challenging the persistent stereotype that women lack substantial expertise in peace and security, the focus will be on promoting women's participation by establishing, as part of the Italian NAP, a roster of national experts, including female experts.

2. The Italian National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

2.1 The National Action Plan as an instrument to advance WPS related commitments

Since Denmark released the first NAP in 2005, and with the UNSCR 1889 (2009) specifically calling for the development of indicators to measure the implementation of the resolution both within the UN system and by member states, a substantial body of research has emerged on the formulation and implementation of NAPs. These studies highlight how NAPs might serve as tools for integrating the WPS agenda into national policies and state priorities. While NAPs vary significantly from country to country, most address, to some extent, the four key pillars of WPS. As noted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the NAPs differ in terms of their positioning within the Government, which in turn determine their focus (internal or external policy) and their level of influence¹¹. The above-mentioned OSCE's research identifies four common elements of effective and "high impact" NAPs:

1. Inclusive design process and established coordination system for implementation;
2. Results-based monitoring and evaluation plan;
3. Identified and allocated implementation resources;
4. Strong and sustained political will.

¹⁰ Esra Çuhadaru, *Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes*. Peaceworks No. 159. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, March 2020. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/03/understanding-resistance-inclusive-peace-processes>.

¹¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*. Vienna: OSCE, 2020. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf>.

2.2 The Italian National Action Plans on WPS

Italy adopted its first NAP for the period from 2010 to 2013. This was followed by the second plan covering 2014 to 2016, the third from 2016 to 2020, and the current fourth plan, which spans from 2020 to 2024.

The entity responsible for drafting and managing the plan at the national level is the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU), while the implementation of the Italian NAP at the international level is entrusted to the Directorate General for Political Affairs and Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI).

For the development of the NAP, the CIDU's Open-Ended Working Group on Women, Peace and Security consults with multiple stakeholders, including civil society organizations, research institutes and universities. These actors are equally involved in the implementation of the NAP.

The 1st Italian NAP (2010-2013) - structured around six key objectives that would have also shaped subsequent plans - marked a significant milestone for Italy as it positioned the country among the relatively small group of nations with a dedicated WPS policy.

The 2nd NAP (2014-2016), also in line with the international evolution of the WPS agenda, introduced a specific objective (N. 5) on "strengthening the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes" and reconfirmed the focus on peacekeeping and defence policy related-aspects. According to Luisa Del Turco: *"Despite certain visible limitations, the first two NAPs establish valid foundations for subsequent developments, defining fundamental aspects such as priority objectives, CIDU's role as the focal point for the NAP [...] and an openness towards civil society. As such, they testify clearly and consistently the important role Italy has sought to play in this sector over the past decade."*¹²

¹² Luisa Del Turco. *Il Terzo Piano d'Azione Nazionale di implementazione dell'Agenda "Donne, Pace e Sicurezza*, Annuario Italiano dei Diritti Umani 2021, Centro d'Ateneo per i Diritti Umani dell'Università degli Studi di Padova (Padova University Press 2021). Available at: <https://www.pacedifesa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/III-PAN-Italia-DPS-Approfondimento-di-LDT.pdf>

The 3rd NAP (2016-2019) integrated a multi-stakeholder approach and entailed a significant involvement of civil society organizations - grouped into the platform named “Gender, Interventions and Peace Process, GIPP” - for the design of the document.

With the 4th NAP (2020-2024), a thematic focus on “Protection” of children, and in particular of girls in conflict situations, was introduced. This choice confirmed the tendency to favour “Protection” over “Participation”, which was the initial prevailing element of the NAP. According to Luisa del Turco, this approach might undue limit the transformative nature of the WPS¹³ also considering the worrisome absence of “Prevention” in all four Italian NAPs.

2.3 The Italian National Action Plans and references to the roster of experts

With the NAP 2014-16¹⁴, and specifically through its 6th Objective: “*The Contribution of Civil Society to the enforcement of UNSCR 1325*”, Italy committed to create an open roster for all national experts, and to make it accessible to interested administrations. In this context, and particularly at the national level, Italy recognized the need to gather dedicated expertise for capacity building activities on WPS related issues. On this, the 2015 Progress Report¹⁵ noted the following: “*To recognize and promote the experiences promoted by civil society— which places significant emphasis on the local dimension, particularly on providing women with opportunities to express their views and realize their potential in areas such as economy, environmental protection, decision-making processes, and as part of national structures and institutions—the CIDU has activated a link on its website for registering and subscribing to a roster of experts, open to all entities involved in the 1325 Plan. However, to date, only one independent expert has registered. Therefore, greater outreach is needed.*”

The 3rd NAP 2016-2019¹⁶ also referred to the consolidation of the roster as part of the 3rd Objective “*Continue to ensure specific training on the various cross-cutting aspects of UNSCR 132, particularly for personnel participating in peace operations*” (Action 4: Further

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ *National Action Plan 2014-2016*. Available at: <https://cidu.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Italy-NAP-2-2014-2016.pdf>

¹⁵ *2025 Progress Report on the Italian National Action Plan 2014-2016*. Available at: <https://cidu.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PROGRESS-REPORT-PAN-1325-6-maggio-2015.pdf>

¹⁶ *National Action Plan 2016-2019*. Available at: <https://cidu.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Brochure-CIDU-2017-ENG-HR.pdf>.

dissemination and expansion of the Experts Roster on UNSCR 1325, available on the CIDU website). Nonetheless, the NAP Progress Reports of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 do not share any details on the advancements made with reference to this specific action.

Unfortunately, and despite its potential to advance the objectives of the current NAP (2020-2024)¹⁷, the document is silent when it comes to the consolidation of the roster.

3. A possible best practice: operationalize the roster of WPS experts to support women participation

3.1 The relevance of the roster

The consolidation of a roster of WPS experts seems to remain a relevant good practice for comprehensively advancing the Italian commitments in the WPS area.

With specific reference to the importance of professionalizing the Italian engagement in mediation, a report of the Agency for Peacebuilding recalls that “*Resolution UNSCR 65/283 provides a systematic approach to mediation, with increased coordination, capacity building, and allocated resources. It [...] encourages leveraging existing mediation capacities and ensuring coherence among various actors involved in mediation efforts*”. In light of that, the report notes that: “*Italy can benefit from a roster of international mediators to be involved in pilot projects, training, mentoring and other specific activities. A more traditional approach based on ad hoc selections and already established connections with some familiar experts can present a significant constraint to establishing a solid structure for mediation. Even though peace mediation has some peculiarities compared to the whole peacebuilding area, the roster can also include broader capacities in the peace sector to strengthen an integrated approach to the area.*”¹⁸

¹⁷ *National Action Plan 2020-2024*. Available at: https://cidu.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/piano_1325_2020-2024.pdf.

¹⁸ Agency for Peacebuilding, “Italy and Peace Mediation”, 2024. Available at: https://www.peaceagency.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AP_Italy-and-Peace-Mediation_ENG_web-version_Bernardo_Venturi_Mariachiara_Giaccai_2.pdf

By adopting the very same reasoning for the Italian engagement in advancing the WPS, it seems that the roster, introduced as part of the Italian NAP 2014-2016, could map and subsequently offer relevant and proven expertise to: (a) advance the integration of WPS aspects in policy and programming while (b) enhancing the national capacities to implement the NAP.

(a) Advance the integration of WPS aspects in policy and programming through relevant expertise

The above-mentioned OSCE study on implementing the WPS Agenda in the OSCE Region¹⁹ analysed the collaboration between state institutions and civil society for the development of NAPs, and noted the important contributions provided by the latter. The study affirms that in multiple cases²⁰, civil society organizations, including women associations, provided important contributions on security sector-related issues. They were also key partners in terms of implementing and monitoring the implementation of NAPs, although the degree to which these associations can be watchdogs differ based on the demand for institutional loyalty. Based on this, the study recommends to value available WPS expertise by ensuring the participation of individuals and CSOs' representatives with diverse backgrounds in the development of NAPs.

Reflecting on this, consolidating the roster of national experts could facilitate the identification of key actors with proven WPS expertise. This would not only contribute to more inclusive consultations during policy development but also help secure their support for effective policy implementation. In line with that, the roster could allow to quickly mobilize relevant expertise for the implementation of the NAP's foreseen actions, such as capacity building, awareness raising, strategic communication and advocacy. Furthermore, the consolidation of the roster could equally allow to map, and subsequently mobilize relevant cross-cutting expertise, in areas such as effective monitoring and evaluation.

¹⁹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*. Vienna: OSCE, 2020. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf>.

²⁰ The study analyses five specific cases: Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(b) Enhancing the Italian capacities to advance its WPS commitments

At global level, and to broadly reflect on women participation, the *Global Study on the implementation of Resolution 1325*²¹ noted that women participation in peace-processes still requires specific measures and approaches as it remain often contested, rarely a natural and unforced element of proceedings.

Nonetheless, the document also notes that a gender-responsive approach to peace processes has recently begun to take shape, highlighting the importance of having technical gender expertise readily available, as well as women practitioners with proven experience who can integrate mediation and negotiation support teams. While the report notes an increasing provision of gender-related expertise, it also notes that “*although gender expertise is systematically offered through the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts and roster of senior technical experts, the overall demand from negotiating parties for these skills remains significantly lower than for other areas of mediation standby expertise*”. Furthermore, “*even when gender experts participate, they are not always part of the strategic planning teams and at times restricted to discussions regarding track II processes*”. Against this backdrop, it seems relevant to conclude that advancing women participation might benefit from specific and coordinated efforts aimed at consolidating, promoting and using existing and specific women expertise related to WPS.

Considering this, and with reference to the Italian context, the roster could contribute to the mapping of women experts with proven WPS expertise so as to facilitate their effective and meaningful contribution and/or participation to processes relevant to the WPS’ advancement. Importantly, the roster could comprise women experts with different background and profiles, so as to strengthen inclusivity as well as diversity.

²¹ Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325*. New York: UN Women, 2015. Available at: https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

3.2 Examples from other Countries

3.2.1 United Kingdom, the Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

The Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk²², which started in 2021 and will continue to operate until 2025, is a call-down facility for UK government teams that provides analysis and expertise on WPS issues. The helpdesk has been established to support the integration of gender aspects in conflict and security-focused policy and programming, and to boost UK capacity to advance its WPS NAP.

The Helpdesk is structured as a partnership led by Saferworld and comprising Conciliation Resources, Gender Action for Peace and Security, Women's International Peace Centre, and the University of Durham.

Based on the Helpdesk website, this mechanism aims to provide flexible and responsive support to the Integrated Security Fund (ISF) officers and UK government officers working at national level and abroad. It is primarily intended for desk-based advisory support but can include trainings and specific support focusing on:

- Initiating and developing gender and conflict analysis as well as thematic research on a wide range of issues to inform WPS, intersectional gender-responsive conflict policy and programming;
- Applying a gender and conflict lens to desk-based evidence review and analysis;
- Advising ISF staff within UK and in-country missions to integrate gender-responsive policy and programming within their ongoing interventions in conflict and fragile contexts.

The Helpdesk's support can be mobilized via e-mail. Following this, the Helpdesk management will follow-up to clarify the specific requirements, so as to identify the most suitable experts. Although specific experts cannot be requested, the best-matched team for the specific request will be identified and suggested by the Helpdesk. After the identification

²² Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk. Saferworld, November 2022. Accessed August 10, 2024.
<https://wpshelpdesk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Women-Peace-and-Security-Helpdesk-11-22.pdf>.

of the experts, the entity that initiated the request can interact directly with the identified experts, while keeping the Helpdesk team in the loop.

The budget for Helpdesk comes from the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF),²³ Gender Peace and Security portfolio. The total funding committed to this project is £1.7 million and, starting from April 2022, each year the Helpdesk has an annual budget of £500,000.

3.2.2 Norway, the Norwegian Standby Capacity Programme

Over the years, Norway has positioned itself as a leading political and financial supporter of international humanitarian, development, peace-making, peace-keeping, and peacebuilding efforts. A key mechanism Norway has developed for this purpose is the creation of civilian standby rosters. These rosters provide Norway with the flexibility not only to offer political and financial backing to international missions but also to mobilize the human resources necessary to manage and implement the programs essential for operationalizing these missions.²⁴

In 2009, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) agreed to establish the Norwegian Standby Capacity Programme (NORCAP). The purpose of NORCAP is to provide an overarching framework within which to administer several civilian humanitarian, peace-making, peace-keeping and peacebuilding related rosters operated by the NRC.

Over the past 25 years, NORCAP has evolved into one of the world's leading global providers of expertise, with the ability to deploy specialists at short notice to enhance response capacity and address identified needs.

²³ The CSSF is a cross-government fund that tackles conflict, stability and security challenges overseas, which pose threat to UK national security. The CSSF's delivery is structured around 4 fund level outcomes: (i) conflict and instability; (ii) state threats; (iii) transnational threats; (iv) women, peace and security. As such, the CSSF is connected with the implementation of the UK WPS NAP.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/conflict-stability-and-security-fund>

²⁴ Cedric de Coning, Walter Lotze, and Mikkel Frøsig Pedersen. *Summary Report Norwegian Standby Roster for Civilian Observers (NOROBS): The Role and Position of NOROBS in the Context of Norway's Contribution to Civilian Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08049>.

Based on the information available on its website, NORCAP has a pool of more than 1,000 professionals recruited based on a variety of requirements, and covering the following thematic areas:

- Crisis response,
- Human rights, democratisation and peace (NORDEM²⁵ programme),
- Protection,
- Gender, via the Gender Standby Capacity Project²⁶ that specifically address the need for senior gender experts to support Resident Coordinators, Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams in prioritizing gender at the country level,
- Needs analysis,
- Cash programming,
- Resilience and clean energy.

Based on the Norwegian NAP for 2019-2022,²⁷ NORCAP and NORDEM are both considered effective tools for the advancement of the WPS agenda.

3.2.3 Sweden, the Folke Bernadotte Academy

The 2024-2028 Swedish NAP²⁸ identified prioritized areas that will guide country's work on WPS. Among these areas is "Leadership and Expertise" which specifically aims at ensuring that gender equality expertise, research and analyses are integrated as a knowledge-enhancing tool into the work of institutional and civil society actors, both at national and international level. As part of these prioritized areas, the Swedish NAP also refers to the

²⁵ The NORDEM programme provides experts for civilian monitoring mechanisms and election observer missions. It also provides advice and expertise in the following areas: good governance, democratic institutions, independence of the judiciary, judicial and legal reform, human rights, election observation and election assistance. <https://www.nrc.no/nordem>

²⁶ Established in 2007, the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that aims at strengthening inter-agency capacity and leadership to deliver on commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. It is managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/gender-standby-capacity-project-gencap>

²⁷ *National Action Plan 2019-2022*. Available at: <https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2019/09/Norway-NAP-4-2019-2022.pdf>

²⁸ *National Action Plan 2024-2028*. Available at: <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Swedens-fourth-NAP.pdf>

provision, for example through secondments, of experts to other organisations as an important tool to advance the WPS-related commitments.

With reference to the Swedish WPS NAP, the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) is the expert implementation agency that:

- Provides trainings on women, peace and security. Interestingly, the FBA's Gender-Responsive Leadership Initiative is designed to support leaders and managers within organizations such as the EU, UN, ECOWAS, OSCE and the African Union to fulfil their central role in enabling gender equal peace, security and development work;
- Conducts research on WPS and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS);
- Second personnel working mainly within the field of women, peace and security to international peace operations that Sweden contributes to, and led by the EU, UN and OSCE. The Swedish government has also decided that FBA is to deploy staff with specific areas of expertise, including WPS and YPS.

4. Conclusions

Considering the best practices briefly illustrated above, and as part of the upcoming Italian NAP, it seems relevant to consider the consolidation of the roster of experts in view to:

- Value at best existing national WPS expertise

As part of establishing the roster, a thorough mapping exercise could be conducted to identify all relevant and available WPS actors and experts, including Italian women mediators, Italian women professionals dedicated to WPS, and civil society organizations active in the WPS field, for the development, and the subsequent implementation of the Italian NAP. This mapping could help identifying relevant expertise to be consulted and then mobilized for the NAP's implementation.

- Ensure professional contributions for advancing WPS commitments

Through the development of clear and specific recruitment criteria, qualified national experts could be identified to deliver on a needs-basis a wide array of professional services in the

area of WPS. The roster could be organized into multiple thematic sections—such as Monitoring and Evaluation, Mediation, Gender Analysis, Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Capacity Building, etc.—as well as by geographic areas. Such a structure could greatly facilitate the identification of the most relevant expertise.

- Promote inclusivity and participation as key elements of a truly transformative WPS approach

The roster can be designed to favour diversity and inclusivity. For example, the roster could comprise junior experts as well as high-level profiles. Furthermore, the roster should go beyond the civil service and diplomatic core so as to include civil society actors with relevant skills and expertise.

While building the roster, it is important to consider that WPS is and remains a multi-dimensional commitment. In fact, those pushing for the inclusion of women have thus far excessively focused on the negotiating table as the main track of the peacebuilding process. However, according to the “Broadening Participation” research project²⁹, the negotiation table is neither the only modality for participation nor should it be seen as a single-entry point for women’s participation. Rather, the formal ‘negotiation table’ may be comprised of multiple entry points permitting women’s engagement to manifest itself in different ways.³⁰

As such, the roster could comprise a wide variety of expertise, all relevant to Track 1, 2, and 3, thus holistically contributing to advance the WPS.

Vis á vis the objectives of the current Italian NAP, and their related actions, the relevance of the roster of experts would be the following:

²⁹ Inclusive Peace. *Broadening Participation Project*. Accessed September 10, 2024.
<https://www.inclusivepeace.org/project/broadening-participation/>

³⁰ Thania Paffenholz. *Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations*. ResearchGate, 2015. Available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298307917_Making_Women_Count_-_Not_Just_Counting_Women_Assessing_Women%27s_Inclusion_and_Influence_on_Peace_Negotiations.

- **Objective N. 1** *Strengthen – in a continuous and sustainable manner – the role of women in peace processes and all decision-making processes, while enhancing synergies with civil society, to effectively implement the UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda.*

In this context, the roster can facilitate the inclusion of women with dedicated and proven expertise in all policy and decision-making processes related to peace and security. Their inclusion, based on their proven thematic expertise, would contribute to their recognition as relevant and capable parties.

Furthermore, the roster, by including members representing and/or connected with civil society, could be strategically used to ensure regular and inclusive consultations, thereby enhancing synergies between (i) all actors involved in the design and implementation of the NAP, and (ii) various levels of intervention, including the grassroots level.

- **Objective N. 2** *Continue to promote gender perspective in peace operations and enhance the presence of women, particularly in the Armed Forces and Police Forces, by strengthening their role in decision-making processes related to peace missions and in peace conferences.*

The roster could enable the mobilization of relevant WPS expertise for policy design, prevention strategies, and conflict management as part of peace operations in conflict areas. It could also facilitate the identification of experts for (i) the design and delivery of capacity-building activities and for (ii) conducting research on existing obstacles to women's participation in the security sector. Additionally, the roster could be used to identify suitable candidates for secondment as Gender Advisers in peace operations relevant to Italy.

- **Objective N. 3** *Contribute to promoting gender equality, the empowerment and protection of women and children, in particular girls, and respect for the human rights of women and children, in particular girls, in conflict and post-conflict areas, by enhancing synergies with civil society to implement UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the WPS Agenda.*

As part of this objective, the roster could facilitate the identification of relevant expertise in key areas such as prevention and protection against gender-based and sexual violence in conflict areas. It could also support the identification of experts for (i) the delivery of immediate humanitarian assistance and (ii) the organization of specific capacity-building programs for professionals involved in peace and security operations. Lastly, the roster could identify women human rights defenders, peace-builders, mediators, and women's associations to enhance co-operation with them.

- **Objective N. 4** *Strengthen strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy by enhancing Italian participation in forums, conferences, and sector mechanisms (e.g., United Nations system, Red Cross, OSCE, NATO, EU, OECD, Council of Europe) to further support the implementation of the WPS Agenda, while continuing to ensure the strengthening of information and training at all levels on the various cross-cutting aspects of UNSCR 1325 (2000), particularly for personnel participating in peace operations. This includes increasing synergies with civil society and universities to effectively implement UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the WPS Agenda.*

The roster would be strategic in providing Italian women experts with increased visibility, directly challenging the persistent stereotype that there are no, or only a few, women with specific expertise in security, mediation, negotiation, and peacebuilding. As such, the roster would be a valuable asset for designing effective communication campaigns aimed at strengthening women's participation in peace and security related matters.

Furthermore, the roster could help mobilizing relevant expertise to contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, as well as WPS policy development, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and advocacy, in close cooperation with partner institutions such as the UN, EU, OSCE, NATO, and the Council of Europe. As per the other objectives, the roster could be instrumental in identifying relevant experts for the design and the delivery of specific capacity building activities and programs.

To summarize, it seems relevant to consider the consolidation of the roster of national - including female - WPS experts via the upcoming Italian NAP so as to:

- Develop an inclusive WPS policy through an open and encompassing process;
- Ensure diverse, relevant and readily accessible WPS expertise for the implementation of the NAP and to address specific needs connected with it;
- Promote the active participation of WPS experts in key process in line with WPS commitments.

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