

HARNESSING THE POWER OF WOMEN IN THE SECURITY AGENDA

Achievements and challenges in mainstreaming and implementation of the women, peace, and security agenda in Albania from the public opinion perspective

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ERISA PROKO

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ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN MAINSTREAMING AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY
AGENDA IN ALBANIA FROM THE PUBLIC OPINION PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This policy paper will provide a helicopter view of Albania's compliance with the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security"¹, through the filters of national security agenda and the institutional mainstreaming efforts in this path. Looking at it through the lenses of the public opinion, this paper will strive to outline a number of features and gender equality mainstreaming trends of the Albanian institutional context, trying to find explanations on the public perceptions and myths. It will attempt to build arguments and conclusions referring to the available data in the security domain, comparing them to the data analysed and decompressed from the Albanian Security Barometer 2022.² . In addition, this policy paper will provide a number of recommendations on how the integration of gender equality principles in the national security agenda could enhance the enactment of certain policies and increase their impact and efficiency.

¹ **Note:** Adopted in 2000, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) heralded new norms and acknowledged the significance of women in the areas of peace and security. The Resolution called upon all United Nations member states to ensure an increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making levels, the expansion of the role of women in peace-keeping operations, the incorporation of a gender perspective into national defence and security policies, and training security and defence establishments on the protection of women. Mainly it linked the women, peace and security agenda with conflict and post-conflict environments. In addition to the UNSCR 1325, the Security Council has passed a series of further resolutions in subsequent years. These resolutions altogether have had a notable impact on the emergence and enhancement of norms forming the worldwide 1325 agenda on women, peace, and security.

² <https://csdgalbania.org/albanian-security-barometer-2022/>

SUMMARY AND MAIN FINDINGS

The (strategic) policy documents promoting overarching ‘gender equality’ across all sectors in Albania are in principle very important instruments that counter the deep-rooted narrative that the security (incl. defence) sector is a male domain. The efforts put in the gender equality mainstreaming are applaudable when it comes to account for the paperwork. The picture is eye pleasing and promising. The enthusiasm then waters down when the magnifying glass is placed on the “chain of command” – as a figurative way to understand that counting the numbers is not enough. The raising of the threshold (quota) is not enough if the system does not provide the same “start” line in the running competition, or if the hurdles on the run are not adjusted to the typology of the runner. Especially in the security sector mainstreaming gender equal opportunities requires a combination of gender equality with gender equity approach.

Trying to apply positive discrimination elements, like raising the recruitment of women at the quota level, has made it impossible to address other standing obstacles still in place that do not provide for women’s full and meaningful participation in security sector decision-making. Unnaturally promoting the idea that the only way to gain more peace and security is by including a higher number of women in the field of national and international security (simplifying it to quantity only), undermines any goodwill motives in streamlining gender equality in this sector perceived as a strong men domination.

When it comes to numbers, showing involvement of women and girls in the security sector in Albania, there is a credible improvement. But if we examine indicators set by the strategic documents (i.e. National Strategy on Gender Equality, National Action Plan1325) such as the involvement of women in top leadership positions in addition to relevant structures and the levels of promotion in higher ranks in the security sector, there is a need to set a common ground understanding beyond the idea that women have a role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

In reality, the actions taken so far represent mostly symbolic changes instead of systemic structural improvements. The commitment to raise the percentage of women involved in the security and defence sectors remains dry (does not do justice to) considering the efforts of girls and women who are committed and deserve to further their career, take leadership roles beyond the token level. In other words, the [Women Peace and Security](#)

agenda³ should be read through the lenses of equity when promoting the leadership of women beyond just parity itself.

The picture looks different and the numbers squabble if we change seats and take a look from the public seat. Referring to quantified perceptions, the overall public consensus that Albania has a robust legal framework and a highly accommodating policy-making that provides for equal opportunities for women and girls in the security and defence sector, clashes with the paradigm that ‘less is not more’.

In order to change our political orientation toward the involvement of girls and women in this sector we first need to change the old paradigm of the male-dominated mindset. The same approach would also be necessary to address the recent theories/narratives used as empirical arguments in political contexts to avoid pointing the elephant in the room, i.e. the systemic failures of the system in addressing security challenges like organized crime, terrorism, violent extremism or the endemic corruption as a common denominator.

The recent theory/ies that women and girls are less prone to be engaged in corruption and organized crime, therefore they make a better alternative for top management positions, does not only feed an unfounded argument and subsequently misconceptions and misperceptions in that regard. It undermines the real efforts for promoting sustainable mechanisms of equal opportunities for women and men, offering an invisible (counter) narrative that does not feed the interest and right motivation to engage more women in the security and defence sector. It also diverts the focus from the real cause that keeps the propensity of women and girls to engage in corruption and organized crime at a high level. And last but not the least, it transforms the genuine gender equality or equity agenda into an instrument of political propaganda.

Women’s security expertise remains systematically under-utilized and undervalued. It is therefore important to shift from symbolic systemic changes into solid structural improvements. It is important to move away from artificial and/or unnatural ad hoc political acts (e.g. fly over appointments in leadership roles) that feed the (mis)perception that women are skilful human resources with the “ability” to be more corruption-proof than men, or resist the organized crime charm, or solve complex, unstable, confusing situations related to conflicts due to the peaceful appeal vested in the female nature.

Such (mis) perceptions thrive in a context where there is a lack of collective effort such as a missing public discussion as well as a lack of will to conduct a comprehensive analysis about this critical situation starting from its very foundation. This shift can be possible by

³ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_179480.

having more open public discussions on the gender roles and perspectives of women/girls involvement in male-dominated sectors like the security sector. Although numbers of women in higher ranks in our armed forces or state police remain below the set quotas, the equivalent in a number of other NATO members or EU Member states do not appear more promising either. This reference has effortlessly and artificially leaped Albania into a “championing” position in the international fora when it comes to translated women quota in leadership positions even beyond the security sector.

Women and girls often experience difficulties in proving themselves as the right leadership alternative. They find themselves in the middle of a patriarchal culture, artificially having promotions to token leadership positions, if not more. This is challenged in itself by the constant political influence in the Albanian traditional institutional customs, let alone the ‘equal opportunity’ wordings of the strategic and long terms policies being translated from paper into in practice in a dry or ungendered way.

To create a new path forward, security and defence institutions must develop an understanding of how women and girls experience security and what skills women and girls harness to secure themselves, their families, and communities. These insights can inform policies and strategies that redefine institutions, serve as roadmaps for new security ideals around defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, and inform education and training programs for girls and women in security.

STREAMLINING/INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY PRINCIPLES IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA

The topic of the involvement of women in the defence and security sector started to gain traction in 2011 when Albania officially started implementing the UN resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security based on an inter-institutional approach on a local and national level. Despite the ongoing progress made over the last decade, the figures on paper struggle to counter the old, fixed narrative that the security and defence sector is a male dominated domain.

Albania adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security in 2018⁴, in compliance with the UNSCR Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000.

⁴ [Albania-Action-Plan-on-Resolution-1325_ENG-CMD-524-11.09.2019-1-2.pdf \(peacewomen.org\)](#)

The timeline of the first NAP (2018-2020) paved the way for Albania being further recognized internationally among key influential institutions and bodies, for its commitments and efforts to streamline gender equality in the security sector. While other countries in the Western Balkans has already ticked on the NAP1325 box much earlier, respectively Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in 2010, Croatia in 2011, and the Republic of North Macedonia in 2013.

Once Albania took its seat in the UN Security Council (January 2022) , the security agenda became a prominent component of the national and international performance, exposing the country to a new international context and forcing the policy makers to reflect on a number of indicators and expected deliverables. The armed conflict in Ukraine and the Albanian alignment as a NATO member with the main allies boosted Albania's self-confidence on its performance in the security sector.

Different from the other Western Balkan countries, Albania is the only country that has not been a country in conflict or involved in any armed conflicts in the last few decades. The only violent conflict in the country, a civil unrest in 1997, was produced by the collapse of informal market institutions, known as pyramid schemes. Identifying Albania as a non-post-conflict country, for a number of years, Albanian policy makers were divided in two camps whether a National Action Plan pursuant to the adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “women, peace and security” (WPS) was creditable and feasible or not. It took Albania over a decade to upgrade the efforts and contribution on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda into a National Action Plan 1325 (2018).

The main objectives of the NAP 1325 aimed at improving policy documents and raising awareness on UNSCR1325; increasing the participation of women in the security sector at home or abroad; establishing a regulatory framework and capacities that enabled better protection and rehabilitation of women in the field of peace and security; and last but not the least taking measures for better monitoring and reporting the deliverables vis-à-vis the Resolution 1325.

The model of the National Action Plan 1325 was designed with a novelty element, i.e. allowing the involvement and contribution of the civil society in all the steps, from design to implementation and monitoring-evaluation processes. It was broadly consulted with all government, non-governmental stakeholders and enjoyed the support and endorsement of the key international partners in Albania (Sweden, Netherlands, US, European Union, OSCE, UNWOMEN, etc) .

In the framework of promoting gender equality and mainstreaming gender-responsive governance, increasing women and girls' participation in political and public life, Albanian institutional stakeholders have played a very proactive role in designing policies and drafting laws that promote and protect women and girls. These policies and pieces of

legislation (2006, 2008, 2010, 2016, 2018, 2020) offer (in paper) protection from abuse, violence, harassment, discrimination to women and girls in Albania. They offer equal opportunities for employment, political engagement/representation and in some cases they provide for positive discrimination in sectors where gender quota is considered to have a positive impact and added value (e.g. gender quota in parliament, recruitments in the armed forces ranks and recruitment in the Academy of Security/state police).

Addressing gender-related issues on the security sector was one of the remains in the agenda as part of the commitments of the 4th National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 – 2030 (NSGE).

On the policy making/drafting domain there are several attempts to mainstream equal opportunities, gender equality across different sectors. The outlook on these efforts is not only related to the internal/domestic institutional commitments but also to the outward perspective, especially in relation to the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) and the EU Acquis.

The NSGE 2021 – 2030⁵ relates to the two main chapters of NPEI 2019-2021⁶ and NPEI 2022 - 2024⁷, respectively Chapter 19 “Social policies and employment”, as well as Chapter 23 “Judiciary and fundamental rights”. The acquis in the area of social policy includes minimum standards in areas such as employment law, equal treatment of women and men in employment and social policy, health and safety at work, non-discrimination in employment and social policy, as well as in social inclusion and protection. The protection of fundamental rights includes traditional civil rights, such as the right to life, the right to dignity and integrity, the prohibition of torture and degrading treatment, the right to liberty and security, the right to respect for private and family life, the freedom to religion, freedom of speech, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of education, right to property, etc.

Promising the effective engagement of all institutions responsible for taking action on gender equality and women’s empowerment, Albania vows to take action on women’s economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and increasing their role in decision-making. This will include increasing and improving women’s access to credit, and

⁵ National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 -2030, approved with Council of Ministers Decision no. 400, dated 30.6.2021; [WEB Strategjia-Kombetare-EN.pdf \(shendetesia.gov.al\)](#)

⁶ National Plan for EU Integration 2019-2021; [PKIE-2019-2021.pdf \(punetijashtme.gov.al\)](#)

⁷ National Plan for European Integration 2022 – 2024; [NPEI 2022-2024 EN-.pdf \(punetijashtme.gov.al\)](#)

promoting and expanding employment programmes for women and girls, towards upping the participation of women in labor markets.

In line with the NSGE, in the course of next eight years, Albania is expected to take steps to prevent and reduce violence against women, and eliminate gender discrimination in education and health services and in the media. Stronger legal and institutional mechanisms will seek to better protect women's rights, and improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will keep progress towards gender equality on track.

Efforts to increase the number of women in decision-making will cover central and local positions across public administration, including the police and armed forces.

Another good news is the initiation of drafting of the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, pursuant to the UNSCR 1325. Such policy document will multiply the chances for meaningful progress of the gender equality mainstreaming in the security and defence sectors. Based on the experiences with the first NAP1325, it is also expected that the overall institutional awareness, the accountability performance and sustainability of gender-responsive mechanism introduced, will intensify in the course of the years.

MATCHING GENDER AND SECURITY DATA WITH PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Despite the many instances of official recognition and progress made, the equality between women and men, girls and boys in daily life is far from becoming a reality. In practice, women and men, girls and boys do not enjoy neither the same rights, nor same opportunities. Social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities persist in the security sector in Albania, as part of the common denominator for the whole society with no sectors excluded. These inequalities are the result of some social notions built upon the many stereotypes present in family, education, culture, means of communication, in the labour market and work environment, and generally on the way the society is organized.

When the UNSCR 1325⁸ was adopted in 31 October 2000, Albania had completed the first generation of security sector reforms. It included the establishment of new security and defence institutions, structures, and chains of responsibility. The first major transformation of the security and defence strategy was the democratization and professionalization of the security sector. The country also instituted basic principles and structures for the oversight and civilian control of the security and defence sector, empowered the parliament to oversee and approve the sector's budgets and made attempts for the civilianization of security and defence sector bureaucracies. Civilianization consisted of staffing security ministries with civilians, including women, who would design and implement security policies. In this way, Albania made progress in reforming its security sector, including the police, army, intelligence, and other security institutions, in making the security sector better able to meet its contemporary obligations and merge them into the overall national democratization agenda. This progress culminated with the full membership of Albania in NATO in 2009.

The greater leap in gender equality was made in 2019 with the enforcement of new and specific policies and legislation related to the national armed forces. Data retrieved from the UNDP gender inequality index⁹ show that Albania noted a 50% improvement in scores from 0.334 in 2019 to 0.181 in 2020, ranking the country 69th in the world.

⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000) [S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000)) (undocs.org) [N0072018.pdf](https://undocs.org/N0072018.pdf) (un.org)

⁹ [Gender Inequality Index | Human Development Reports](https://www.undp.org/en/gender-inequality-index) (undp.org)

Albania			
2019 GII value	0.156		
GII change from 2018	-0.008		
Maternal Mortality Ratio	15.0 death/100,000 live births		
Adolescent Birth Rate	15.0 births/1,000 women age 15-19		
	Female	Male	Gender gap
Share of seats in parliament	29.5%	70.5%	-41.0%
Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older)	95.4%	93.0%	2.3%
Labour force participation rate (age 15 and older)	52.7%	67.7%	-15.0%

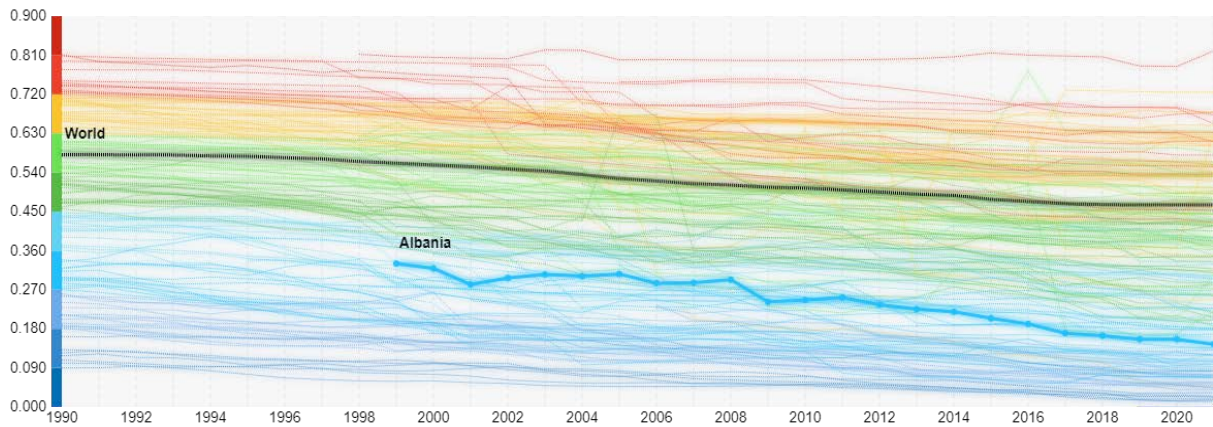


Figure 1&210

Albania has been very active and ambitious in the international security fora, taking on many new security obligations. As a NATO member, it is to be noted that Albania has actively participated in international peace support operations (Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Chad, Georgia, the Ivory Coast, Kosovo and South Sudan), but with limited institutional attention paid to the role of women in these operations. Nevertheless, the adaptation of the standards set by the UNSCR 1325 to the national level through the development and adoption of a specific national action plan on

¹⁰ Statistical references relate to statistical material presented in this Statistical Annex and in the full set of statistical tables posted at <https://hdr.undp.org/human-development-report-2021-22>.

WPS in 2018, brought Albania's security actors closer to international norms in regards to women and security.

A key element of the UNSCR 1325 in Albania has been to open the political space for reforms and increase the level of professionalism in the security sector through redefining missions, tasks, and structures for the security sector actors in line with the contributions that women can offer.

These positive developments however can not count as a solid trend in mainstreaming gender equality in the security sector. The political ambitions expressed in policy documents projected a moving target for the institutional chain of the security domain. To a certain extent, the decision to stick with the engagements of the UN Resolution 1325 and attain the objectives outlined NAP 1325 has created strains and confusion. Trying to raise the recruitment of women at the quota level, did not go hand in hand with addressing of other obstacles still in place, enabling women's full and meaningful participation in security sector decision-making.

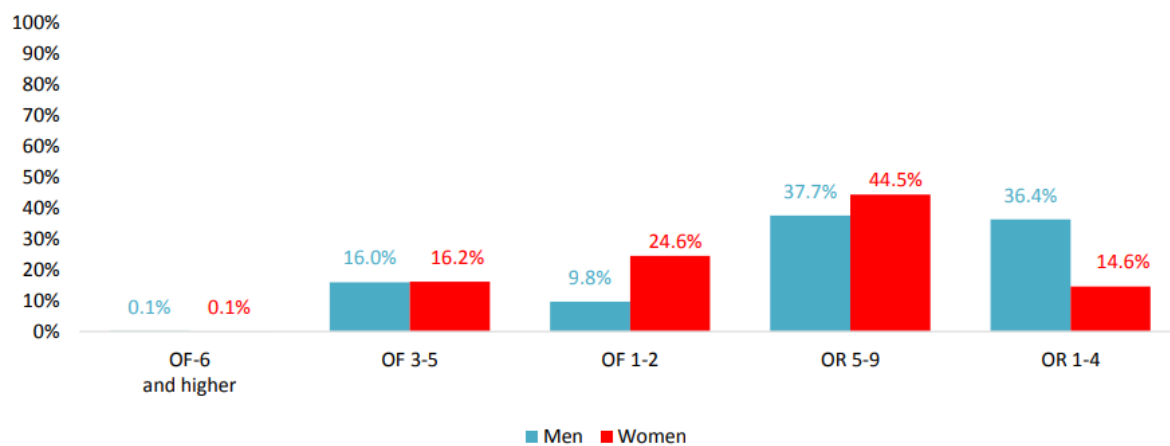
Starting from the goodwill gesture of implementing UN Resolution 1325, it continued to unnaturally promote the idea that the only way to gain more peace and security is by including a higher number of women in the field of national and international security. Such approach raises the question whether this was the only way forward. Raising the percentage doesn't imply qualitative inclusiveness. It also makes it impossible for the fulsome incorporation of NATO's approach to the Women, Peace and Security agenda based on 3 I's – **Integration, Inclusiveness, and Integrity**.¹¹ In NATO's WPS policy, **"integration"** means integrating gender perspectives in everything that NATO does. WPS agenda is not meant to make war more effective: it is supposed to help end war. **"Inclusiveness"** means both gender balance within NATO and national forces and institutions that are more responsive to the needs of women and men. NATO members are encouraged to ensure that their armed forces and defence establishments become more inclusive of women, creating space to talk about LGBT inclusion, magnifying women in senior positions, delivering training on gender-based violence. But there is scope to do so much more. **"Integrity"** within NATO's WPS policy refers to accountability and meeting international standards. NATO members should be applauded for adopting a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse: a critical step for NATO's integrity and credibility as regards WPS. For NATO members and partners who have adopted a WPS National

¹¹Women, Peace and Transforming Security Visions of the Future of Women, Peace and Security for NATO, 31 Oct 2020 https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/201110-wps-essay-transforming-security-e.pdf

Action Plan or committed to Feminist Foreign Policy, integrity demands much more than just this. Integrity means having principles and living up to them.

In 2021, Albania was internationally recognized as a **gender equality champion** with more than 50% women in the government and slightly above 30% women in the parliament. Nevertheless, several national and international publications and studies confirm that even though women’s political participation is high, Albanian women are however still underrepresented at regional governance levels and in the security sector. The progress made on improving women’s participation and decision-making capabilities, promoting for the first time a woman as ‘major General’ in military ranks (Figure 2, distribution of women and men by rank in Albanian Armed Forces, year 2018, source NATO Statistics.¹²) has stagnated since then. Significant barriers persist, which explains the low percentage of women in the armed forces and in the police force.

Figure 2. Distribution of women and men by rank



According to the assessment made in the framework of the first Monitoring Report¹³. on the implementation of the Interinstitutional Action Plan 1325, the percentage of women/girls by September 2019 was 15% in the Armed Forces from whom 13.08% military personnel in Armed Forces same as in 2018, and 16% in military representations abroad and 4% in military/peace keeping missions. At the end of the monitoring period,

¹² Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (2018) https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/7/pdf/200713-2018-Summary-NR-to-NCGP.pdf

¹³ Monitoring Report No. 2 On the implementation of the interinstitutional action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 “On women, peace and security” 2018-2020, October 2019 – November 2020, pg 19.

the women and girls in the police and military forces marked a slight increase compared to 2019: In the armed forces, there is an increase of women military personnel of 0.38%, of which 0.37% more as officers, and 0.65% more as soldiers. The total number of women/girls in the military and civil personnel increased by 0.63%.

About the same performance is noticed in the Albanian police force, with 14.2% from 6% in 2018, from whom 9.7% police officers, 0% executive directors, 20% high directors, 0% first directors and 8% directors.

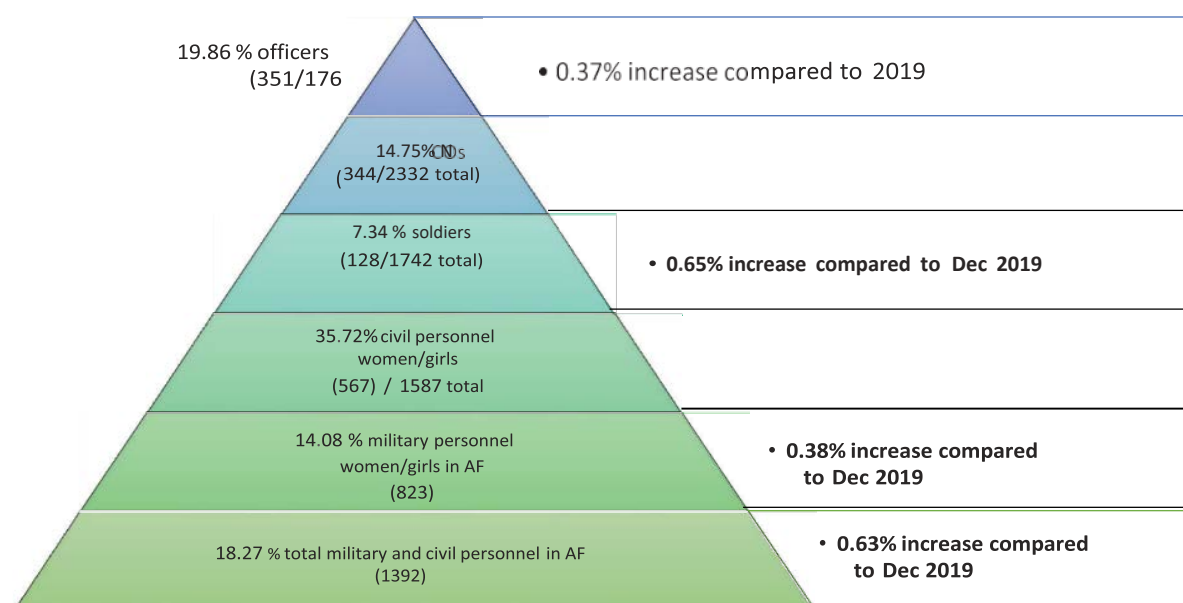
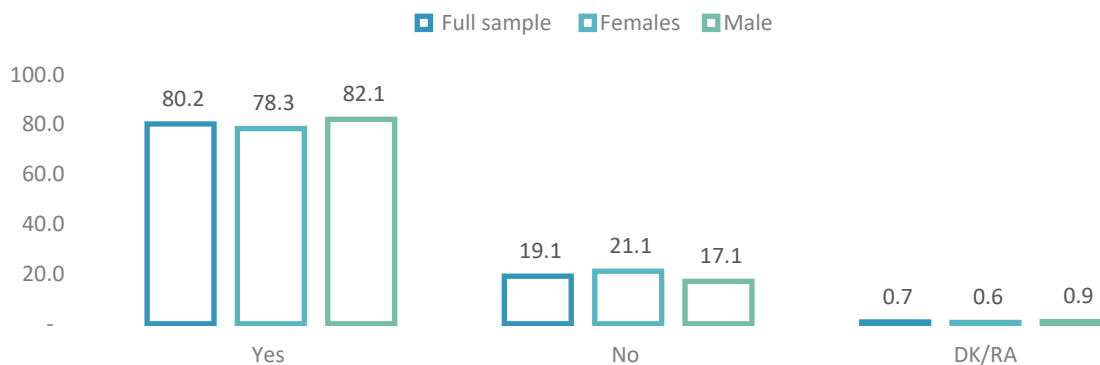


Figure 3: Gender representation in armed forces September 2020 compared to December 2019

Security sector is the most exposed sector in terms of stagnation, where women and girls' participation, promotion and equal opportunities have been questionable or subject to criticism as examples of inequality and discrimination. According to the data provided by the Albanian Security Barometer 2022 (see charts below)¹⁴, the public perceives women and girls to be less qualified or fitting to take jobs in the police or military force (Graph 1).

¹⁴ <https://csdgalbania.org/albanian-security-barometer-2022/> Dymishi. A. (2022). *Albanian Security Barometer: National Survey 2022*. Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance, 42-49.

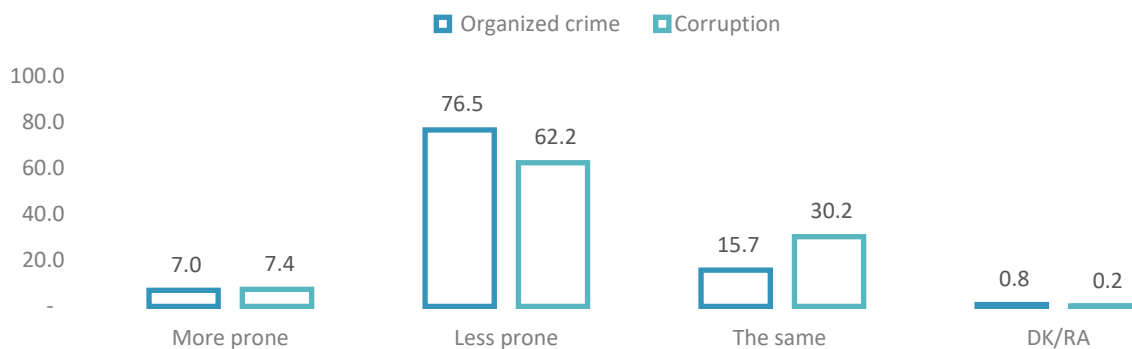
Are men more suitable to perform the functions in the police services?



Graph 1. Opinion regarding the suitability of men to perform functions in police services

They also associate the tendency for criminal behaviours mostly with men, perceiving women to be less inclined to get involved in organized crime, corruption and/or other criminal behaviours (Graph 2).

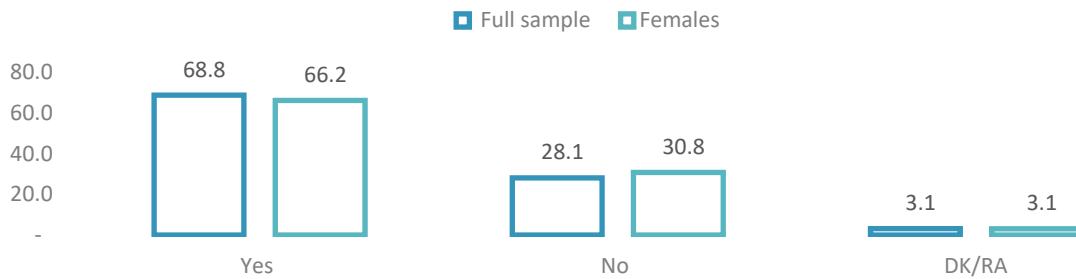
Propensity of women to be involved in corruption and organized crime activities



Graph 2. Opinion regarding the propensity of woman to be involved in corruption and organized crime activities

However, 68.8% of the public in Albania is of the opinion that the legal framework and gender-related policies offer equal opportunities to men and women. They are of the opinion that there are no barriers for women and girls to do so.

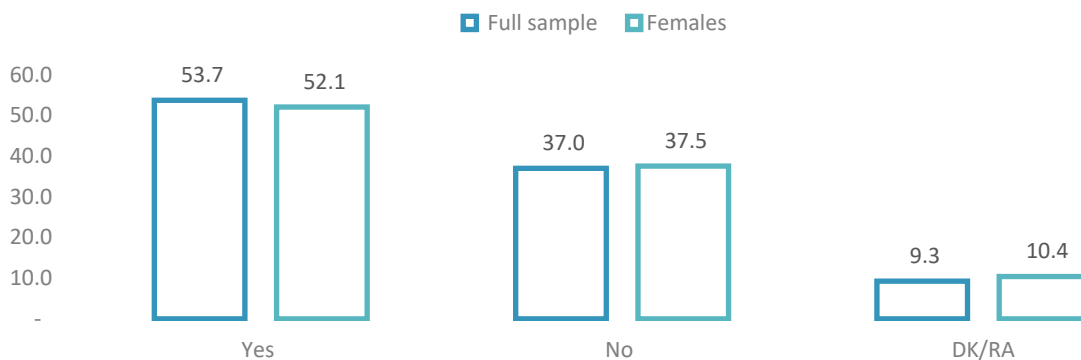
Do you think there are protective policies and laws to guarantee equal security for men and women?



Graph 3. Opinion on whether policies and laws guarantee equal security for men and women

However, only 53.7% think that women in the security sector (police, military) are adequately represented at top leadership levels or that they have enough opportunities to get promoted in higher ranks or can have leadership positions and a career growth same as men.¹⁵

Are women adequately represented at management / leadership levels in the police service?

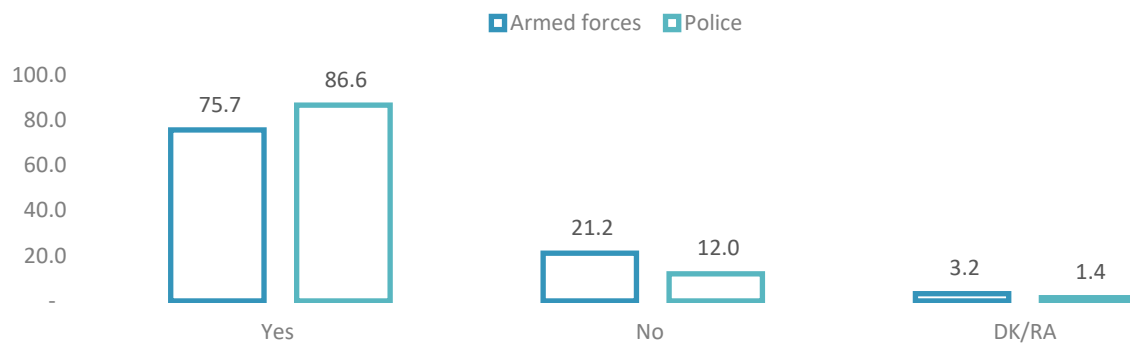


Graph 4. Opinion on adequacy of representation of women at management and leadership positions in the police

¹⁵ Dymishi. A. (2022). *Albanian Security Barometer: National Survey 2022*. (Report No. 4) Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance, 24. <https://csdgalbania.org/albanian-security-barometer-2022/>

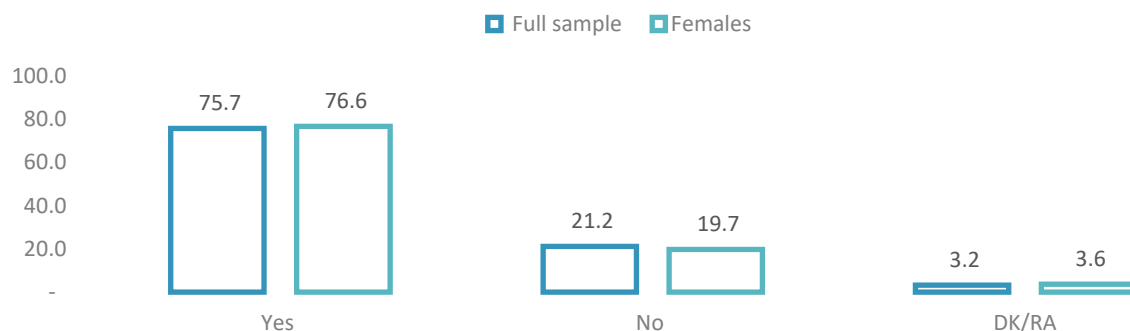
Based on the data offered by the Albanian Security Barometer 2022, there is a clear majority among citizens who share the opinion that gender quota in police force is a positive and impactful policy and is enforced satisfactorily. Nevertheless, there is a wide consensus among public at large that women representation in the security sector (police, military) should further increase. Respectively 86.6% of the citizens believe there should be more women employed in the police force and 75.7% who believe that more women should be employed in the military force.

Opinion on whether representation of women should be increased in the police and the armed forces



Graph 5. Opinion on increased representation of women in the police and the armed forces

Do you agree with increasing the representation of women / girls in the armed forces?



Graph 6. Opinion regarding the adequacy of representation of women in the armed forces

Such perception among citizen could be explained by the action taken by the government following the launch of the first National Action Plan 1325. The number of women officers in the army increased by 8% and non-commissioned officers by 10.7% in the course of

2018 -2021. Also, the curricula of the Military Academy, Police Academy/Security Academy and the Faculty of Crime Investigation were reviewed, including the topics and elements of gender mainstreaming.

As a current research paper¹⁶ concludes, the absence of the political will to mainstream and internalize the norms, such as those from the UNSCR 1325, has not been limited to the political establishment. The highly confidential nature, the culture and dynamics of policymaking within the police and the armed forces, the main actors comprising the security and defence sector, provides the security sector with numerous points of possible resistance to gender mainstreaming. The security and defence sector has its own organizational culture and dynamics and has a tendency to respond late or remain unresponsive to new developments and instead be preoccupied with its own classified and confidential environment. Scholars have pointed to the various ways¹⁷ in which security and defence institutions establish social hierarchies around gender, espousing male-dominated procedures. The assumed anti-gender equality bias in the security and defence sector of many countries including Albania, can be understood/explained in this light.

Mainstreaming women and girls' involvement in the armed forces as an unnatural top-down flow has created the perception of gendered emergency in the society. Thus, we have to consider whether shifting away from the mind set that imposes upon our democratic societies the necessity of quotas as a simplified check the box exercise. Instead, we need to understand and realize that securing our societies can be achieved by guaranteeing human rights and respecting the integrity of women in every step of their career. For example, respecting their rights to promotion based on the acknowledged legal achievements in each chain of command will result in naturally increasing the number of women in top leadership positions. Instead of obsessing with the numbers and checking boxes, it is of paramount importance to enable the environment where women and girls will climb the ladders with no glass ceilings stopping them at the bottom.

On the same line of reasoning, holding to the supposition and myths that women are less prone to engage in criminal activities, like organized crime, terrorism, violent extremism or corruption – therefore it is better to place them in top management roles - needs be renewed. Despite of the short term result and numbers it may produce at first sight, it still remains a male-decision to exploit a supposed advantage of women and girls. Instead of fertilising the ground where women and girls do not experience challenges in climbing all

¹⁶ [JRS book 17.1 - v6.pdf \(ceon.rs\)](#), pg 4

¹⁷ Hudson 2005; Wright 2016; Jenichen, Joachim, and Schneiker 2018; Jenne and Bisshopp 2021

stages of the career ladder in a male dominated security sector, the above approach spurred from suppositions/myths feeds a wrong narrative that undermines any genuine collective efforts in mainstreaming gender equality from paper to practice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides some conclusions and recommendations on enhancing the efficiency of gender equality policies mainstreamed in the security sector in Albania.

The data provided by the Security Barometer 2022 indicate that gender stereotypes influence perception of the citizens/public on the qualification and suitability of men versus women in the security sector. There are no streamlined rules for reconciling work and family life of the professionals in this sector. There are no guaranteed equal opportunities in practice, especially on career growth and taking leadership, high level management roles. Women and girls employed in police or armed forces are still facing, noticeable “*structural barriers that keep men in positions where decisions count*”.¹⁸

When interpreting data about sexual harassment on the job, the sector has no full capacity to prevent and fight discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of violence. The security and defence sector is not sufficiently transparent and open to participation by civil society and women’s organizations. Therefore, more efforts are necessary to be taken from different stakeholders in this institutional chain, in order to address the loopholes of the system and counter misconceptions, wrong perceptions and grow more accountable to third parties (e.g. media, civil society).

The monitoring report on the implementation of the National Action Plan 1325 (2018-2020)¹⁹ shows that 85.1% of the objectives outlined in this plan have been met. However, there are still actions that need to be taken to increase the performance of Albania vis-à-vis its commitments made on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The drafting and adoption of a second National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, giving special emphasis to the establishment of the implementation reporting mechanisms in order to guarantee more accountability by the stakeholders involved is highly recommended.

At a domestic level, encouraging closer collaboration between security sector institutional constellation and civil society advocating for a meaningful inclusion and participation of

¹⁸ <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/10/the-first-report-on-the-implementation-of-resolution-1325-in-albania-launched>

¹⁹ Monitoring Report No. 2 On the implementation of the interinstitutional action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 “On women, peace and security” 2018-2020, October 2019 – November 2020

Albanian women in politics and the security chain would have an added value. It should be highlighted that an all-inclusive approach should be taken in the drafting and consultation process. It is important that the Ministry of Finance and Economy is involved early in the NAP design processes, in order to match the indicators and objectives set in the Plan with the necessary budgetary needs that make the NAP 1325 commitments implementable and impactful.

From a broader regional perspective, the cooperation and exchange with the other countries in the region (WB6) would create opportunities for sharing best practices, lessons learned and a more impactful implementation of the objectives.

Considering the engagement of the Albanian security sector in the international fora, the inclusion of women in the higher echelons of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence and in peace-keeping operations - in which Albania has taken part - has shown progress, though it has been comparatively low. Therefore, there is a need to advocate that women are meaningfully included in all decision-making bodies in armed and police forces. A meaningful “open door” for women and girls would reverse the recruitment procedures in the police and armed forces not being particularly clear and transparent. It would dismantle traditional practices of lack of elaborated information regarding job functions and responsibilities, as well as the absence of published job descriptions that negatively impacted the motivation of women to become part of and pursue career prospects in the security sector. It would overturn the lack of information describing functions they would be expected to perform, which often prevents women from taking part in recruitment procedures and efforts required for promotion.

Considering the discourses referred to above, the Albanian discourse on women, peace, and security contains dilemmas between the local need to contextualise the UNSCR 1325 agenda and country’s domestic and international obligations. As also seen in the case of the NAP 1325, to a large extent it perpetuates the status quo and does not provide a platform for the genuine integration of women that would enable greater transformation in the security and defence sector. There are several structural issues that influence women’s security such as the patriarchal culture, fear, polarisation, and social fragmentation. Thus, the discourse in Albania should reflect the need to approach women, peace, and security beyond protection, representation, and participation, and suggests a perspective of women as a means for security transformation.

The new National Action Plan 1325, the drafting of which has recently started, is a positive development in the security domain. Such policy that will be adopted in the country for the implementation of Resolution 1325 should be approached with a broader scope, to include new issues that advance this policy. Aspects related to current developments in the regional and international context, including events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the armed conflict in Ukraine and its subsequent impact or implications in more sectors than just security, should be brought to the attention of the new policy intended to be adopted.

Last, it is important to highlight that gender mainstreaming in a male-dominated domain as security and defence should not be understood and interpreted as an exercise of numbers (quotas) only. It is also very risky to intertwine in the gender mainstreaming efforts the theory that women and girls should take leadership roles, simply because they are less prone to criminal behaviours (corruption, organised crime, violent extremism etc). Such narrative would undermine the efforts for a theory of change in the society and would risk sustainable positive changes in favour of women and girls.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

WPS Agenda - Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Resolution 1325 - UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

EU - European Union

MEFA - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

MHSP - Ministry of Health and Social Protection

MoI - Ministry of Interior

NPO - Non-profit organization

OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSO - Civil society organization

National Action Plan (NAP 1325) - Interinstitutional Action Plan on the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 in the Republic of Albania



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and Governance

