

POLICY BRIEF

EU'S GENDER ACTION PLAN III: HALFWAY THERE? OBSERVATIONS AT THE MID-TERM OF THE EU GAPIII

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLIP	Country-Level Implementation Plan
EU	European Union
GAP (III)	EU's Gender Action Plan (III)
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (“+” denotes everything on the gender and sexuality spectrum that letters and words cannot yet describe)
MTR	Mid-Term Review/Report
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

KVINNA TILL KVINNA

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993. For every woman's right to be safe and to be heard.

Today we are one of the world's leading women's rights organisations, working directly in areas affected by war and conflict to strengthen women's influence and power. We work closely together with more than 100 local partner organisations across 20 countries to end violence against women, reach lasting peace and close the gender gap once and for all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 marks the halfway point for the EU's Gender Action Plan III—which steers all of the EU's work on women's rights and gender equality in its external action. Following the external evaluation of the GAP III, and ahead of the mid-term progress report, this brief provides observations and insights from The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and its partner network on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III, and recommendations to improve and advance the EU's work on gender equality going ahead.

BACKGROUND

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's regional offices and local partner organisations engage extensively in monitoring the implementation of the EU's Gender Action Plans, as well as influencing the commitments in the EU's gender action plans.

The following recommendations and observations are based on this extensive work, as well as on our work supporting organisations pushing for gender equality, the women peace and security agenda, and intersectional feminist causes.

PARTNERING WITH NATIONAL AND LOCAL-LEVEL WOMEN-LED AND INTERSECTIONAL ORGANISATIONS IS KEY

Strategic and comprehensive partnership with local, women-led and intersectional feminist organisations is key for the EU to be able to support the realisation of gender equality and the human rights of women, girls and LGBTQI+ people. At present, only a tiny fraction of worldwide funding goes to women’s and feminist movements; and these organisations are often deprioritised and excluded from political discussions and policy dialogues.

To this end, we recommend the EU to:

- Increase the proportion of funding under GAPIII that reaches local women-led and feminist movements, and establish a clear target for this.
- Revise funding mechanisms and practices to allow smaller, national and local-level organisations and movements to access EU funding for gender equality. This could be through, for instance, established networks of women's rights organisations in partner countries who are able to manage and redistribute funds to their members.
- Establish strategic partnerships, and increase policy and political dialogues with women-led and feminist organisations, at delegation and at Brussels level.

It is important that these partnerships are not only on topics which are explicitly gender-focused. At present we often see women experts, and organisations with gendered expertise, excluded from conversations which are not specifically with a gender focus. In addition, women’s and feminist organisations are often directed to speak to gender focal points—who often have a more programmatic mandate, and are not at senior level—even if women’s organisations want to discuss issues which are political and which require the engagement of more senior staff. Further down in the document, we recommend to

revisit the gender focal point system and analyse whether it is the most effective set-up.

- Ensure that civil society consultations are intersectional: including organisations from rural areas and from outside capital cities, including organisations from conflict-affected areas, LGBTQI-led organisations, organisations led by people with disabilities, and organisations led by racialised people.
- Ensure prioritisation and political backing of the causes prioritised by women's and feminist organisations and movements from senior political EU staff.

IMPROVED AND NEW TRACKING PROCESSES FOR EU FUNDING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The way that gender markers are currently being used to track GAP III funding is currently quite broad and may give a false impression of how much of EU funds are in fact contributing to gender equality (to reach the EU's target of 85%). The problems with both this marker and the way it is being used are:

- 1) The main marker which is being used—gender marker 1—is not a marker measuring gender equality or women's rights as a primary objective.
- 2) The gender marker does not adequately distinguish between the different kinds of recipients of this funding.
- 3) The gender marker is not always being used in various documents as per the OECD guidance on this marker.
- 4) The 85% is often being calculated based on the overall budget for each project, of which there is a smaller gender component, rather than tracking the actual amount of money ultimately spent on gender equality components of the programme.

In response to this, the EU should:

- Track what proportion of gender equality funding goes to a) national gender equality machineries, b) International women's rights organisations c) National and grassroots women's organisations and feminist movements and d) the UN and other international bodies. Use this tracking to measure progress towards funding local women's and feminist organisations—as recommended above.
- Ensure that OECD-DAC guidance is always being followed when gender markers 1 and 2 are being used.

GENDER IS POLITICAL

The GAP III is supposed to cover all areas of EU external action. However, because previous GAPs were focused on international cooperation, there is often a disconnect between EU staff and teams working on GAP III implementation and those working on issues such as peace and security, human rights, political discussions, and economic discussions.

In addition, the GAP III contains substantial commitments on Women, Peace and Security, and is considered a key tool and reference document regarding WPS and mainstreaming gendered considerations into EU peace and security actions.

At partner country level, women's organisations and women experts are often directed to speak to EU delegation gender focal points on issues of concern. However, the gender focal point is usually junior level, is often focused on programmatic rather than political work, and is very often double or triple-hatted in their role. When it comes to Women, Peace and Security, it is usually the political sections of delegations who need to have these discussions, but it is the international cooperation sections who are often currently having these conversations.

Gender equality, women's rights and intersectional feminist issues at partner country level urgently need strong political support from senior staff at the EU.

To address these issues, the EU should:

- Ensure that the commitments in GAP III are realised at a political level, through commitments in GAP III being used in peace and security discussions, human rights dialogues, political discussions, EU accession processes, and economic discussions.
- As part of the GAP III Mid-Term Report, analyse to what degree heads of delegation and political sections — and their political counterparts in Brussels — are using the EU GAP Country-Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs) in their own political dialogues, human rights dialogues, peace and security discussions, and other discussions.
- As part of the GAP III Mid-Term Report, analyse how many countries' EU GAP CLIPs contain Women, Peace and Security related recommendations.
- Shift responsibility for the CLIP to more senior level within each delegation, and ensure that Brussels counterparts from all relevant sections of the Commission and EEAS are involved in both developing the CLIPs and ensuring their implementation.
- Revisit the EU Delegation gender focal point system, and analyse whether this is the right set-up to ensure that gendered issues are handled at senior political levels.

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