The EU Gender Action Plan III

2021/2003(INI) - 10/03/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 479 votes to 96, with 116 abstentions, a resolution on the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III).

Parliament welcomed the new EU Gender Action Plan III for 2021-2025, which aims to advance gender equality worldwide. However, it regretted that the Council had failed to achieve unanimity on conclusions, owing to objections from four Member States to the word ‘gender’, thereby obstructing the formal endorsement of the Action Plan. It felt that this was a clear step backwards for gender equality and women's rights.

Members stressed that the EU has an important role to play in achieving a gender-equal world through supporting partner countries to address gender discrimination. They called on the EU to lead by example and urged the six Member States that have not yet ratified and implemented the **Istanbul Convention** to do so without delay.

More effective EU commitment and efficient implementation

Parliament called for full implementation of GAP III and for it to be a **priority in all the Union's external action**, whether in trade, development policy, humanitarian aid, security or sectors such as energy and agriculture.

Members welcomed the fact that 85 % of all new external actions will be required to incorporate gender as a significant or principal objective and also welcomed the Commission’s aim of having gender equality as the main objective of 5 % of its new external action programmes. The resolution called for the establishment of an extensive and comprehensive training programme to underpin the implementation of GAP III, in particular on gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender impact assessments, as well as on gender-based violence.

The resolution stressed the need for regular, external and independent assessment of GAP III’s results at every level and every stage, against the targeted and measurable objectives. It called on EU missions and delegations, Member States, partner countries and local and regional governments to work closely together in the implementation of GAP III.

Moreover, sufficient funding through the EU programming process is needed for the effective implementation of GAP III.

Seven areas of action

(1) Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence

Members welcomed that the first area of engagement of GAP III focuses on eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and called for enhanced, coordinated and holistic action to combat **femicide**, and all types of gender-based violence online and offline, to be stepped up.

Members called on the Commission to ensure a coherent long-term approach to stopping female genital mutilation (FGM) which affects 200 million victims worldwide and 500 000 victims in the EU alone ever year.

(2) Ensuring access to healthcare for women and sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR)

Stressing that legislative roll-backs in the area of abortion undermine the protection of women's health, rights and dignity, the EU should be a leading example worldwide in terms of promoting SRHR, free from coercion, violence, discrimination and abuse. In this regard, all Member States are called on to ensure **universal access** to SRHR in their territories.

Measures are called for measures to prevent girls from missing school during their periods and to tackle period poverty and combat stigmatisation in this area.

(3) Promoting economic and social rights and equality, and ensuring the autonomy of women and girls

Noting the economic and social consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Parliament called for GAP III to promote women's economic activity and their access to the necessary economic and social tools, and resources and social protection, especially in emergency contexts. It stressed that new forms of financing such as gender bonds could kick-start national economies while empowering women.

Members called for increased and targeted funding and scholarships to enable women and girls to access higher education and vocational training, in particular with a view to promoting the digital and technological education of girls, and women's participation in STEM fields, and to support female-led projects.

(4) Involving women in peacebuilding and security initiatives

Members called on the EU to promote greater participation by women in peacekeeping and further peacebuilding, and to support and recognise women, young women, girls and women human rights defenders as key drivers of change, and to support and protect them.

(5) Ensuring gender-responsive humanitarian action

The Commission is called on to provide more concrete proposals on specific expenditure, programmes, tracking and assessment of gender-related activities in humanitarian settings, and to elaborate measures to further develop adapted and efficient gender-responsive EU humanitarian action.

(6) Building a green and digital society

Members welcomed the inclusion in GAP III of the priority area on **climate change**, given that climate change is not gender neutral, as it acts as an amplifier of existing gender inequalities, especially for the poor, young people and indigenous people, and especially in fragile environments.

The resolution also called for the European Green Deal to be swiftly followed by 'Green Deal Diplomacy' that systematically includes a gender and intersectional perspective, and involves women and girls, including indigenous women, in strategic decision-making on climate change adaptation.

(7) Creating a true Generation Equality

Members called for the EU, its Member States, the Commission and the EEAS to commit to advance towards a feminist foreign, security and development policy in order to implement international agreements on the rights and empowerment of women and girls. They recalled that inter-generational dialogue and the inclusion of, as well as the commitment on the part of men and boys to advance gender equality are crucial to bringing about societal change and creating a true Generation Equality.