



Cybersecurity, Women, Peace and Security & NAP 1325s

THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda provides a framework for addressing international security threats and their gendered dimensions, as well as for ensuring women are part of peace and security decision-making. As the agenda enters its third decade, new security issues are emerging, such as cyberthreats and their gendered implications. To stay relevant, the WPS agenda needs to expand its focus beyond traditional conflict zones to include cyberspace.

In conflict-affected areas, both men and women are exposed to cyberviolence, targeted by recruitment efforts from conflict parties, and are more vulnerable to cybercrime. However, women in these fragile settings face a double burden: online abuse rooted in gender discrimination and offline violence driven by instability. In places where violence is already common and accepted, online hate and disinformation can more easily escalate into real-world attacks—including sexual and gender-based violence.

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS (NAP 1325)

By the end of 2024, six EU member states included references to cyber threats or online violence in their National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, and the Netherlands. Denmark and Ireland highlight the importance of involving women in cybersecurity and informational technology. Italy's plan includes monitoring of online hate speech targeting women refugees and asylum seekers, as part of a broader effort to track hate crimes. Finland takes a more comprehensive approach, with a dedicated section and an outcome aimed at tackling online gender-based violence. Estonia and the Netherlands acknowledge the issue but do not outline any concrete actions or outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUDING CYBERSECURITY INTO A NAP 1325

1 At the level of cybersecurity negotiations, policies, and programmes

Some NAPs have included lobbying at the level of treaty and convention negotiations for (small) arms control and disarmament. In a similar way, lobbying for cyber treaties, policies and programmes to include gender perspectives can be included as a NAP activity. Further, women remain underrepresented in cybersecurity negotiations and lobbying for their full, equal and meaningful participation is needed. Women's participation in international cybersecurity decision-making is important to provide a diversity of perspectives which can enable more careful information processing and better policy decisions.

At a national level you could explore whether there is a need to better recognize the gendered nature of online violence and cyber-bullying in policies and legislations.

Gender bias in digital technologies employment

2

Research finds that while 71% of men say they have AI skills, only 29% of women report having the same abilities — indicating a 42-percentage point gender gap. The lack of girls and women in the digital sector is a missed opportunity. It slows down societal progress towards a fairer and more inclusive digital world. The lack of representation of women in the creation of digital technologies translates to less gender sensitivity in designing technology.

Include in your NAP measures to increase the number of women in digital technologies employment, both domestically and internationally. Consider setting up training programmes, or train, mentor, and support women digital entrepreneurs.

3

Cyber violence against women and girls

Include in the NAP cyber violence as part of the spectrum of gender-based violence. While digital technologies have provided women and girls with tools that allow them to access and share information about threats to their security, that same online world also exposes them to a disproportionate level of violence and abuse. Measures to prevent women and girls from gender-based violence should therefore also include measures against online violence. Information sharing, creating safe online spaces, helplines and other measures could be included. You could consult women and girls when designing appropriate and acceptable services for victims.

Increased and safe access to the digital space

4

Worldwide, in 2023, 70% of men were using the Internet, compared with 65% of women. This means that globally, there were 244 million more men than women using the internet in 2023 - representing a digital gender divide. It is however pivotal to ensure that women and girls have access to the digital space in a safe way. You can include measures to increase the safe access of women and girls to the digital space, both domestically and internationally. You can also include measures to improve digital literacy/skills through education and training programs, domestically (women and girl refugee and asylum seekers) and internationally.

5

Gender and online radicalisation

There is a need to better understand the different factors leading to and influencing women and men's radicalisation. The drivers influencing recruitment to Armed Violent Groups may differ between men and women, as may the role of online social media platforms in such recruitment. Consider including in your NAP research into the determinants of gendered participation in such groups. You can also think of organizing community dialogues to discuss effective ways of restricting the spread of terrorist content and disinformation online. You could consider involving technology platforms and social media companies in these dialogues.

SOURCES

Sharland, Lisa, et al. 2021. *System update: Towards a women, peace and cybersecurity agenda*. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). <https://doi.org/10.37559/GEN/2021/03>

UNIDIR. 2019. *Gender in cyber diplomacy: Factsheet*. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). https://unidir.org/files/2019-12/Gender%20in%20Cyber%20Diplomacy_Factsheet.pdf

Randstad. 2024. *Understanding talent scarcity & AI equity*. Randstad. https://www.randstad.com/s3fs-media/rscom/public/2024-11/Randstad_understanding_talent_scarcity_AI_equity.pdf

European Commission. 2024, August 12. *Women in Digital Scoreboard 2024*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/women-digital-scoreboard-2024>

International Telecommunication Union. 2023. *Measuring Digital Development – Facts and Figures 2023*. International Telecommunication Union. <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2023/10/10/ff23-the-gender-digital-divide/>