

Next Steps For LGBTQ+ Engagement In WPS Practice In Ireland

Outcome Report

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Alex is a PhD Candidate in International Peace Studies at Trinity College Dublin. Alex's research focuses on queering the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, examining the inclusion of people with a diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) within international peace and security frameworks. With a background in gender studies, peace research, and international relations, Alexandra's work bridges academic inquiry and advocacy, aiming to challenge binary understandings of gender and promote intersectional approaches to UN peacekeeping. Their work also explores the role of queer organisations in shaping inclusive peace processes and advancing the safety and well-being of marginalised communities globally.

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Jamie is a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Manchester and a leading scholar in the fields of gender, sexuality, and security studies. Her research focuses on queering the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, exploring how diverse sexual orientations and gender identities intersect with peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Dr Hagen's work has been widely published, contributing to debates on LGBTQ+ inclusion in international policy frameworks, feminist security studies, and the ethics of peace and conflict research. She is also a co-director of the Centre for Gender and Global Security and is committed to advancing intersectional approaches to security and international relations.

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda has achieved significant recognition as a framework for promoting gender equality in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

However, the lived experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) individuals remain largely marginalised, both in the conceptualisation, implementation, and operationalisation of this agenda.

This exclusion perpetuates structural inequities and diminishes the transformative potential of WPS frameworks.

Insights from our "Workshop on Queering the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" (6th December 2024) underscore the urgent need for the Government of Ireland, the Irish Defence Forces, UN Member States, and wider epistemic communities to adopt a more inclusive and nuanced approach. This submission synthesises findings from detailed notetaker reports, highlighting practical recommendations for UN Member States, future Irish WPS National Action Plans (NAPs), and Irish Defence Forces WPS Action Plans (APs) [i], showcasing the opportunities for the integration of queer perspectives across the WPS pillars of Prevention, Protection, Participation, and Relief and Recovery.

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

WPS, rooted in United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, provides a policy framework for addressing gendered experiences of conflict and peacebuilding. Since 1325, the UN has grown its gender-sensitive peacebuilding approach through a suite of UNSCRs collectively grouped under WPS (UN Peacekeeping, 2020, p. 2). WPS is defined by the UN as 'a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UN policies and programmes' (ibid). Unfortunately, as is evident through this definition, the UN's peacebuilding framework via WPS has made no mention of LGBTQ+ identities in its concept, policy, or practice to date (Hagen, 2016; 2021).

WPS emphasises four key pillars for implementation: participation, which ensures inclusive involvement in decision-making and on-mission processes; protection, which safeguards individuals from violence and discrimination; prevention, aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict; and relief and recovery, focusing on post-conflict support and rebuilding. While WPS has been praised for centering women in these discussions, its focus has been increasingly criticised for relying on binary gender norms and failing to account for the lived realities of LGBTQ+ people from conflict-affected regions.



Photo by Jamie Hagen

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Participants

Organisations represented through our attendees:

Christian Aid (Ireland),
Colombia Diversa, DCU,
Durham University,
Government of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs,
Irish Consortium of Gender-Based Violence,
Irish Defence Forces,
LGBT Ireland,
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission,
Outhouse,
OutRight International,
Trinity College Dublin,
UCD.

Facilitators

Dr Gillian Wylie (Trinity College Dublin),
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Tara Grace Connolly (Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission),
Basira Paigham (OutRight International),
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The Workshop Toolkit: A Brief Synopsis

This workshop has been based on a toolkit authored by Jamie J. Hagen, Anupama Ranawana, Valentina Parra, Laura Beltrán, María Susana Peralta Ramón, and Nathalie Mercier, which addresses a critical gap in the application of WPS by integrating queer perspectives, to reshape the practical approach to UN peacebuilding. It challenges entrenched heteronormative frameworks, emphasising the need for inclusion of marginalised genders and sexualities in UN peace processes.

Colombia Diversa, a leading LGBTQ+ advocacy organisation in Colombia, played a pivotal role in developing the toolkit. Their contributions were grounded in their extensive experience supporting LGBTQ+ individuals during the Colombian peace process and their involvement in transformative justice practices. Specifically, Colombia Diversa provided insights from their work advocating for LGBTQ+ rights within transitional justice frameworks and helped shape the country's first NAP on WPS in 2023. By focusing on the intersectionality of gender, sexual orientation, and power dynamics, the toolkit aims to foster more inclusive, effective peace practices across diverse societal contexts.



Photo by Jamie Hagen

Key Insights from Workshop Discussions

Overcoming Systemic Exclusion and Hierarchies in UN Peacebuilding

“NAPs, when imposed, can clash with values and understandings of society. For culture to change, it has to be a multilevel effort, bottom-up.”

UN peacebuilding structures and WPS NAPs often prioritise cisgender and heteronormative frameworks, marginalising queer voices. There is a need to deconstruct these hierarchies by engaging grassroots queer organisations.

“NAPs, when imposed, can clash with values and understandings of society. For culture to change, it has to be a multilevel effort, bottom-up.”

Queering the Four Pillars of WPS

LGBTQ+ experiences can enhance WPS pillars:

“What matters is the culture, the educational aspects at the micro-level...some of it is role modelling and some of it is just opening up conversations.”

Prevention Addressing deep-seated cultural norms through education.

“What matters is the culture, the educational aspects at the micro-level...some of it is role modelling and some of it is just opening up conversations.”

Protection Queer individuals face specific vulnerabilities in conflict zones.

“We have to think about gender sensitivity when working with refugees. Our visions can be very different, especially when you debate liberation and safety.”

“Which NGOs have a space at the table also matters. There have to be diverse views on the same.”

Participation Tokenism and exclusion persist in policy spaces.

“Which NGOs have a space at the table also matters. There have to be diverse views on the same.”

Relief and Recovery Trauma-informed, culturally sensitive support is needed.

“The joy of queering is allowing people to be who they are.”

Coalition Building Between Feminist and Queer Movements

While feminist and queer movements share goals, internal hierarchies can marginalise queer perspectives in WPS initiatives. Case studies, such as Colombia's WPS NAP, highlight the potential of collaboration.

“The joy of queering is allowing people to be who they are.”

“Governments rush into policies, but where do they go? Unless they are operational, what are we doing?”

Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Practice

Frustration exists around the lack of operationalisation of WPS policies, particularly regarding queer inclusion. Language in NAPs should be accessible and relatable.

“Governments rush into policies, but where do they go? Unless they are operational, what are we doing?”

“Language in NAPs should be accessible. People should be able to relate to it. It’s important to think about how we internalise a policy.”

Technology and Queer Inclusivity in Security

AI and other emerging technologies can either reinforce discrimination or serve as tools for inclusion. Ethical guidelines are needed to ensure technology supports queer inclusion in security.

“AI is a colonising and discriminative tool.”



Photos by Alex Richardson

Wider Recommendations for UN Member States

Localise Policy Frameworks

- Ensure that WPS NAPs are developed through inclusive, bottom-up consultations that engage LGBTQ+ communities.
- Adapt policies to reflect local cultural and societal contexts while maintaining a commitment to universal human rights.

Invest in Queer-Inclusive Education and Training

- Integrate LGBTQ+ issues into peace and security training for diplomats, military personnel, and humanitarian workers.
- Develop curricula that challenge binary thinking and promote diverse understandings of gender and sexuality.

Promote Queer-Feminist Coalitions

- Provide funding and support for feminist and queer organisations to collaborate on shared objectives.
- Commit to addressing and understanding the pre-existing power imbalances within coalitions, i.e. between feminist and queer organisations, in order to advance an equitable approach for future WPS frameworks.

Strengthen Data Collection and Analysis

- Develop methodologies for collecting data on LGBTQ+ individuals affected by conflict while ensuring ethical safeguards against stigma and exposure.
- Share best practices globally to build capacity for inclusive data collection.

Leverage Technology Responsibly

- Establish ethical guidelines for the use of AI and other technologies in peacebuilding to ensure they enhance inclusivity.



Photo by cottenbro studio

Linking to LGBT Ireland's Strategy Plan

Making Ireland the Best Place in
Europe to be LGBTQI+ (2023-2027)
Strategic Goals

Building on the insights and recommendations from this outcome report, the following section outlines specific actions for the Government of Ireland and the Irish Defence Forces as they implement and operationalise the next iterations of their WPS NAPs and APs.

These recommendations focus on strengthening Ireland's leadership in inclusive peacebuilding and peacekeeping by addressing LGBTQ+ inclusivity via a leveraging the themes and strategies discussed during this workshop.



Photo by Yan Krukau

1. Localising Policy Frameworks for Inclusive Consultation

Establish formal advisory roles for LGBTQ+ civil society representatives in WPS decision-making bodies.

At the conceptualisation phase of WPS NAPs and APs, conduct annual LGBTQ+-inclusive consultation forums within the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Irish Defence Forces, and Irish Aid, ensuring that Irish WPS NAPs and Irish Defence Forces APs reflect the lived realities of LGBTQ+ individuals affected by conflict. Establish formal advisory roles for LGBTQ+ civil society representatives in WPS decision-making bodies and the Government of Ireland's Oversight Group – which oversees the application of WPS in various domestic and international spheres of Irish policy – in order to strengthen Strategic Goal 5: To Campaign Alongside our Allies for Necessary Policy and Practice Change to Ensure LGBTQI+ Equality (LGBT Ireland, 2023).

2. Invest in LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education & Training



Photo by RDNE Stock project

Mandate that all Irish UN Peacekeepers, Irish UN Gender Advisors, diplomats, and humanitarian workers complete specialised training on LGBTQ+ inclusion in peace and security.

Mandate that all Irish UN Peacekeepers, Irish UN Gender Advisors, diplomats, and humanitarian workers complete specialised training on LGBTQ+ inclusion in peace and security, developed in partnership with LGBTQ+ organisations such as the Trans Equality Network Ireland (TENI), LGBT Ireland, and Outhouse. Expand existing UN gender training modules to include case studies on LGBTQ+ experiences in conflict [ii] zones, reinforcing Strategic Goal 2: Develop a National Quality Assured Training Programme & Kitemark in Partnership with other LGBTQI+ Organisations (LGBT Ireland, 2023).

3. Promote Queer- Feminist Coalitions & Institutional Support



Photo by Antoni Shkraba

Create a formal platform for intersectional feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations to co-develop policies on gender-sensitive peace and security approaches.

Establish a dedicated funding stream within Irish Aid and the DFA's Stability Fund [iii] to support grassroots LGBTQ+ peacebuilding initiatives. Create a formal platform for intersectional feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations to co-develop policies on gender-sensitive peace and security approaches. The platform in this context would serve as a formalised, structured space for intersectional feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations to engage with Irish government bodies, particularly in shaping policies related to peace, security, and gender-sensitive approaches. This could be realised through either a Working Group, and/or a new hub for grant opportunities, and/or knowledge-sharing network where feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations can exchange insights (i.e. hosting annual policy forums and training workshops). This ensures alignment with Strategic Goal 6: Work Collaboratively to Make Ireland the Best Place in Europe to be LGBTQI+ (LGBT Ireland, 2023).



Photo by Renê Ferreira

4. Strengthen Data Collection & Ethical Analysis

Develop an intersectional WPS-LGBTQ+ monitoring framework to track the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes.

Develop an intersectional WPS-LGBTQ+ monitoring framework [iv] to track the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes. Fund Irish research institutions and universities to conduct gender-sensitive conflict impact assessments, ensuring data-driven approaches to LGBTQ+ rights in conflict settings. Embed gender-sensitive and LGBTQ+-inclusive indicators [v] in Ireland's international human rights reporting mechanisms [vi], advancing Strategic Goal 3: Establish a Multidisciplinary LGBTQI+ Research Network to Coordinate a Programme of High-Quality Research (LGBT Ireland, 2023).

5. Leverage Technology Responsibly for LGBTQ+ Safety



Photo by Mizuno K

Establish a digital safety protocol for LGBTQ+ peacebuilders working in hostile environments.

Establish a digital safety protocol [vii] for LGBTQ+ peacebuilders working in hostile environments, co-developed with Ireland's Cyber Security Centre [viii]. Fund tech-driven peace initiatives that protect LGBTQ+ activists from online and offline threats, ensuring ethical AI use in humanitarian responses. Promote digital literacy training for LGBTQ+ advocates in conflict zones, aligning with Strategic Goal 2: Develop a National Quality Assured Training Programme & Kitemark in Partnership with other LGBTQI+ Organisations (LGBT Ireland, 2023) and Strategic Goal 7: Ensure Good Practice in Governance (LGBT Ireland, 2023)

Conclusion: Continued Conversations on WPS

As Ireland prepares to develop its next WPS NAP, these recommendations underscore the need for ongoing dialogue between government agencies, the Irish Defence Forces, and civil society organisations. The workshop demonstrated the value of bringing diverse perspectives together, and future efforts must continue this collaborative momentum. Ireland has the opportunity to lead globally in queering WPS by embedding these recommendations into its domestic and international frameworks. We look forward to continuing the conversation with stakeholders to ensure that Ireland's next NAP reflects these priorities and establishes a robust framework for inclusive peacebuilding.

In general, the findings from this workshop provide a compelling call to action for UN Member States and UN personnel working in the wider context of WPS. In particular, Ireland's forthcoming WPS NAP presents a timely opportunity to work in meaningful partnership with queer NGOs and community organisations, ensuring that future peace and security frameworks are not only inclusive in principle, but transformative in practice – grounded in the lived realities, rights, and resilience of LGBTQ+ individuals across all contexts. By integrating queer perspectives into WPS, peacebuilding communities can address systemic exclusion and enhance the relevance of peacebuilding and peacekeeping frameworks. The recommendations outlined above offer practical steps to achieve this vision.



Photo by Aleks Magnusson

Potential LGBTQ+ NGO Partners in Ireland for Future WPS Application

These organisations play a vital role in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, providing essential support services, and fostering inclusive communities across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Their dedication to equality, dignity, and safety for all – particularly for those facing marginalisation – aligns strongly with broader human rights and peacebuilding efforts of the UN and Ireland. Recognising and celebrating their work not only highlights their invaluable impact but also creates opportunities for future collaboration, ensuring that LGBTQ+ voices and experiences are meaningfully included in WPS. Their expertise and commitment offer powerful pathways for inclusive policy development, community resilience, and collective progress towards a more just and peaceful society.

Outhouse Dublin

Outhouse Dublin is a vital LGBTQ+ community resource centre in the heart of Dublin, offering a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ individuals and groups. The centre provides a wide range of services, including support groups, mental health initiatives, training, and outreach. Outhouse is committed to fostering visibility, education, and community empowerment, ensuring that LGBTQ+ people can access the support they need while creating a space for cultural and social exchange. Outhouse Dublin's inclusive approach to community building and its focus on mental health and well-being makes it an important partner in advancing WPS goals. By advocating for the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals, Outhouse ensures that peacebuilding frameworks acknowledge and support diverse gender identities and experiences, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and comprehensive peace and security policies.

TENI

TENI seeks to better-improve the conditions, rights, and equality of trans people and their families. Its work addresses key issues such as healthcare access, legal recognition, and social inclusion for trans and non-binary individuals. As a long-standing leader in advancing trans rights, TENI's contributions offer vital insights into how WPS can be truly inclusive of gender diversity, beyond binary and/or conventional understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality. By advocating for the rights and inclusion of transgender

individuals, TENI contributes to WPS by promoting gender equality and ensuring that diverse gender identities are considered in peace and security discussions across Ireland.

LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland – is a national support service for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people, as well as their families and friends. With a strong emphasis on mental health and community empowerment, the organisation works closely with both individuals and institutions to ensure access, dignity, and representation. LGBT Ireland's cross-sectoral work, especially with government and healthcare services, offers strong potential for shaping inclusive peacebuilding policies with reach and depth. Through its support services and advocacy, LGBT Ireland aligns with WPS by fostering inclusive Irish communities and addressing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in contexts of peace and security both nationally and internationally.

Rainbow Refugee NI

Rainbow Refugee NI supports LGBTQ+ individuals seeking asylum in Northern Ireland due to persecution based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Their work centres on safety, dignity, and visibility for queer migrants navigating hostile systems. Rainbow Refugee NI's trauma-informed approach to migration and LGBTQ+ identity is crucial for embedding intersectional and justice-focused perspectives into peacebuilding strategies. By providing assistance to LGBTQ+ refugees, Rainbow Refugee NI addresses the intersection of gender, security, and human rights, which is central to the WPS framework.

Gay Project

Gay Project is an Irish NGO based in Co. Cork that supports gay, bi+, trans, and queer men, celebrates sexuality and gender diversity, and advocates for LGBTQ+ human rights and policy protections. Gay Project contributes to the broader goals of WPS by ensuring that issues of gender and sexual diversity are integrated into discussions of peace and security. It is also essential that future WPS strategies engage with men and masculinities not merely as tools for promoting women's empowerment, but as critical sites for transformation in their own right – challenging harmful norms, fostering allyship, and addressing how masculinities are shaped by, and contribute to, conflict, security, and peacebuilding dynamics.

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[i] The Irish Defence Forces Action Plans (APs) on WPS are their institution's equivalent of a WPS NAP, aimed at underpinning the WPS objectives set out via the Government's WPS NAP. In other words: "to fulfil Defence Forces' commitments contained within the national level plan, and progress the established organisational framework toward successful implementation of this landmark resolution" (IDF, 2020, p. 5).

[ii] Important cases to drawn on here that are documented by the UN and wider international community are Nepal and Myanmar (International Alert, 2022; UN Women, 2023).

[iii] This fund is part of the Government of Ireland's international peace, security, and development efforts, providing financial support to initiatives that contribute to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and stabilisation in fragile and conflict-affected states.

[iv] The intersectional WPS-LGBTQ+ monitoring framework would be a structured, evidence-based system for tracking and assessing the inclusion – through, for example: (1) Standardised LGBTQ+-Inclusive Indicators; (2) Ethical & Intersectional Data Collection; (3) Accountability & Public Reporting.

[v] Examples of key indicators: (1) Representation of LGBTQ+ individuals in peacekeeping forces, diplomatic missions, and mediation roles; (2) Inclusion of LGBTQ+ perspectives in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction policies; (3) Reports on human rights violations and targeted violence against LGBTQ+ individuals in conflict zones; (4) Funding allocation for LGBTQ+-led peacebuilding initiatives.

[vi] Such as Ireland's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions to the UN Human Rights Council and/or Ireland's reporting on CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and the Beijing+25 agenda.

[vii] This would be via developing guidelines and best practices for humanitarian workers – particularly those supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in conflict zones – to use secure and ethical digital communication methods.

[viii] Ireland's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is the government body responsible for cybersecurity. While it mainly focuses on national cybersecurity threats, it also engages in international digital security efforts. This is important as many queer and marginalised communities experience high rates of cyber harassment, doxxing, state surveillance, and digital repression.

Practice in Ireland Engagement in WPs Next Steps For LGBTO

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