Renewal of the EU Plan of action on Gender equality and Women's empowerment in development

European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2015 on the renewal of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development (2015/2754(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), establishing gender equality as one of the main principles on which the EU is founded,

– having regard to Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), establishing the principle of policy coherence for development, which requires that the objectives of development cooperation be taken into account in policies that are likely to affect developing countries,

– having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the subsequent outcome documents of the United Nations Beijing +5, +10, +15, +20 Special Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 9 June 2000, 11 March 2005 and 2 March 2010 and 9 March 2015 respectively,

– having regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) that took place in Cairo in 1994, where the global community recognised and affirmed that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are fundamental to sustainable development,

– having regard to the EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 (COM(2010)0491),


– having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 May 2015 on Gender in Development and on a New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development,
having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2014 on the EU and the global development framework after 2015,

having regard to the Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Partner Countries,

having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), of 18 December 1979,

having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security,

having regard to the questions to the Council and to the Commission on the renewal of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality on Women’s Empowerment in Development (O-000109/2015 – B8-0762/2015 and O-000110/2015 – B8-0763/2015),

having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Development,

having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the European Union (EU) is committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring gender mainstreaming in all of its actions; whereas gender equality and women’s empowerment is a precondition for achieving post-2015 sustainable development goals and is also a self-standing human rights issue that should be pursued regardless of its benefits for development and growth; whereas gender-based violence is a serious breach of human rights and should never be justified by religion, culture or tradition;

B. whereas the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action found that progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) had been slow and uneven and that no country in the world had fully closed the gender gap; whereas the review found that this lack of progress had been exacerbated by the persistent and chronic underinvestment in GEWE;

C. whereas two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that explicitly address women’s rights, namely the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (MDG 3) and the improvement of maternal health (MDG 5), remain largely unachieved; whereas every day an estimated 800 women in the world die due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth; whereas about 222 million women in the developing world lack access to safe and modern methods of family planning while the proportion of development aid aimed at family planning to total global aid for health is declining;

D. whereas the majority of the world’s poor are women and female-headed households; whereas the vulnerability of marginalised women is increasing; whereas 62 million girls in the world do not attend school;

E. whereas one in three women in the world is likely to experience physical and sexual violence at some point in her lifetime; whereas 14 million girls are forced into marriage every year; whereas the EU is committed to the right of every individual to have full

1 Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0059.
control over, and to decide freely on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence;

F. whereas the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has reported\(^1\) that investments are ‘vastly insufficient to achieve gender equality’ despite the tripling of aid targeted for that purpose by its members reaching USD 28 billion in 2012; whereas gender financing is mostly concentrated in social sectors leaving economic and productive sectors underinvested, whilst OECD analysis shows that investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments;

G. whereas 2.5 billion people, a majority of them women and youth, remain excluded from the formal financial sector;

**A step change in GAP2**

1. Believes that the conclusions of the evaluation of GAP1 show the clear need for a step change in EU action on GEWE and that we need a renewed political commitment by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to improve performance; stresses the importance of implementing the main recommendations of the evaluation in the successor to the current GAP, starting with a fully-fledged management response;

2. Welcomes the Commission’s intention to initiate a transformative shift with the new GAP and therefore believes that GAP2 should take the form of a Commission communication; regrets that GAP 2 has been produced as a Joint Staff Working Document and not as a Communication; urges the Commission and EEAS to begin implementation of the new plan as soon as possible so that concrete results can be achieved as part of the broader EU commitment to GEWE in the SDGs, and to involve Parliament in consultation throughout that process;

3. Believes that GAP2 should focus on all aspects of EU external policy – development cooperation, humanitarian aid, trade, human rights and foreign affairs, migration and asylum – in line with the policy coherence for development principle, and should apply to developing, neighbourhood and enlargement countries alike;

4. Believes that GEWE should be core business for EU institutions, with clear management responsibilities both in the central administration and in the EU delegations; underlines the fact that heads of delegation, heads of unit and senior management must be accountable for reporting, monitoring and evaluating GEWE policies, and that gender mainstreaming must be incorporated into job descriptions and training given for all staff;

5. Believes that the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) should ensure that all Commissioners responsible for external action demonstrate the necessary leadership to ensure a successful implementation of GAP2; welcomes the Council conclusions of May 2015 which underline the commitment of the Member States to a transformative agenda on the rights of women and girls; highlights the need for complementarity between the actions of the Commission/EEAS and those of the Member States;

6. Regrets the fact that gender issues are not addressed in the DG DEVCO 2014 Annual Report and calls for GEWE issues to be included in the annual reports of all Commission

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Directorates-General (DGs) involved in external action and of the EEAS in the future; calls on all EU delegations to submit an annual GAP report and for EU delegations to present a summary of GEWE performance in their annual reports, mid-term reviews and country-level evaluations; believes that results should be integrated in results-orientated monitoring (ROM); 

7. Notes that the 2017 mid-term review of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) programming documents presents a good opportunity to assess the impact of DCI-financed programmes on women and girls, clearly identify the share of DCI-financed programmes that benefit women and girls, and make necessary reallocations should this prove necessary; 

8. Recalls the EU principle of policy coherence for development and stresses the importance of coherence between the EU internal and external policies and the need to ensure policy coherence between the new GAP and the next action plan on human rights and democracy; stresses that gender must be a systematic and integral part of all human rights dialogues between the EU and third countries; calls on the EEAS to establish gender dialogues in addition to human rights dialogues with third countries; 

9. Reiterates that full coordination between central departments, delegations and the embassies of Member States is essential for successful implementation of GAP2, using gender country profiles and other tools; underlines, in this regard, that the review of EDF country programming provides an opportunity to ensure that full implementation of GAP2 is on track and to make adjustments as necessary; 

**Data collection and targets**

10. Calls for more effective implementation strategies and insists on the use of gender-sensitive quantitative and qualitative indicators and systematic and timely collection of gender disaggregated data with regard to the beneficiaries and participants across all actions as part of the monitoring and evaluation process; insists that the data should be made available to the public in order to ensure financial accountability and transparency; believes that reporting should be aligned and integrated into established monitoring and evaluation systems such as the Results Framework of the Commission’s Directorate-General in charge of International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO); underlines the need to invest in national statistics and calls on all the Member States to establish gender-sensitive monitoring systems; 

11. Invites EU delegations and the Member States’ embassies to prioritise and invest in high-quality gender analysis as the basis for country-level strategy and programming; considers that the EU should revise national indicative plans from the point of view of the new GAP; 

12. Recognises that girls and young women are particularly disadvantaged and at risk, and that specific focus is needed to ensure girls’ access to education, to allow them to live lives free from violence, to remove discriminatory legislation and practices, and to empower girls and young women globally; 

13. Stresses the need for clear targets and indicators, measured and disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other factors and improved tracking of budgetary allocations; underlines that targets and monitoring methodology should be aligned with the post-2015 global development framework and other relevant international frameworks;
14. Stresses that the EU must indicate and ensure sufficient financial and human resources to deliver on its commitments to GEWE; underlines the importance of mainstreaming gender in public finance through budgeting that is gender-sensitive and addresses inequalities;

**Key aspects for the new GAP**

15. Believes that the GAP must address obstacles to the full implementation of the EU guidelines on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the elimination of all forms of violence; calls for a comprehensive EU approach on VAWG with increased efforts and resources to prevent and eliminate all discriminatory practices against women as well as to combat and prosecute all forms of violence including trafficking in human beings, female genital mutilation, forced sterilisation, forced pregnancy, gendercide, domestic violence and marital rape, child, early and forced marriage and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations; calls for the development of specific EU actions to strengthen the rights of different groups of women, with special attention being given to young people, migrants, women living with HIV, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons and persons with disabilities;

16. Stresses the importance of enhancing girls’ access to all levels of education and removing sex-based barriers to learning;

17. Highlights the fact that the use of rape as a weapon of war and oppression must be eliminated, and that the EU must bring pressure to bear on third-country governments and all stakeholders implicated in regions where such gender-based violence takes place, in order to bring the practice to an end, bring perpetrators to justice and work with survivors, affected women and communities to help them heal and recover;

18. Underlines the vulnerability of women migrants, refugee and asylum seekers, and the need for specific protection for them; calls for specific measures to strengthen and fully ensure the rights of women asylum seekers; calls for bold action at European level to tackle the ongoing migration and refugee crisis, including a holistic and gender-sensitive approach to migration and asylum which is consistent across the Member States;

19. Recognises health as a human right; underlines the importance of universal access to health care and coverage, including sexual and reproductive health and rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action; calls, in this regard, for further efforts to increase women’s access to health and health education, family planning, prenatal care and sexual and reproductive health, notably to address the largely unachieved MDG 5 on maternal health, including reduced infant and child mortality; points out that access contributes to the achievement of all the health-related development goals; welcomes, in this connection, the Council conclusions of May 2015 in particular;

20. Underlines the need to create an enabling environment, notably by removing social and legal barriers to women’s access to productive assets, including land and natural and economic resources, promoting financial inclusion, decent work standards, gender-responsive social protection and equal pay for equal work;

21. Believes that businesses have an important role to play in advancing gender equality through actions that contribute to women’s economic empowerment and women’s economic rights, such as ensuring decent work for women, equal pay, access to finance and banking and opportunities to participate in leadership and decision making, and
protecting them against discrimination and abuse in the workplace, and through gender-sensitive corporate social responsibility; calls in this context for increased support to be given to local SMEs, especially to female entrepreneurs, so as to enable them to gain from private-sector-led growth; highlights the positive role that micro-finance, social entrepreneurship, and alternative business models, such as mutuals and cooperatives, continue to have in the field of women’s economic empowerment and inclusion;

22. Recognises the need to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work;

23. Notes that women’s empowerment and food security are mutually supportive; stresses the need to empower rural women by addressing the discrimination in access to land, water, education, training, markets and financial services; calls for a substantial increase in public investment in agriculture and rural development, with a focus on smallholders, agricultural cooperatives and farmers’ networks;

24. Emphasises the need for women’s inclusion and representation in emerging economic fields that are important for sustainable development, including green and circular economy sectors, renewable energies, and ICT;

25. Reiterates the crucial role of formal and informal education in the empowerment of women and girls in the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres; emphasises the need for an EU strategy on education in development to include a strong gender perspective, particularly in the areas of education for sustainability, post-conflict reconciliation, lifelong education and vocational training, the field of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and the role of the arts in intercultural exchange;

26. Underlines the importance of increased female participation in shaping and implementing the post-2015 framework; calls for increasing financial support to women’s rights organisations, policy and capacity-building measures aimed at involving and increasing the participation of grassroots civil society organisations, and notably women’s organisations, in stakeholder consultations at all times and at local, regional, national and international levels;

27. Notes that the GAP must address the situation of LGBTI persons in third countries, and must include the promotion and protection of LGBTI rights;

28. Stresses the importance of strengthening women’s legal rights and access to justice through gender-sensitive law reform; believes that targeted funding for gender equality in legal aid helps to strengthen the rule of law;

29. Calls on the EU to promote increased participation of women in peacekeeping, peacebuilding processes and EU military and civil crisis management missions; reiterates, in this context, its call on the EU to promote UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, and calls for the incorporation of gender perspectives and women’s rights in all peace and security initiatives;

30. Calls for the EU to promote the fundamental human rights of women and girls as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; insists in this context on the need to ensure the protection of the right to life and dignity of all women and girls by actively combating harmful practices such as gendercide;
31. Underlines the importance of measures strengthening leadership and participation of women and women’s rights organisations in the public as well as private spheres; calls for increased efforts to increase the participation of women and women’s rights organisations in political life, notably through the integration of such efforts in all democracy support programmes, including Parliament’s comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA);

32. Underlines the need to involve men and boys and promote their active engagement and responsibility in addressing discriminatory social norms and combating gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls;

33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and UN WOMEN.