

FOR AMBITIOUS EUROPEAN POLICIES PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY



WHAT ARE THE KEY COMMITMENTS FOR #EE24?

- 1** | CREATE A SUPPORT FUND FOR LOCAL FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS
- 2** | STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO PROMOTE A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY
- 3** | INVOLVING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF EU EXTERNAL ACTION



FOCUS ON GENDER EQUALITY: A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY AMBITIONS

Gender equality is regressing. The UN reports that, at this rate, it will take us another three centuries to achieve equality. The cause for this can be found in the recent crises that have particularly affected women, girls and gender minorities. The increasing insecurity and growing impoverishment stemming from these crises are leading communities to adopt strategies that are harmful to gender equality, such as early marriage, increased sexual violence, human trafficking during migration, and more. Women and girls are the foremost victims of armed conflicts, climate crises and food insecurity, due to economic, social and cultural factors.

To fight these global inequalities, countries such as Canada, Germany and France have adopted feminist diplomacy or a feminist foreign policy. According to France's High Council for Gender Equality, "Feminist diplomacy is a State's policy that puts gender equality, women's freedom and rights, and the fight to abolish patriarchy at the core of its external action, in all its dimensions [...]. To this end, it ensures participation, in equal proportions, of women and feminist movements (in and outside of the country) in its co-construction and implementation. It allocates sizeable resources over the long term to the achievement of this objective and it establishes, within the State, specific and long-term organisation of institutions and government which ensures the consistency of policies and that includes an accountability system.¹"

At the European level, gender mainstreaming is an official policy of the European Union and its Member States, in accordance with Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This commitment seeks to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality in all actions undertaken. The 2017 Development Consensus also highlighted gender equality in sustainable development, by emphasising its importance in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The European Union (EU) has developed three major strategies to mainstream gender into all its internal and external policies. The EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, launched in 2020, sets out goals such as eliminating gender-based violence and stereotypes, as well as reaching gender balance in decision-making processes. Most EU Member States have adopted the 3rd Gender Action Plan (GAP III), promulgated in 2020. It emphasises gender equality as a prerequisite for conflict prevention and resolution. In parallel, the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019–2024 seeks to implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) approach holistically.

1 | CREATE A SUPPORT FUND FOR LOCAL FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS

To address gender inequalities, it's crucial to have an approach focused on local women's rights organisations (WRO). These groups have a major impact thanks to their close links with communities and their understanding of socio-cultural norms, as highlighted in studies by the OECD and the Mama Cash organization. Despite this, these organisations are severely underfunded by the European Union. In 2019 and 2020, only 0.5% of support from EU institutions for gender equality was allocated to women's rights organisations.

This lack of financial support and its irregular nature compromise the effectiveness of aid for gender equality. Long-term efforts to bring about change are jeopardised when these organisations must constantly seek short-term funding, according to ECDPM².

¹ Haut Conseil à l'égalité (202), [La diplomatie féministe : D'un slogan mobilisateur à une véritable dynamique de changement](#), Rapport, novembre.
² Chloe Teevan, (2021), [The EU's Gender Action Plan: Principles and practices](#), Briefing Note, octobre.

Stable and sufficient funding for these civil society organisations (CSOs) in partner countries must be ensured. In a 2020 evaluation, the European Commission (EC) suggested exploring forms of inclusive and feminist funding that transfer decision-making power and encourage partnerships with grassroots organisations. This approach is crucial for effectively supporting gender equality.

DEFINING WHAT A "WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATION" IS

For Coordination SUD, this term includes many types of organisations that work to promote gender equality, including those whose actions are at the interface of gender and sexual orientation, gender identity, expression or characteristics, race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, socioeconomic status, nationality and residence, State affiliation and migratory status.



The Support Fund for women's rights Organizations (Fonds de Soutien aux Organisations Féministes - FSOF) is a French initiative created in 2019 at the request of CSOs. What sets it apart are its objectives of financing structural costs and supporting the development of women's rights organisations as well as their networking. The FSOF offers flexible financing adapted to local needs. In this way, it gives a boost to local CSOs, which are considered as best positioned to use Official Development Assistance (ODA) effectively to promote gender equality. In addition, the FSOF has increased funding dedicated to gender equality and bolstered solidarity links between French associations and those in other regions of the world.

Taking into account the recommendations stemming from the mid-term evaluation, it would be relevant to transpose this approach to the European level.

2 | STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO PROMOTE A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The 3rd EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III) is a key aspect of the EU's international action. Promulgated in 2020, it seeks to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in EU external policies. GAP III introduces an approach based on three basic principles: it is transformative in terms of gender-based social relations, intersectional and rights-based. It commits to ensuring that 85% of new EU external actions contribute to gender equality by 2025.

However, its implementation faces challenges. The monitoring of GAP III's impact, especially on external stakeholders, is complicated because of the lack of detailed annual reports from the EC. Despite independent evaluations, some key dimensions such as gender-based violence remain unexplored. In addition, gender mainstreaming in EU external policies is hampered by a lack of human resources, training and knowledge within EU delegations.

Although GAP III is consistent with external financing instruments such as NDICI-Global Europe, its quantified objectives lack real ambition. Targets for gender equality, in particular the French law requiring 20% of funding to specifically target gender equality, are not fully integrated into GAP III. Furthermore, new actions specifically focused on gender equality make up only 4% of total funding in 2021, illustrating the persistent challenges in achieving the GAP III objectives.

3 INVOLVING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF EU EXTERNAL ACTION

The meaningful participation and leadership of pre-adolescent and adolescent girls and women in political and public life are crucial to achieving the SDGs. Despite the international standards established in 1995 in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there has been little progress in women's representation. According to the UN, parity in national legislative bodies will not be reached until 2063 on the current track.

Through the Youth Action Plan in EU External Action, the EU is committed to giving young people, especially young women and girls, a greater voice and leadership role. This equitable participation is in line with EU values and commitments as well as with international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) points out that women's leadership in politics contributes to more equitable and sustainable societies. Women's political participation is linked to better governance, increased economic stability and stronger social cohesion.

IMPROVE COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE EU

CSOs (civil society organisations) play a key role in enriching public policy, by providing public authorities with a wide range of expertise and opinions from civil society. They draw on their experience in the field to make these opinions known. CSOs must be informed about public policy and have the opportunity to influence it, as they can propose concrete solutions to the problems raised. They also support parliamentary work by taking part in committees, helping to draft amendments and facilitating communication between MEPs and relevant players on the ground.

It is therefore through their own work – and also by supporting greater participation by CSOs in the work of the Council of the European Union and the EC – that MEPs can contribute to EU policies that leave no one behind.

Finally, special attention should be paid to the inclusion of organisations of diasporas, women, children, and youth; any organisation representing minority and minoritized groups; and organisations of various sizes.



FURTHER READING

OECD DAC Network on Gender equality (2016). [Donor support to southern women's rights organisations](#). OECD Findings. OECD, November.

Maria Regleron Eva Luna Maes (2023). [Implementing the EU Gender Action Plan III: Turning ambition into impact?](#). CONCORD Europe, June.

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Rosamund Shreeves and Ionel Zamfir (2023). [Women in politics in the EU. State of play](#). European Parliament Think Tank, Mars.

Lara Fergus, Karen Kraan, Susan Jessop, Zohra Moosa (2020), [Feminist activism works! A review of literature on the impact of feminist activism in achieving women's rights](#). Mama Cash, July.



Coordination SUD is the national coordinating body of French NGOs working for international solidarity.

Coordination SUD was founded in 1994 and currently comprises 184 NGOs, either as direct members or through six networks of associations (CLONG-Volontariat, Cnajep, Coordination Humanitaire et Développement, CRID, FORIM and Groupe initiatives). These organisations work in the fields of emergency humanitarian and development aid, environmental protection, human rights, advocacy and global citizenship education for international solidarity — with a special focus on helping the most disadvantaged groups of people.

Coordination SUD's Europe work brings together member NGOs that carry out advocacy work on European issues relating to international solidarity, as well as Coordination SUD's representatives to CONCORD Europe, the European confederation of humanitarian and development NGOs of which Coordination SUD is a member.

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En partenariat avec

