



*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
The Chair*

5.9.2024

Mr Johan Van Overtveldt
Chair
Committee on Budgets
BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion on General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2025 – all sections (2024/0176(BUD))

Dear Mr Chair,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality has been asked to submit an opinion to your committee. At its meeting of 24 July 2024, the committee decided to send the opinion in the form of a letter.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality considered the matter at its meeting of 5 September 2024. At that meeting¹, it decided to submit the opinion set out below to the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible.

Yours sincerely,

Lina Gálvez

¹ The following were present for the final vote: Lina Gálvez (Chair), Dainius Žalimas, Irene Montero, Mireia Borrás Pabón, Irmhild Bossdorf, Mélissa Camara, Valérie Devaux, Elisabeth Dieringer, Paulo Do Nascimento Cabral, Viktória Ferenc, Gabriela Firea, Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Alexandra Geese, Chiara Gemma, Catherine Griset, Marina Kaljurand, Stefan Köhler, Arba Kokalari, Ewa Kopacz, Elena Kountoura, Judita Laššáková, Marlena Małag, Maria Noichl, Mirosława Nykiel, Giusi Princi, Emma Rafowicz, Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, Benedetta Scuderi, Cecilia Strada, Zoltán Tarr, Laurence Trochu, Dimitris Tsiodras, Henna Virkkunen, Lucia Yar, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión.

Opinion

- A. whereas gender equality is a core value of the Union enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union; whereas Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that ‘in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality’, thus establishing the principle of gender mainstreaming, which stipulates that the gender equality perspective must be integrated across all policies and programmes, including all levels of the budgetary process; whereas budgets are never gender neutral and therefore need to be established with the clear objective of anti-discrimination and the goal of reaching all individuals and their specific needs;
- B. whereas Parliament has repeatedly called for sufficient funding for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Daphne Strand, Equality and Rights Strand of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, CSOs under the NDICI programme, EU4Health programme, ESF+ Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand; whereas Parliament has repeatedly also called for applying gender mainstreaming in the main European Funds such as Horizon Europe, CAP, Cohesion Funds and NGEU;
1. Underlines that a gender perspective should be fully integrated in the budgetary process; calls for implementation of gender budgeting and the inclusion of gender related objectives in the Union programmes as well as for identification of relevant budget lines, effective monitoring of the Union budget’s contribution to gender equality and a gender-sensitive review of programmes and spending, in order to make necessary adjustments in the following MFF period; reiterates its calls for the need to accelerate progress in gender equality, including through the promotion of budgets and funds that advance gender equality, as well as for greater investment in gender statistics; underlines that this is crucial for the Union that is facing crises and conflict, and backlashes against women’s rights and gender equality; stresses that gender equality must be a priority in the budgetary procedure, ensuring fair opportunities for all;
 2. Reiterates the need to further develop the EU Commission gender tracking methodology, which should identify actions with a gender impact in some EU programmes, but also track the overall funding volume dedicated to gender equality in the EU budget; recalls that 20% of interventions are classified in the 2025 Budget as having an uncertain relevance to gender equality (score 0*) and 69% with no relevance (score 0); calls for the collection, reporting and evaluation of comparable gender-disaggregated data to facilitate gender impact assessments in Union policy areas;
 3. Highlights the worrying and increasing backlash against gender equality and women’s rights and the importance of EU instruments including the NDICI to combat this situation; calls for ambitious and specific budget allocations for preventing and combating gender-based violence within Daphne; calls on the Commission to increase budget allocation to civil society organisations that promote women’s rights in Europe and beyond, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; reminds the requirement to allocate at least 40% of the funds dedicated to the Equality, Rights and Gender Equality strand and to the Daphne strand to activities to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence at all levels, and at least 15% to activities promoting women’s full enjoyment of rights, gender equality, including work-life balance, women’s empowerment and gender

mainstreaming;

4. Calls on the Commission to increase budget allocation to civil society organisations that promote women's rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); stresses that sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental rights and highlights the continued importance to fund organisations working in the field, such as those that facilitate cross-border cooperation between organisations providing safe and legal abortions; highlights the importance of innovation in the distribution of funds and an increase in re-granting initiatives to improve access to funds for smaller grassroots organisations, especially local feminist organisations, in order to guarantee the best impact on women's rights and gender equality; highlights that it is necessary to allocate sufficient budget to measures to combat LGBTI-phobia, such as telephone lines for counselling and attention;
5. Calls on the Commission to also increase budget allocation to civil society organisations that promote social justice in Europe and beyond, including in conflict areas; highlights the importance of reinforcing civil society organisations via the NDICI programme; underlines the role of those organisations in offering expertise and support to those affected by conflict-based gender-based violence and sexual violence; acknowledges the 77% of NDICI actions that contributed to gender equality in 2022, and reiterates its expectation that the Gender Action Plan III agreed goal of 85% will be reached;¹
6. Recalls the important role played by EIGE in understanding and addressing the extent and causes of gender inequality affecting women in all their diversity in the Union, especially in the context of the backlash against women's rights and conflict-related, economic and health crises and having in mind intersectionality; recalls that EIGE has experienced persistent issues with understaffing, which were further aggravated through the sharp increase in requests for technical assistance as a result of the prioritisation of gender mainstreaming in all Union policies and initiatives in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025; stresses its calls for EIGE to be granted the budget and staff allocations, including an increase in contract agents, required to handle the significant increase in workload;
7. Recalls that one in three women in the Union has been affected by gender-based violence, at an estimated economic cost of EUR 290 billion per year; calls for additional ongoing funding of the Equality and Rights Strand of the CERV programme and the Daphne programme to combat all forms of gender-based violence in the Union, including in the framework of the effective implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence and sexual abuse against women, girls and other forms of domestic violence and the Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence; calls for special attention to women facing intersectional discrimination, such as LBTIQ women, racialized women, migrant women and women with disabilities;
8. Stresses the importance of using European Structural and Investment Funds such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to promote gender equality, women's employment

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-performance_en#contribution-to-horizontal-priorities

and access to the labour market, universal childcare and long-term care facilities, particularly in the light of the Union's 13% average hourly gender pay gap; considers that the delivery of care depends on well financed and properly functioning public services and social protection systems; highlights the fact that economic inequality and social stagnation are inextricably linked with intersectional discrimination; salutes the objective of using at least 30% of cohesion policy investments to support direct gender equality measures and gender mainstreaming; notes however that some Member States are lagging significantly behind in their use of cohesion funds for gender equality;² underlines the need for budgetary allocations to support women's entrepreneurship, women-led SMEs, encourage access to women business angels/venture capitalists and to fight women's poverty which is higher than males' and has increased following the Covid pandemic;

9. Condemns that women remain under-represented in leadership and decision-making positions, while being overrepresented in low-paid sectors such as care and service work as well as in informal economy and in sectors with higher precarious conditions; stresses the need to reinforce budgetary allocations, in order to address systemic challenges to labour market participation, including tackling the gender care gap, stereotypes, norms, roles and traditions and improving access to high quality care facilities and working conditions in the care sector;
10. Calls for budgetary allocations under the EU4Health programme for research into gender specific conditions such as menopause, infertility issues, endometriosis and fibroids and gender-affirming care, with an intersectional perspective, the provision of universal healthcare, along with the provision of cross-border services to ensure the provision of free, safe and legal abortion and other sexual and reproductive health services to women in all their diversity; stresses that women in the EU, including migrant women must enjoy equal access to goods and services, including medical, through the provision of access to mobile healthcare, where appropriate;
11. Stresses that SRHR are fundamental rights and a precondition of gender equality and must be placed at the heart of health policy, considering the backlash against women's rights and access to safe and legal abortion; stresses the need to reinforce budgetary allocations that support universal respect for and access to SRHR, including access to free, safe and legal abortion in health public service, and demands the allocation of resources for sexual and reproductive health under the EU4Health Programme in particular, to ensure universal access to SRHR, as well as free access to contraceptive methods, and ensuring essential care and medicines for voluntary family planning, specifically covering, inter alia, the issues of reproduction, preparation for childbirth, maternal and neonatal health and fertility treatments; deplores the Italian Government's use of RRF-related legislation to plant anti-choice activists in family planning centres³, and insists that no Union funds should be dispersed to any government or organisation that contravenes SRHR;
12. Recognises the vital work done by the Gender Advisors and the Gender Focal-Points within civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions; reiterates its call for dedicated funding for gender-related actions within all CSDP missions, in line with

² <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-supporting-gender-equality/gkxm-7hxd>

³ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/italys-new-law-giving-pro-lifers-access-to-abortion-clinics-stirs-debate/>

the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security;⁴

13. Calls on the Commission to examine the core mission of those to whom Union funds are granted and to withhold funding from actors who seek to use Union funds for the purposes of backsliding human rights, promoting homophobic, racist, anti-migrant and anti-trans sentiments, attacks on rainbow families, restricting access to abortion and generally contributing to the degradation of women's rights and gender equality.

⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/FEMM-AD-735527_EN.html

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPOREUR FOR THE OPINION HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The Chair in her capacity as rapporteur declares under her exclusive responsibility that she did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.