



Factsheet on the new framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016-2020)

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What does the EU want to achieve with this new framework?

The EU wants a world where the rights of girls and women are claimed, valued and respected by all, and where everyone is able to fulfil their potential and contribute to a more fair and just society. The EU is therefore fully committed to break the vicious cycle of gender discrimination by supporting partner countries to establish a more enabling environment for the fulfilment of girls' and women's rights and to achieve real and tangible improvements in gender equality.

Gender equality is not just a matter of social justice, but also one of "smart economics": women's participation in the economy is essential for sustainable development and economic growth. An OECD study estimated that closing the labour force gender gap by 2030 could yield a potential average gain of 12% in relation to the size of the total economy across OECD countries. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and raise total agricultural outputs. This could lift an estimated 100-150 million people out of hunger worldwide, amongst other benefits.

Overall, evidence shows that when women are given equal opportunities and access to resources and to decision-making, communities are more prosperous and more peaceful. The EU wants to assist partners in effectively using this significant transformative potential.

Why are the European Commission and the EEAS coming up with this initiative now?

The "EU Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015" is coming to an end, and in 2013, the Council entrusted the Commission and the EEAS to set up a Taskforce to develop a new Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2016-2020.

On top of that, 2015 is a pivotal year for gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. It is the year when a new development framework will be agreed upon at the global level, with gender equality firmly at the centre of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU and its Member States are at the forefront of the protection and fulfilment of girls' and women's rights. The strong EU position in the post-2015 development agenda clearly contributed to gender equality being accepted as a central element of the new SDGs.

What is really new about the vision for 2016-2020?

There is a focus on thematic pillars for the first time. This means that four pivotal areas have been identified which could transform the lives of women and girls if action is taken:

The three thematic pillars are:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the social and economic rights / empowerment of girls and women
- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation.

There is also a fourth, horizontal pillar:

- Shifting the institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.

Another new aspect is the fact that gender analysis will be done systematically for all new external actions undertaken, such as in projects, and bilateral and regional programming. EU actors [\[1\]](#) reporting on these activities will use sex-disaggregated data wherever available. Concerted efforts will be made to generate data when needed.

Is this vision only applicable to partner countries outside the EU?

The EU has another framework for gender equality within the EU. This particular framework for action covers the EU's activities in third countries, especially in developing, enlargement and neighbourhood countries, including in fragile, conflict and emergency situations.

Its implementation is the joint responsibility of the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS). Coordination and collaboration with EU Member States will continue to be ensured.

An essential part of this framework will also be to promote policy coherence with other internal EU policies (Policy Coherence for Development). Moreover, it will be implemented in full alignment with the EU Human Rights Action Plan.

How is the Commission going to evaluate that the objectives have been fulfilled?

This new framework for action (formally a "Joint Staff Working Document") and the measures set out in it provide the monitoring and accountability framework against which to measure progress on gender equality and girls' and women's rights and empowerment. EU actors are expected to deliver results against this framework and to report transparently on progress and setbacks. Central to the reporting approach is:

- systematic reporting on the institutional culture shift for all EU actors against the indicators set out in the document;
- systematic gender analysis for all new external actions undertaken (e.g. projects). This analysis will inform reporting choices and selection of indicators. The identification of priorities and indicators will be completed by mid-2016;
- an annual reporting by all EU actors on the EU's contribution to at least one objective per thematic priority. EU actors reporting on these activities will use sex-disaggregated data whenever available. Concerted efforts will be made to generate data when needed.

How is this framework going to be financed? Is the €100 million all that is on the table?

Despite significant increases in recent years, the overall funding resources for gender equality and women's empowerment actions are still not fully adequate. The EU is committed to work towards reducing the gap between our commitments and our investments in gender equality and women's rights.

The EU will use a wide range of external assistance instruments:

- Specific bilateral or regional development support programmes - for instance the women's economic empowerment project financed by the EU Trust Fund for Central African Republic, and the Pan-African programme on female genital mutilation;
- A number of targeted activities are also to be funded through the Global Public Goods and Challenges thematic programme included in the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), with around EUR 100 million committed to improve the lives of girls and women.
- In addition, gender aspects are taken into consideration in several other thematic actions like food security, rural development, private sector development, and for instance, gender specific actions will be developed under the climate change programme for the years 2014-2016 (estimated EUR 16 million, DCI).

Different aid modalities (such as budget support, support to civil society organisations and thematic interventions) are envisaged for its implementation.

In the period 2007-2013, the EU committed an amount of around EUR 1 258 million to activities targeted at improving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment. Provisional OECD data shows that in 2013, 39% of the EU ODA considered gender dimensions as either significant or principal.

We will aim to increase our financial contribution to gender objectives in the current EU financial framework 2014-2020 through targeted activities and gender mainstreaming. But most importantly, we will strive to ensure that all EU's external assistance is "gender sensitive".

What is the relation of this document with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being discussed by the international community?

The EU has been advocating for gender equality in three ways: first, for gender equality to be a stand-alone goal in the new global agenda for sustainable development; secondly, for gender equality to be mainstreamed in all other goals; thirdly, for data to be collected in a sex-disaggregated way.

In addition, the new framework aligns itself with the priorities identified at global level. Most of the

indicators proposed in it are based on the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators. As the SDGs will be formally adopted at the United Nations later this week, the indicators will be reviewed in 2016 to fully align with the final set of SDGs and the finalised set of SDG indicators.

What are the next steps in the endorsement and implementation of this framework?

The text adopted yesterday by the European Commission and the EEAS is formally a "Joint Staff Working Document". It is now going to be presented and discussed in the relevant Council Working Parties and at the Foreign Affairs Council on Development, which is expected to endorse it through adoption of respective Council conclusions.

The new framework will apply as from **January 2016**. If endorsed by EU Member States, it will also be applied in their external actions.

What has been achieved so far on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment?

Globally, significant progress has been made towards achieving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment but the level of achievement has been uneven across regions and within countries. Not only must progress be accelerated but achievements to date need safeguarding against any deterioration or backlash.

Girls' access to primary education and women's economic empowerment have all significantly improved in recent years. More women have access to health care services and modern methods of contraception and less die in childbirth. Globally an estimated 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births occurred in 2010, a decline from 1990, when 400 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births were recorded. In developing regions, the proportion of deliveries attended by trained health personnel rose from 55% in 1990 to 66% in 2011. Gender issues are regularly on the agenda of human rights and political dialogues with third countries and 116 human rights country strategies have prioritised gender equality and women's empowerment.

Still there is a long way to go as worldwide girls and women continue to be systematically left behind and discriminated against. Social norms lock girls and women into unequal power relations, leaving many girls and women with little control over decisions that affect their lives, be it at household, community or national level.

Transforming the lives of GIRLS and WOMEN through EU External Relations 2016-20

EU OBJECTIVES:

Girls and women live free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

by contributing to:

- the elimination of all forms of violence against girls and women
- the eradication of trafficking of girls and women
- ending child, early and forced marriages
- ending sexual violence in (post-)conflict situations and humanitarian crises
- increasing access by girls and women to quality health care services
- ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights
- improving girls' and women's nutrition levels, especially during key lifecycle moments

Girls and women participate as equals in the economic life and have access to all economic resources and social services.

by contributing to:

- quality education for girls and women, including in science, technology and engineering
- improving access by women of all ages to decent work
- women's equal access to financial services; use and control over land and other productive resources
- ensuring girls' and women's access to, use of, and control over, clean water, energy, information and communication technology and transport infrastructure

Girls and women participate equally in decision-making at all levels.

by contributing to:

- women's increased participation in policy, governance and electoral processes at all levels
- empowering girls' and women's organisations and human rights defenders
- supporting agents of change working to shift negative social or cultural norms, including the media, women's grassroots organisations and the active involvement of men and boys
- women's increased participation in decision-making processes on climate and environmental issues

Commission services and EEAS deliver more effectively on EU commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment through external relations.

- by focusing efforts on a rights-based approach with clear results for girls and women
- by ensuring dedicated leadership on gender equality
- by improving the quality of partnership, coordination and dialogue at all levels
- by adopting a clear results-driven approach and using high quality gender evidence and analysis
- by working towards ensuring adequate financial support for the implementation of these measures



[1] Commission services, the European External Action Service and EU Member States.

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