



EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025

End FGM EU analysis

The End FGM European Network welcomes the launch by the European Commission of the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), an agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action, on the 25 November 2020, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Published on such a symbolic date, we appreciate that the first area of engagement of the GAP III focuses precisely on eliminating gender-based violence, as one of the most widespread human rights violations worldwide. We also welcome the EU commitment to ensure internal-external coherence when advancing gender equality, by making sure that the GAP III on promoting a gender equal world complements the Gender Equality Strategy, launched earlier this year, focusing a gender equal Europe. This reinforces the EU mandate as one of the leaders within Generation Equality of Action Coalition 1, both in its internal as well as external commitments.

Firstly, End FGM EU appreciates the ambitious set of actions within the GAP III, to scale up within the next five years, the EU contribution to achieve SDG 5 of Agenda 2030. **It appears clear that the GAP III builds upon GAP II, while going one step further to accelerate change, by focusing on structural accountability and expanding the thematic areas of engagement covered.**

STRUCTURAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

The independent evaluation of GAP II laid bare the insufficient institutional cultural shift in the past five years, which undermined the impact of EU external action to achieve gender equality. Lack of awareness at management level and of a common vision and approach at all EU levels around gender equality, have made it difficult to achieve truly systematic transformative results in the past five years. Subsequently, we are encouraged to see the following provisions in the newly launched policy framework.

1/ Greater emphasis than before is being allocated towards making **EU tools and structures more accountable to being gender sensitive, gender responsive, and most importantly gender transformative.** This had also been one of the main recommendations from public consultations and civil society feedback on the impact of GAP II. A key shift in focus from a result-oriented framework to a structurally transformative one has happened -at least on paper-, as we see that four out of five pillars of action concentrate on **how** to achieve sustainable and structural change, rather than **what** objectives to aim for.

2/ End FGM EU also welcomes the reiteration of integrating a **gender dimension as a cross-cutting priority** in all EU development assistance, through the commitment of **at least 85%** of all new external actions to have gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as a significant objective or as a principal

objective by 2025. However, this commitment was also part of the GAP II, but as of 2019, only slightly over 64% of all new projects had gender equality as one of their objectives.

3/ We welcome that the detailed staff working document with specific objectives and indicators to frame the implementation of GAP III on the key thematic outcome indicators will be integrated into ‘**country-level implementation plan**’, developed by EU Delegations, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations and missions, in coordination with EU Member States’ embassies. This will ensure a stronger basis for monitoring and accountability of EU action at country level.

4/ End FGM EU also appreciates the new addition, requiring all **EU Delegation to carry out one gender-transformative action at country level, by 2025**. We recommend that this follows a gendered needs assessment to facilitate for the creation of tailored impact, reflecting specific issues faced by countries around gender equality;

5/ The focus on **strengthened cooperation for a common strategic vision** at EU level is commendable, particularly the reference to an EU leadership which must be gender responsive and gender balanced. We believe a true and long-lasting transformation starts from within and involves those with decisional powers, and will need to be followed by an adequate implementation framework.

Our key recommendations to strengthen the EU structural accountability around GAP III are:

- Ensure stronger implementation at country level, as well as a coordinated approach to implementation between DEVCO Headquarters and EU Delegations, and at all management levels;
- Put in place a stronger and systematic monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that by 2025 the commitment on paper will be fully put in practice;
- Ensure systematic and meaningful consultation with women and girls-led organisations in all phases of programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

THEMATIC AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT:

Concerning the objectives of the GAP III in terms of areas of engagement around gender equality (pillar #3), End FGM EU is pleased to see that compared to the previous framework, these are substantially broadened to include emerging issues and trends at the global level.

6/ Primarily, End FGM EU is very pleased to see a cross-cutting focus on addressing **intersectionality** and the intersections between gender and other forms of discrimination, as a key to achieve truly transformative social change and gender equality. Good intentions on paper must be channelled into systemic interventions to change discriminatory structures, including within the EU institutions.

7/ In addition, we commend the reference to **connections between development and humanitarian sectors** (including Women, Peace and Security agenda), particularly concerning gender-based violence, to ensure a truly transformative approach to EU external action which does not work in silos. In particular, the focus on safe and quality humanitarian actions that support preparedness, prevention and response (including access to adequate services) to sexual and gender-based violence and the work of the Call to Action is very important.

8/ Moreover, we are satisfied to see the **increased emphasis placed on bodily autonomy of women and girls in all their diversity**, which resulted in two separate thematic priorities in this newly adopted framework (instead of one as it was before): the first, around freedom from all forms of gender-based violence, and the second, concerning promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is a substantial step towards addressing more deeply the root causes of gender inequality around these two areas of concern.

9/ End FGM EU also welcomes the fact that the elimination of **female genital mutilation (FGM)** is specifically included within both the aforementioned thematic priorities. Moreover, specifically on FGM, we welcome that the EU will have a specific focus on:

- supporting country, regional and global initiatives around the **elimination of harmful practices**;
- promoting prevention – by challenging **harmful gender norms**, working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a survivor-centred approach, also **engaging men and boys, traditional and religious leaders**;
- supporting access to psycho-social support services and participation in economic and social life of survivors of gender-based violence;

Our key recommendations to strengthen the EU engagement on key thematic areas in its external action are:

- Ensure tackling systemic intersectional discrimination, both internally within the EU structures, as well as externally in third countries through project implementation;
- Put in place a stronger and systematic collaboration between stakeholders involved in the implementation of the GAP III to break silos, including: between European Commission Directorate Generals, between different management levels of the same Directorate General, between European Commission and EU Delegations in third countries, between European Commission and EU Member States, and at all management levels within EU Delegations;
- Be a leading example worldwide in terms of promoting the right to bodily integrity and autonomy of women and girls in all their diversity, both in terms of ending gender-based violence against them and concerning their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Increase funding for all key thematic priorities to truly have an impact and achieve gender equality by 2025.

We thank the European Commission for having presented the Gender Action Plan III, that will guide the European Union's external action for the next five years and we stand ready to support and monitor its implementation.

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