



June 2018

The main global development partners meet in Brussels for the European Development Days (EDD, EUDevDays.eu) on 5 and 6 June. This year, the debates focus on 'women and girls at the forefront of sustainable development'. Better inclusion of both genders in education, economic activity and decision-making has positive effects on many aspects: increased and better sharing of resources, children's health and schooling, as well as community resilience to natural or man-made shocks. However, all too often women and girls are discriminated against and the victims of abuses. EU action towards third countries addresses violence and harmful practices, and underlines the benefits of gender equality. Priorities on these issues are clearly stated in the EU Gender Action Plan for 2016-2020 (GAP II), and the EU Strategic Engagement to Gender Equality 2016-2019, among others. The European Parliament has often voiced its support for global women's empowerment. EPRS, Parliament's in-house think-tank, has produced a number of papers on the topic: a selection of recent publications can be found below.

Child marriages: Still too many

'At a glance' note by Eric Pichon, June 2018

Although the official age of adulthood varies across countries, several international conventions – in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by 140 states – apply the definition of 'child marriage' to any couple where at least one member is aged under 18. This practice challenges both children's rights and gender equality, and exposes brides to serious abuses and health risks. Child wives drop out of school and have little access to economic resources, which hinders potential development opportunities for their community. The EU not only constantly condemns child marriage, but also endeavours to tackle the practice through targeted aid programmes. The European Parliament will again raise the issue during the 2018 Development Days.

Transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations, 2016-2020

'At a glance' note by Joanna Apap, May 2018

A European Parliament motion for a resolution on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan for 2016-2020 highlights a number of positive trends that have been noted after the first year of functioning of GAP II, as well as a series of issues and areas for improvement. It is founded on four thematic pillars, namely: ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity; promoting the economic and social rights as well as empowerment of girls and women; strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation; and bringing a shift in the institutional culture within the Commission and the EEAS

Gender equality and trade

'At a glance' note by Ionel Zamfir, March 2018

Trade liberalisation has a gender-differentiated impact. The EU, which is committed to the promotion of gender equality in all policies, has established specific mechanisms in its bilateral trade agreements to enforce women's labour rights, and monitor the gender impact of the specific agreement. Parliament discussed an own-initiative report during its March plenary session, which called for those to be reinforced.

Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

'At a glance' note by Rosamund Shreeves, February 2018

The European Union is committed to working collectively to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM) as part of broader efforts to combat all forms of violence against women and girls, and to support the efforts of its Member States in this field.

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[EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 at year one: European Implementation Assessment](#)

Study by Isabelle Ioannides, October 2017

The EU's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (referred to as GAP II) is the Union's framework for promoting gender equality, and women and girls' empowerment, in external relations in third and partner countries, as well as in international fora and initiatives. GAP II is significant, as it is the tool to put into practice the principles related to gender parity outlined in the new European Consensus on Development. Its goals are also key to the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Against this background, this European Implementation Assessment seeks to provide an initial assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of GAP II at its first milestone: the end of its first year of operation in third countries.

[Fighting conflict-related sexual violence](#)

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, December 2016

Although both genders are vulnerable when faced with armed conflict, women are exposed to many risks, with sexual violence standing out as the most prominent among them. Conflicts since the end of the Cold War have displayed multiple, horrendous forms of violence against women, whether in Africa, former Yugoslavia or in present-day Iraq, Syria and Nigeria. Given the gravity of the crimes, the EU has emphasised the importance of a zero-tolerance policy, focusing on accountability and awareness-raising. Helping victims of gender-based violence deal with its long-lasting psychological and social consequences is increasingly recognised as a crucial measure. One of the most important steps is to break the culture of shame and silence that makes the vast majority of cases go unreported, and renders judicial recourse impossible. Women who speak out about their or others' ordeals face multiple risks and threats, and their courage deserves to be honoured

Further reading

[Empowering women in the EU and beyond: Education and reproductive health](#)

Briefing by Joanna Apap, Christian Dietrich (EPRS) and Caterina Francesca Guidi (GlobalStat, EUI), March 2017

[Empowering women in the EU and beyond: Leadership and conflict resolution](#)

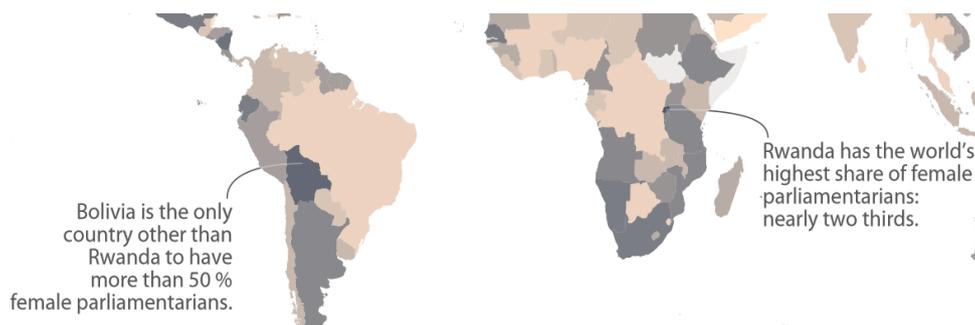
Briefing by Joanna Apap, Christian Dietrich (EPRS) and Caterina Francesca Guidi (GlobalStat, EUI), March 2017

[Arbitrary detention of women and children for immigration-related purposes](#)

Briefing by Joanna Apap, February 2016

More on the [European Parliament 'Think tank'](#) page.

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