

CONNEKT CROSS-REGIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM. Women's Agency in Prevention

**Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)
Campus Catalunya - Avinguda Catalunya 35, Tarragona**

Despite recent notable advancements, gender in security studies is still an area with black zones to be explored, where gender dynamics in extremism, political violence and terrorism have insufficiently been analyzed from a feminist perspective. As scholar Laura Sjoberg points out in her book "Gender and International Security: Feminist Perspectives" (2010), gender cannot be considered as a separate issue or subsection as it is "conceptually, empirically, and normatively essential to studying international security". Therefore, CONNEKT adopted a "gender lens", as proposed by Jill Steans (1998), to avoid "elevating the masculine subject to universal status" and thus obtain solely a partial portrait of the reality of violent extremism.

This forum will highlight the state of feminist studies in global security and how even well-intentioned academic approaches have a gendered bias where women are indefectibly linked mostly to peace and prevention. However, the active involvement of women in violent actions, women's engagement in activism and protest as well as the widespread evidence of sex as a tool of war, require a fresh look upon how the role of women is considered in International Security.

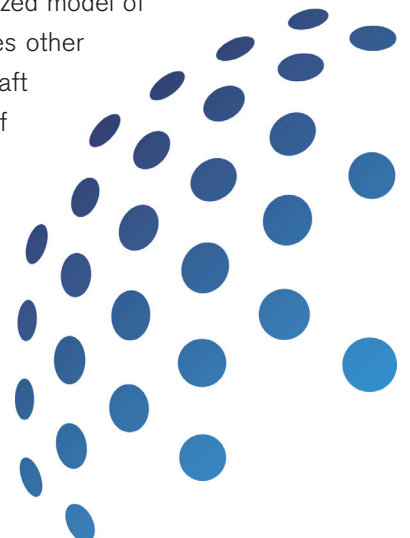
Feminist approaches not only define security but also target who is entitled to it and link to structural violence or inequality between what is associated with femineity and masculinity. Many authors refer to the notion of "hegemonic masculinity", an idealized model of masculinity that has been transmitted through time, that subordinates other forms of masculinity, privileges male notions of militarism and statecraft and creates an idealized femineity where women are passive agents of patriarchal institutional structures. As Swati Parashar states (2010), women's agency is taken away and women are portrayed as lacking political, nationalist or religious aspirations.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870772



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When women are examined as perpetrators of political violence, the focus is on the flawed and corrupted nature of their actions. Their agency is ignored and they are represented as being particularly cruel and violent, as enraged killers that have been manipulated and are too emotionally driven. Parashar refers to women in non-state militant actors as “the other within the other” and draws attention to a multilayered identity of militant women which is based on the social interactions they experience and the images that romanticize and feminize them. Contrary to the idea that engagement in extremist groups should be an opportunity for women to gain public presence, they seem to be finally shaped into a dominated image of victimhood within the realm of the private.

However, women have performed different kinds of roles in non-state militant projects, challenging traditional notions of femineity. Scholar Mia Bloom (2011) found that women show different push/pull factors and go through very different experiences than males joining militant or extremist groups. Exploring the roles, symbols and meanings constructed over gender within the field of extremist groups will require a clear acknowledgement of the context, structures and power relations within which such images and meanings are constructed and interpreted.

Such understanding will be paramount to explore the potentialities, challenges and added value of women in prevention and resilience-building as well as in countering violent extremism. In the field of PVE, women’s participation has generally been associated to maternity: the myth of mothers being the best early detectors of signs of radicalization of their children and their maternal mission of being the conveyor belts of positive values such as tolerance and solidarity. Not only this idea lacks evidence but it does confine again the role of women into the private sphere.

Therefore, this forum will strive to take women’s roles out of the private sphere and place them in the center of public activity: as actors deserving and providing security in multiple fields of public life. The complementarity of experiences, diversity of contexts and profiles present in this forum will enrich the understanding of gendered strategies, differences in motivations, grievances, roles, experiences and, ultimately, outcomes in prevention and countering violent extremism.

* The working language of all forum’s sessions will be English.



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WEDNESDAY, 5th JULY

Location: Sala de Graus, D1 building, ground floor, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

9.00h - 9.15h **Registration**

9.15h - 9.30h **Welcome remarks**

Víctor Merino Sancho, Commissioner for Equality, Diversities and Welfare, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

Senén Florensa, Executive President, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

9.30h - 11.00h **Opening Conference**

Moderator

Maria-Alba Gilabert, journalist, International Desk, Catalunya Ràdio

Panelists

Nancy Yammout and Maya Yamout, Rescue Me-For the best than you can be
"Invisible women" because whatever we do we are still Invisibleuntil our voices are heard

Mersiha Turudija, Education builds BiH - Jovan Divjak

Psychosocial support - a way to healthy/better future.

To follow the session available online: <https://n9.cl/io3ad>

11.00h - 11.15h **Coffee break**

Location: Sala de juntes, D1 building, first floor, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

11.15h - 11.30h **Presentation, objectives and working methodology**

The goal of the Forum is to collect the voices of women in the understanding of the drivers in the field of prevention, as well as to engage them in the identification of prevention measures. Moving beyond the role of women only as targets or victims, the Forum recognises them as active actors in policymaking, as well as key legitimate stakeholders in the field of prevention and resilience-building.

Lurdes Vidal Bertran, CONNEKT's Scientific Coordinator, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

WOMEN IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM: FROM GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT TO POLICY

11.30h - 13.30h **Experience-sharing and identification of challenges and opportunities in social intervention**

This session is designed as an experience-sharing session among women that are involved in the field of social intervention and resilience-building. The objective of the session is to



explore participants' own understanding of the topic and in particular the various approaches to PVE from their specific national or professional contexts. Through the presentation of their work, the session will intend to identify challenges, good practices, transferable experiences, but also assess different approaches, capacities and levels and domains of intervention.

Moderator

Aida Traidi, CONNEKT's Management Officer, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

11.30h - 12.15h **I. Sharing our own experiences in P/CVE**

Sanaa Albanawi, Education Policy Officer, IREX/USAID

Rawan Adel, researcher, American University in Cairo (AUC) (Egypt)

Zineb Benalla, consultant in P/CVE and founder of Eirene Associates. Int. (Morocco)

Nermina Kuloglija-Zolj, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Azza Kamel, founder, Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT) (Egypt)

Maria Koleva, activist, LGBTQ organisation 'Deystvie' (Bulgaria)

Teodora Mileska, researcher and activist in gender equality and peace and reconciliation in the Western Balkans (Bulgaria)

Elena Mujoska Trpevska, president, Macedonian Society of Penology (North Macedonia)

Rasha Fityan Saleem, Executive Director, Politics and Society Institute (Jordan)

Margarita Spasova, Advocacy Officer, Ekaterina Karakelova Academy, and member, Amnesty International (Bulgaria)

Viola Vanessa Kastrati, researcher, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) (Kosovo)

Nejra Veljan, researcher and project manager, Atlantic Initiative (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

12.15h - 13.15h **II. Sharing ideas for better actions**

Participants will be divided in three smaller groups with one facilitator for each group to discuss the following items:

- The 5W: What does prevention mean? When should be implemented? Who should be in charge of prevention? Where can prevention be more effective? Why women in prevention?
- The 1 H: How should we conduct prevention of violent extremism? Main lessons learned, main obstacles and challenges faced.
- Avenues and potentialities that should be explored in the prevention-resilience domain

13.15h - 13.30h **III. Putting ideas together: tips for CONNEKT's prevention toolkits**

One representative from each group or the facilitator shares with the rest (5 minutes each) the result of the ideas sharing and brainstorming.



13.30h - 15.00h Lunch

15.00h - 16.30h **Gender in violent extremism (VE): Addressing the policy level**

This session aims to provide a space for discussion on the role of gender in security in general and more specifically in Violent Extremism from the perspective of academia, policy-making and social actors. The draft version of a policy paper on gender and VE which is currently being drafted by CONNEKT will be presented for discussion among participants: What are the existing biases in security studies? How is women radicalisation studied and approached? Do drivers differ between men and women? How VEOs use gender patterns and different ideas about masculinities and femininities? What role concepts of masculinity and femininity play in framing women's roles in VEOs? How can women be empowered as actors of change in P/CVE?

[Presentation of the policy paper](#)

Lurdes Vidal Bertran, CONNEKT's Scientific Coordinator, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

18.00h - 20.00h Guided tour – Roman Tarraco

Meeting point: *Campus Catalunya*

20.30h Dinner

L'Ancestral



THURSDAY 6th JULY

Location: Sala de Junes, D1 building, first floor, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

GENDERING SECURITY AND PVE: AGENCY AND RESILIENCE

9.00h - 11.30h

Parallel Discussion Groups: the role of women in P/CVE from a local/community actor perspective (Activity for invited experts, only)

Based on the inputs from the first day, this session will offer a unique opportunity for the participants invited by each country team to explore their understanding of different topics that will be proposed. The session will be divided in two parts: a first part where participants will split in different groups and brainstorm ideas about pre-identified topics, and a second part where the ideas discussed in each group will be shared with the whole group, highlighting the key themes touched upon in the parallel discussions.

Facilitator

Marissa Anglarill, Communication & Development Enabler People-passionate

Location: Room 312, A2 building, third floor, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)

9.00h - 11.00h

CONNEKT's Project Committee Research Meeting (I)

(Activity for consortium members, only)

As invited participants work in a closed-door intimate setting, Consortium members will meet in a separate room to discuss on results and next steps of the project. The following topics will be on the agenda:

- Our highlights from the research on drivers and drivers combinations
- What have we learned on contexts of social interaction
- What do our results say about gender and VE?
- Structural elements that we need to take into account, as well as limitations and risks
- Cross-regional trends and dynamics (common or divergent)
- Cross-motivational trends and dynamics (what are the commonalities and differences among diverse violent and extremist movements of different etiologies?)
- Settling a common ground for prevention: work on the WP5-2 questionnaires

11.30h - 12.00h

Coffee break

12.00h - 13.00h

Contributing to CONNEKT's outcomes: developing Prevention Toolkits in community contexts

CONNEKT foresees the production of 8 Prevention Toolkits (one per country) that will be tested in local community workshops with target population, civil society actors and local authorities. In September, a Methodology Lab to discuss the elaboration of the toolkits will be held in Amman. With this milestone in mind, this session of the forum, designed as a



participatory engaging activity, aims to enrol women in the identification of tools and measures to prevent violent extremism, highlighting the role of women in this field. The moderator of the session will provide a brief overview of CONNEKT's research results, and all the participants will discuss and contrast these results with their experiences, identifying prevention measures and strategies at the community level. The inputs provided by the invited participants will directly feed CONNEKT's outcomes.

Moderators

Jadranka Stikovac-Clark, Senior Advisor and Director, Generations for Peace (GfP)

13.00h - 13.30h **Concluding remarks. De-briefing and key takeaways**

This final session will focus on the main takes of the forum. How to incorporate a gender perspective in P/CVE programming? How to support the participation of women in P/CVE efforts? What do the participants think we should keep in mind when dealing with prevention? These inputs will be very valuable for the production of the Prevention Toolkits in WP7.

Lourdes Rubio Rico, Director, UNESCO Chair Intercultural Dialogue in the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Gemma Aubarell Solduga, Gender, Culture and Civil Society Programme Director, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

13.30h - 15.00h Lunch

15.00h – 16.30h **CONNEKT's Project Committee Research Meeting (II)** (Activity for consortium members, only)

