

## GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACHES IN CONFIDENCE- AND SECURITY-BUILDING MEASURES

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### Abstract

The paper examines the existing issues and proposes new outlook on the solutions for incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in the sphere of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe (CSBMs). Based on a thorough consideration of the current practices and relevant documentation, the notion of gender-positive approach is introduced, while a set of particular measures for improving gender mainstreaming in the security sector is suggested. To assess adequately the degree of streamlining the OSCE's gender-related principles at local level and underline the existing gaps between theory and practice, short interviews were conducted with former and current female officers and specialists, engaged in human rights promotion in the defence and security structures. The paper concludes with the diagram offering interconnected steps to the efficient engagement of women in CSBMs.

**Keywords:** Gender-sensitive approach, confidence, security, Europe, OSCE, women's military service, security sector, peace.

### Introduction

Integration of gender-sensitive approaches into the realm of security and peace, including conventional arms control (CAC) and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in Europe, is legally enshrined in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the European Social Charter, the UN Resolution 1325 on women's role in peacebuilding and security (UNSCR 1325), PACE Resolution 2120 and more documents, toolkits, manuals and handbooks, which set the tone for mainstreaming inclusive standards (OSCE/ODHIR 2020; United Nations 1979, 2000; Council of Europe 2015; PACE 2016; OSCE 1994). However, when it comes to the realisation of these approaches and their practical aspects, things are less obvious.

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General expertise about the topic does not hint at any consensus. While some working documents indicate substantial improvement in gender mainstreaming policies in the given domains, especially over the recent years (OSCE 2018, 2019), other papers are full of scepticism, considering European conflict prevention policies and institutions as “gender-blind by design ... even when ‘successful’” (Davis 2018). As it will be shown further, the truth lays somewhere in between.

What optimists and sceptics of current gender mainstreaming practices in CSBMs do agree upon is the necessity to make gender-sensitive approaches more sensitive, as paradoxically as it may sound. That is, to identify and improve indicators of measuring success of gender policies beyond simple count of number of women in institutions and people trained. The Achilles’ heel of gender-sensitive methodologies is also the lack of clear explanation of how positive changes spill over in institutions from top to bottom and vice versa. Therefore, the current paper aims not only to show the pitfalls of gender-sensitive approaches in the security sector, but also to suggest practical steps for overcoming the obstacles and increasing applicability of gender-sensitive tools, especially at local levels. The methodology, utilised for this purpose, includes content analysis of the OSCE’s relevant key documents (in particular, the Vienna Document, the Treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe), local interviewing of women from the security sector of Armenia, as well as block diagram technique to demonstrate efficient women’s engagement in CSBMs.

### **Gender sensitivity as a fad vs. gender sensitivity as a rule**

From the nature of aforementioned documents, postulating the importance of gender-sensitive approach, it is clear that implementation of the latter is directly connected with the extent of recognising human rights and capacities of women and men in the CAC and CSBMs. Security constitutes the core of CSBMs, however, constructing it would be impossible without human rights, which are gluing and cohering the whole architecture of European defensive solidity and thus should never be overshadowed by the focus of the OSCE, NATO, or CSTO on topical issues. Moreover: the idea to dichotomise human dimension against security, which is viewed to come at the expense of the former, is rather artificial and misleading. The success in combatting terrorism and human trafficking, in ensuring control over arms and their proliferation in Europe depends not only on the collective efficiency of technical measures applied. What is equally important, it relies on how these measures were established: whether they were set by and over qualifications, knowledge and expertise on the spot, or the genderly predetermined stereotypes.

This is widely accepted on paper, but not always followed in practice truth. As one of the female officers serving in the Armenian armed forces confirmed, as long as gender sensitivity is not instilled in the minds of affiliated with the security sector professionals, certain increase in the number of women in leadership, although registered, will not have any significant meaning, because women “do not have a situational influence on the

developments”<sup>1</sup>. Considering how women’s engagement is evolving not only in Armenia but also in other OSCE participating States, proven by collected data (OSCE/ODIHR 2019), it would be fair to assert that on a broader European scale appointment of women to the leading positions manifests tribute to popular tendency, a fad rather than genuine willingness to benefit from their professionalism. The mere enrolment of women in the security and confidence building is not a manifestation of human rights per se and should not be regarded as an achievement. After all, numbers vividly evidence that women are still underrepresented in both quantitative (women generally involved) and qualitative (women in leading roles) terms<sup>2</sup>. For example, only one female officer worked in the Arms Control and Peacekeeping Division in the Ministry of Defence of Armenia,<sup>3</sup> while according to the former officer from the Security Council of Armenia, there is “a decline, locally and globally, of female participation in the decision-making process on security issues”<sup>4</sup>. Hence, the engagement of women and installation of gender-sensitive approach become an achievement only when:

- women occupy positions, including leading roles, not to govern abstractly, but to have the decision-making power;
- preventing, investigating and eradicating human rights violations against women in the security sector is equally tangible against men’s cases;
- methodologies, tools, procedures and trainings not only cover the topic concerned, but illustrate a roadmap for championing gender sensitivity.

A gender-sensitive approach, introduced formally but without explaining, following, and disseminating it equally among men and women, is doomed to failure. Under such conditions, promoted experts, servicepersons, and officers are limited to theoretical knowledge about their rights and obligations without means and capabilities to utilise it, which causes shortcomings in and uncertainty about consecutive accumulation of feasible betterments. For example, if women are trained to inspect and monitor arms control, stipulated by the framework of the CFE Treaty, but do not exercise the knowledge they gained due to subjective reasons, including cultural norms or traditionally preferential attitude towards male specialists in this sphere, they are not only deprived of human rights but also of professional capabilities for growth. This devalues not only the training received, but endangers the very realm of CAC and CSBMs, as the more communication goes solely among men, the more used they become to express masculinity and dialogue only with their male counterparts, condescending or ignoring female expertise and constantly finding justifications for such ignorance in the entrenched tradition of masculinity. The vicious cycle of reproduction of male dominance and gender blindness in the arms control and security can be overcome only when the gender sensitivity is learned in classroom but practiced in field. This is

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<sup>1</sup> From the series of interviews with the female specialists in the security sector of Armenia, conducted for the current paper in the period of 26-29 July 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The current OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ann Linde is only the 4<sup>th</sup> female in that role from the list of 39 chairpersons since 1991. Women’s participation in 31 peace processes between 1992-2011, measured by UN Women, is as low as 9 per cent of negotiating teams and 4 per cent of signatories of peace agreements (Diaz and Tordjman 2012, 6-7).

<sup>3</sup> From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

<sup>4</sup> From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

particularly important for the states, where the gender sensitivity is still far from being full-fledged. As one of the interviewed female officers confessed, “If career advancement is not based on the principles of professionalism, professional competence and performance appraisal, then in societies like ours, where there are numerous barriers to women’s military service, from public perception and stereotypes to more institutional issues, women’s potential for peace and security will remain unrevealed”<sup>5</sup>.

In this respect, while recognising the importance of equality of male and female specialists in access towards capacity building, it is essential to take into account pole position of male pundits, called on to give opinion about the topic concerned more frequently, and traditionally weaker positions of female professionals to utilise their expertise. Therefore, it is rather gender-positive approach that should be exercised and replace gender neutrality in the area of security and arms control. Gender-positive approach does not utilise a one-size-fits-all equality, because original unequal conditions, under which male and female professionals have been initially developing, constructed the basis of human rights disparity that cannot be completely mitigated by later equal distribution of roles and associated responsibilities (Charlesworth 2005; Myrntinen and Daigle 2017). Instead, gender positivity presumes scrutiny of contextual risks and preconditions and, *mutatis mutandis*, smart and targeted decisions, based on such scrutiny. The goal to implement gender positive approach in and by the OSCE should be a cross-dimensional matter. It springs from the human dimension but naturally encompasses politico-military, and the economic and environmental dimensions too, as the success in reaching the targets in both dimensions can be secured via diversity of expertise, including gender diversity.

The next chapter, focusing on the OSCE’s key documents on CSBMs, will propose particular decisions for enhancing gender sensitivity and incorporating it enhanced into the practice of the Organization.

### **Identifying and overcoming the difficulties in gender sensitivity for CSBMs**

The development and implementation of Gender and Security Toolkits, the efforts to promote Women, Peace and Security national action plans with the UNSCR, the trainings on gender equality organised for thousands of military personnel are all those essential pillars that established foundation for modern gender sensitivity in the OSCE’s structure and institutions. These policies became true impetus for more frequent and explicit discussions of topics covering gender abuse, sextortion, other forms of ill-treatment, or gender-based stereotypes (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women 2019, 43-44). However, resistance to gender mainstreaming also remains high and adapts to changing environment. It is not only tools and methods that evolve, but also countermeasures and symptoms of gender discrimination (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women 2019, 56-57). To tackle them effectively, it is important to maintain institutional coherence, transmit and adapt gender-sensitive approaches across all involved bodies (UN Women 2018; OSCE/ODIHR 2008). More rigour view proves that streamlining the

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<sup>5</sup> From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

approach to the local levels still remains an issue. For example, the questions concerning women's rights in the armed forces and gender discrimination are raised as separate chapters of the "Handbook on human rights of armed forces personnel...", published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in 2008 (OSCE/ODIHR 2008). However, in a similar by content and goals "Training manual for organizing and conducting a course on human rights and fundamental freedoms in the armed forces", prepared 5 years later by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, which in its essence refers directly to the aforementioned Handbook and "aims to raise awareness about human rights and fundamental freedoms among army staff" (OSCE 2013, 2), the questions of gender intolerance and mainstreaming gender-positive approach are barely touched. The Manual refers to only a few internationally adopted standards, such as CEDAW, but does not inform a reader about how these standards are applied locally, let alone integrated into the agenda of the armed forces. Another example is the local lack of awareness and communication about the OSCE's efforts in gender mainstreaming. From four female officers, interviewed for the current paper, who work for or have occupied the offices directly relevant to the protection of human rights in the security sector of Armenia, only one female was aware about the involvement of local female officers in the OSCE's missions regulated by the Vienna Document and the CFE Treaty<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, the production of toolkits on gender and security sector reform, or manuals on human rights in the armed forces is only a part of the bigger yet incomplete mission, aimed at ensuring full awareness of particularly female officers and specialists about how to use these toolkits. This in turn raises the question about disproportionality of women's engagement in the CSBMs in participating States, and the lack of effort from the states advanced in gender mainstreaming to share the respective knowledge with other states. It is not only the responsibility of states, who follow the lead, to absorb the knowledge on gender-sensitive approaches properly, but also of the frontrunners to deliver this knowledge wisely and ensure its local utilisation broadly.

The evidenced gaps raise two important concerns. First, about the extent of consistency and coherence in methodological approaches towards highlighting gender sensitivity in different OSCE representations. Second, about the extent where it would be possible to streamline the produced knowledge and corresponding gender-sensitive procedures, adjust them to the internal context of a country, and then follow them locally. A feasible solution for both concerns can be secured via cross-organisational cooperation, when the specific matter is considered in a versatile manner. That is, organisations learn from each other, exchange knowledge and best practices, improve transparency, interconnectedness and adaptability. This would be of special importance at the level of local representation, when the studies conducted on gender mainstreaming would provide a complex vision, derived from the work of several international organisations and embassies, while suggesting pinpointed improvements for domestic decision-makers. Similarly, it is important to familiarise beneficiaries with a wider range of internationally adopted forms and tools of gender mainstreaming and present practical ways of their adaptation to the regional juncture. If the gender-sensitive approaches are being enhanced within the OSCE's internal structure, the Organization should ensure

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<sup>6</sup> From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

positive spill over of these approaches for all participating States. This can be achieved by making the matter more vocal at formal events, as well as in field operations. In the latter case, unfortunately, the question of gender sensitivity is often regarded as a lower order issue, while it should be naturally included in many if not all OSCE's activities.

For the reasons stated above, it is crucial to include more female specialists in the inspections and monitoring missions of arms control stipulated by the CFE Treaty. Depending on the availability of respective professionals, the Protocol of the Treaty that covers inspection may be further elaborated to emphasise the importance of gender neutrality when selecting the inspectors, and the necessity to support female specialists, who possess sufficient expertise to be assigned as an inspector if they are underrepresented in a participating State (OSCE 1990).

Similarly, the principles deriving from the Vienna Document on CSBMs can be empowered by the updated mechanisms of monitoring gender sensitivity, introduced for the participating States. Such mechanisms, presuming ad hoc surveys, checking the profiles of potential employees on gender-based offenses and violence, and analysis of gender disaggregated data in the security domain, perfectly fit into the norms of exchange of information, stipulated by Article II of the Vienna Document (OSCE 2011). Understanding the degree to which gender-sensitive approaches are incorporated in the work of the security institutions, may help the participating States exchange relevant data on women's integration and personnel policies. Such efforts may be further underpinned by the establishment of structural units, which focus precisely on human rights and gender mainstreaming, e.g. human rights and integrity building centres, women's councils, women's integration unit. Similarly, inquiries within the Force planning point of Article II concerning training programmes may include requests to highlight peculiarities of the trainings through the prism of gender mainstreaming (OSCE 2011). The exchange of information on the matter concerned may be further enhanced through study visits (OSCE 2011), during which relevant governmental agencies, parliamentary bodies and ministries will present their best practices of protection of women's rights, their integration and professional advancement.

Women's participation and gender-positive approach should be further consolidated around other articles of the Vienna Document. As such, "contacts between relevant military institutions, especially between military units" may put an emphasis on the networking of women's councils from the participating States; female professionals should be particularly encouraged to participate in "exchanges and visits between members of the armed forces ... especially those between junior officers and commanders"; in observation of certain military activities; and in compliance and verification missions (OSCE 2011).

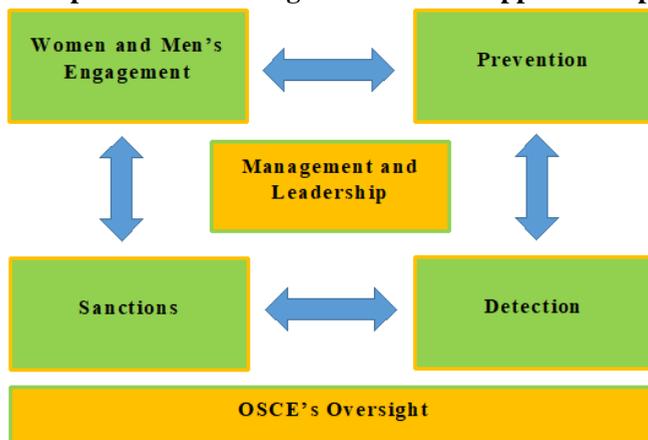
All in all, the measures suggested above can create new incentives for female professionals to choose or continue their path in the security sector, and empower more qualified women to demonstrate their experience and intelligence more vocally. The next chapter will summarise and conclude the main recommendations of the paper, presenting a diagram through which these recommendations can be followed.

## Conclusion and discussion

Taking into account and accepting the criticism against still-existing gender blindness, a constructive approach has been taken to suggest meaningful and feasible alternative that can substitute the current practices of considering security sector as a sole prerogative of male experts. This approach comes with the gender-positive vision, which should serve as an impetus for inclusive and fair integration of female scholars and practitioners into the areas of arms control and security-building measures. The rigorous scrutiny of the OSCE's documentation and means to apply CSBMs allowed identifying those obstacles that hamper fair participation of men and women in decision-making. Based on the conducted analysis, a new set of recommendations has been developed to enrich the contribution of gender-sensitive approaches to CSBMs:

- The notion of “gender-positive approach”, understood as the scrutiny of contextual risks and, *mutatis mutandis*, the realisation of smart and targeted activities aimed at championing women's engagement in the security sector, should be included in the OSCE Glossary and in other relevant documents setting the foundations for upgraded gender mainstreaming.
- To promote higher interaction between human rights structures within the security sector (e.g. integrity-building centres in the ministries of defence, women's councils in the armed forces, etc.) of the participating States. If such structures are not well established or fully operational, to encourage study missions and vocational exchange of female servicepersons and experts, particularly from those states, where gender mainstreaming policies are not fully-fledged.
- To enhance engagement of female professionals in the military contacts and cooperation, as well as inspection missions agreed within the framework of the Vienna Document.
- To instil the practice of accumulating gender-disaggregated data in the security domains.
- To establish the institute of whistle-blowers or ombudspersons on gender affairs, appointed by the OSCE Secretariat or selected nationally in cooperation with the Secretariat, who ensure the adequacy of gender mainstreaming in the defence sector, signal gender-caused human rights violations, as well as execute psychological, moral and legal support to men and women who suffered from ill-treatment.

Consecutive implementation of the described activities will allow more diverse gender participation in CSBMs, while for female pundits already engaged, to establish networks of cooperation with their colleagues from other participating States.

**Diagram 1. Implementation of a gender-sensitive approach in practice**

The diagram, represented above, illustrates schematically how the gender-sensitive approach can be realised in practice. It begins with public education initiatives, awareness raising events and outreach campaigns aimed at engaging qualified female and male professionals in the security sector. The main objective set in this brick is to ensure accessibility of information about gender mainstreaming policies to larger audiences and, consequently, to motivate female specialists particularly to express their interest and knowledge more vocally.

The next three bricks, based on the already-selected female and male specialists who contribute to the aforementioned domain, illustrate interconnected mechanisms of prevention, detention and subsequent penalties (sanctions) of gender-based misconducts. These protective measures are designed to signal any violation of human rights and promote fair competition especially for decision-making positions.

Finally, the four bricks open the path towards establishing qualified and expertise-based management and leadership, constructed on the gender-positive approach. Each of these steps and the system as a whole are supervised by the OSCE's respective authorities, such as the proposed whistle-blowers or gender ombudspersons, who are assisted closely by competent representatives of civil society, external expert groups, and scholars.

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