Basic information

2017/2012(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020 **Subject** 4.10.04 Gender equality 4.10.09 Women condition and rights 6.30 Development cooperation	

Key players

European Parliament

Joint committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
DEVE Development	MCAVAN Linda (S&D)	01/02/2017
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	ŠUICA Dubravka (PPE)	01/02/2017
	Shadow rapporteur JIMÉNEZ-BECERRIL BARRIO Teresa (PPE) RODRIGUES Liliana (S&D) ŽITŇANSKÁ Jana (ECR) THEOCHAROUS Eleni (ECR) BECERRA BASTERRECHEA Beatriz (ALDE) SÁNCHEZ CALDENTEY Lola (GUE/NGL) FORENZA Eleonora (GUE/NGL) MARCELLESI Florent (Verts/ALE) SOLÉ Jordi (Verts/ALE) VON STORCH Beatrix (EFDD) CORRAO Ignazio (EFDD)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	BECERRA BASTERRECHEA Beatriz (ALDE)	24/05/2016

	INTA International Trade	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	International Cooperation and Development	JOUROVÁ Věra

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
22/09/2015	Non-legislative basic document published	SWD(2015)0182	Summary
16/02/2017	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
16/02/2017	Referral to joint committee announced in Parliament		
24/04/2018	Vote in committee		
07/05/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0167/2018	Summary
30/05/2018	Debate in Parliament		
31/05/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0239/2018	Summary
31/05/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
31/05/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2017/2012(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Implementation
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55 Rules of Procedure EP 59
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CJ07/8/09088

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE610.927	30/10/2017	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE613.497	15/11/2017	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE612.256	24/01/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0167/2018	07/05/2018	Summary

Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0239/2018	31/05/2018	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2018)515	16/11/2018	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
ECHR	Commission working document (SWD)	SWD(2015)0182	22/09/2015	Summary

Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020

2017/2012(INI) - 07/05/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Development Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Linda McAVAN (S&D, UK) and Dubravka ŠUICA (EPP, HR) on the implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document (SWD(2015)0182 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020.

The fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) is to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls worldwide. SDG5 must be mainstreamed into the entire 2030 agenda so as to achieve progress across all SDGs and targets.

The original Gender Action Plan I (2010-2015) (GAP I) brought some progress, but was also marked by a number of shortcomings.

The new Gender Action Plan II 2016-2020 (GAP II) focuses on shifting EU institutional culture at headquarters and delegation levels in order to create a systemic change in how the EU approaches gender, as well as on transforming women's and girls' lives.

One year on since the adoption of GAP II, a number of positive trends have been noted. However, a number of challenges have been noted as regards the reporting and implementation of key priorities and gender-related SDGs and the monitoring of progress on all objectives, as well as in terms of mainstreaming gender into sector policy dialogue.

The GAP II has been produced in the form of a Joint Staff Working Document. The Commission is called on to demonstrate its firm commitment by **upgrading it into a future communication on gender equality**.

GAP II provides a comprehensive agenda that spans the entire EU foreign policy agenda, and welcomes in this regard the choice of **three thematic pillars**, namely:

- ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity,
- promoting the economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women, and
- strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation.

These pillars are intended to tackle the main factors and causes involved in discrimination and marginalisation. Members also noted the horizontal pillar consisting of shifting the institutional culture of the Commission’s services and the EEAS in order to more effectively deliver on the EU’s commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment through the Union’s external relations.

The report pointed out that the chief contributory factors and causes leading to discrimination and marginalisation include: sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, including harmful traditions such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Achievements of GAP II: Members welcomed the expansion of the gender action plan to all EU external services and to the Member States, and noted the progress in shifting EU institutional culture at headquarters and delegation levels, which is key to strengthening the effectiveness of EU initiatives and their impact on gender equality.

Key recommendations for the Commission/EEAS: Members called for:

- further steps to facilitate **exchange of best practice** in improving gender equality and gender mainstreaming between delegations and units;
- the strengthening of the **human resource** capacity dedicated to gender mainstreaming within the Commission’s services, through tailored **training** and reorganisation of existing structures and by taking on additional staff;
- the promotion and **mainstreaming** of the principle of equality between women and men by the EU in its external relations;

- the strengthening of EU Member State and international action through the UN in order to more effectively address the impact of conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls;
- for a mechanism to be set up expressly for the purpose of monitoring and strengthening gender policy under trade agreements;
- efficiently implement targeted policies to facilitate women's access to leadership and managerial posts;

Funding: Members noted that adequate funding for gender equality in external relations will be necessary to sustain political commitment to this goal. They stressed that current funding for gender equality and women's empowerment actions remains inadequate and urged that this situation be reversed in the next MFF.

In particular, they called for a dedicated budget line on gender equality to be established in order to address in a more prominent way the level of political participation and representation of women, in the EU's neighbouring countries and within the EU.

Future reporting: Members underlined the need for a simplified method of reporting which keeps bureaucracy to a minimum. They called for future implementation reports to be finalised and released within a shorter timeframe and for the development of on-line reporting, clear templates and the issuing of a guidebook to facilitate the work of the delegations. Increased support should be given to local SMEs, especially to female entrepreneurs, via micro-loans, so as to enable them to gain from private sector-led growth. Members called for the improvement of data collection in order to enable a qualitative analysis of women's situation, for example regarding working conditions.

Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020

2017/2012(INI) - 31/05/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 383 votes to 118, with 120 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document (SWD(2015)0182 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020.

The original Gender Action Plan I (2010-2015) (GAP I) brought some progress, but was also marked by a number of shortcomings.

The new Gender Action Plan II 2016-2020 (GAP II) focuses on shifting EU institutional culture at headquarters and delegation levels in order to create a systemic change in how the EU approaches gender, as well as on transforming women's and girls' lives.

Review of the gender equality action plan (2016-2020): the GAP II has been produced in the form of a Joint Staff Working Document. The Commission is called on to demonstrate its firm commitment by upgrading it into a future **communication** on gender equality.

One year on since the adoption of GAP II, a number of **positive trends** have been noted. However, a number of challenges have been noted as regards the reporting and implementation of key priorities and gender-related SDGs and the monitoring of progress on all objectives, as well as in terms of mainstreaming gender into sector policy dialogue.

Parliament noted that GAP II provides a comprehensive agenda that spans the entire EU foreign policy agenda, and welcomes in this regard the choice of **three thematic pillars**, namely:

- ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity,
- promoting the economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women, and
- strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation.

These three pillars aim to address the main factors and causes of **discrimination and marginalisation**:

- sexual violence (e.g. harmful traditions, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation);
- limited access to basic sectors and social services, such as health, education, water, sanitation and nutrition;
- difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health;
- unequal representation in public and private institutions, in political decision-making processes and in peace processes.

Members welcomed the expansion of the gender action plan to all EU external services and to the Member States, and noted the **progress in shifting EU institutional culture at headquarters and delegation levels**, which is key to strengthening the effectiveness of EU initiatives and their impact on gender equality.

However, they regretted that current programming appears to side-line the gender dimension in **situations of crisis or difficult conflicts** and that priorities related to family planning or reproductive health are neglected both in terms of funding and programming. They called on the EU and all Member States to **ratify the Istanbul Convention**, as the first legally binding international instrument seeking to prevent and combat violence against women.

Key recommendations for the Commission/EEAS: Parliament called for:

- further steps to facilitate exchange of best practice in improving gender equality and gender mainstreaming between delegations and units;
- the strengthening of the human resource capacity dedicated to gender mainstreaming within the Commission's services, through tailored training and reorganisation of existing structures and by taking on additional staff;
- the promotion and mainstreaming of the principle of equality between women and men by the EU in its external relations;
- the strengthening of EU Member State and international action through the UN in order to more effectively address the impact of conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls;

- for a mechanism to be set up expressly for the purpose of monitoring and strengthening gender policy under trade agreements;
- efficiently implement targeted policies to facilitate women's access to leadership and managerial posts;

Funding: Members noted that **adequate funding** for gender equality in external relations will be necessary to sustain political commitment to this goal. They stressed that current funding for gender equality and women's empowerment actions remains inadequate and urged that this situation be reversed in the next MFF.

In particular, they called for a **dedicated budget line** on gender equality to be established in order to address in a more prominent way the level of political participation and representation of women, in the EU's neighbouring countries and within the EU.

Parliament also recommended:

- promoting legal frameworks and strategies that encourage greater and more effective participation of women in peacekeeping and peace-building, as well as in EU mediation processes and military and civilian crisis management missions;
- increasing support to **local SMEs**, especially female entrepreneurs, via micro-loans to enable them to take advantage of private sector-led growth.

Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020

2017/2012(INI) - 22/09/2015 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a staff working document on gender equality, in particular on transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020.

BACKGROUND: equality between men and women is at the core of values of the European Union (EU) and enshrined in its legal and political framework. The EU is at the forefront of the protection and fulfilment of girls' and women's rights and vigorously promotes them in its external relations.

2015 is a pivotal year for gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. Nonetheless, the level of achievement has been uneven across regions and within countries. Worldwide, girls and women continue to be systematically left behind and discriminated against.

This document builds on the lessons learnt from the previous Gender Action Plan 2010-2015, and consolidates the context, rationale and priorities of a **refreshed approach** that reaffirms and translates the EU's policy and political commitments to gender equality into more effective delivery of concrete results for girls and women, while promoting more efficient coordination, implementation and monitoring of EU activities in this area.

CONTENT: according to the document, progress should be accelerated in the following issues:

Transforming the lives of girls and women: the EU is committed to breaking the vicious cycle of gender discrimination. The Commission services and the EEAS will strengthen their efforts to place gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women at the heart of the EU's external actions, focusing on:

- ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity;
- increasing the number of girls and women receiving quality education at all levels as well as training;
- increasing women's participation in policy, governance and electoral processes as well as in decision-making processes on climate and environmental issues.

Taking action and transforming lives: the following points aim to contribute in a measurable manner to preventing, and responding to, all forms of violence against girls and women:

- eliminating of all forms of violence against girls and women and of gender-based violence;
- eradicating the trafficking of girls and women;
- ending sexual violence and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and in humanitarian crises;
- increasing access by girls and women of all ages to quality, affordable health care services;
- ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights, including sexuality education;
- eliminating the phenomenon of gender-based sex selection and female infanticide;
- ending child, early and forced marriages.

Institutional culture shift: the single most important factor to make results more effective in the areas of girls' and women's psychological and physical integrity, economic and social empowerment and voice and participation would be to **significantly shift the institutional culture**. Commitments on gender equality should be translated into clear and tangible outcomes which should be accompanied by improved coordination, coherence, leadership, gender evidence and analysis, and should work towards ensuring adequate financial and human resources.

In order to achieve this, the Commission services and the EEAS intend to continue investing in efforts to:

- focus on a rights-based approach to development and on transformative areas with clear results for girls and women;
- ensure dedicated leadership on gender equality across Commission services and the EEAS;
- engage more effectively across Commission services and the EEAS in implementing EU gender equality objectives for policy coherence, particularly on issues such as FGM, trade and migration that have clear links to EU internal policies;

- adopt a clear results-driven approach that sets high standards for reporting, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, and promotes evidence-based decision making. This will include investing in, and using, systematic high quality closely monitor external relations' resource and budget allocations to gender and identify means of ensuring adequate financial support for these measures.

Responsibility and Implementation: in order to ensure real and long lasting improvements, the Commission services and the EEAS shall, *inter alia*:

- ensure strong and dedicated leadership on commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations;
- set up a **gender advisory board** with leading experts from partner countries;
- promote **incentives** for good performance on gender equality in thematic, bilateral and regional programmes;
- establish a **helpdesk** at headquarters in Brussels to support EU Delegations and headquarters' operational units in implementing the measures proposed herewith.