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WORKING DOCUMENT

on the proposal for a Council Regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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Context

EU must prioritise investment in equality, social development and rights for citizens in order to redress from the current crisis. Gender equality is central to economic growth, to cohesion, and to democracy.

According to Article 312 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty), the multiannual financial framework (MFF) of the European Union shall be laid down by a unanimously adopted Council Regulation. The Regulation determines the amounts of the annual ceilings on commitment appropriations by category of expenditure and of the annual ceiling on payment appropriations, and it also lays down other provisions required for the annual budgetary procedure to run smoothly.

Furthermore, Article 8 of the Treaty stipulates that the European Union shall promote equality between men and women as a fundamental principle in all its activities.

General remarks

The Commission's approach regarding gender aspects of the next MFF shows on one side greater flexibility in answering the upcoming challenges facing women, on the other side the lack of earmarking of concrete funds could also result in decreased funding compared to the current MFF.

It is essential to keep in mind that gender mainstreaming and specific resource allocation go hand in hand. One cannot be effective without the other. Specific resource allocation cannot be replaced by horizontal objectives, but has to be introduced as a complement to specific resource allocation. A double approach ensures efficiency and predictability, and should be the rule in all key financing instruments.

The horizontal approach to gender in more financial instruments could only be welcomed if there are certain guarantees provided by the provisions of the MFF, which are maintained for the decisions on the annual budgets. However the decreasing number of targeted instruments, such as the Daphne programme and the gender equality line of the PROGRESS, without proposing concrete measures replacing these in the next MFF, are discouraging signals as regards EU as a central actor for gender equality.

In conclusion, the current proposal for MFF 2014-2020 does not reflect the importance of investing in gender equality and women's rights. In order to respond to the current challenges, the EU needs to ensure a significant increase in resources for gender equality. This can only be achieved through:

- A decision to apply gender responsive budgeting processes being introduced in MFF 2014-2020;
- Establishing a specific funding programme for gender equality and women's rights in EU internal policy;
- Stating gender equality as a specific objective within several of the different regulations of funds and programmes;
Specific earmarked funding within several of the funding programmes and also for the European Institute for Gender Equality.

Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting

It is simply irresponsible to introduce sweeping horizontal mainstreaming clauses - if these are not accompanied by more precise definitions and targets of what should be accomplished in terms of gender equality in the context of a particular financing mechanism.

The main implementing tool for gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process is to apply gender responsive budgeting. The preparation of an MFF provides an excellent opportunity to also lay down the necessary provisions of gender budgeting in the European budgetary process. The application of gender mainstreaming in laying down the MFF is especially important, due to the nature of the annual budgetary procedures vis-à-vis the multiannual framework. The budget lines are primarily set by the MFF, therefore the instruments and the annual budget lines are relatively fixed, leaving little room for adding the gender perspective during the annual budgetary procedures.

*The Council decision on the MFF must include instructions to the Commission to apply gender-budgeting in the EU budgetary process and in use of the different financing instruments.*

The MFF shall ensure that the during the next financial years, in accordance with such a decision by the Council, the horizontal approach of gender mainstreaming will be translated into concrete resource allocation in all policy areas of the European Union. The Commission's current Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 and the strategy for the successive 5 years after 2015, as well as the annual reports on gender equality shall serve as a fundamental indication of the areas where and how the spending shall be targeted.

Creating a specific funding programme for gender equality and women's rights

Increased funding for gender equality actions is needed if the EU is to meet its targets, both in terms of employment and growth, but also in terms of rights and democracy. It would therefore be important to consider the possibility of introducing a finance instrument dedicated to gender equality and women's rights. This would give visibility and signal the importance that the EU lends to gender equality in all its work. It will also be a guarantee that gender equality concerns are addressed in a systematic and coherent manner across EU internal policy.

Such a programme would be the budgetary counterpart to the policy commitments and institutional instruments already in place, including the EIGE, the Gender equality strategy, and the implementation of the Women's charter. It would not replace gender mainstreaming efforts in the other funding mechanisms, but it would give direction and force to the gender mainstreaming efforts in other areas as well.

Funding programmes for NGOs and projects

We know from experience that in the area of gender equality, some of the most driving forces - both in terms of policy and in terms of delivering real change on the ground for women - are
women's organisations and some trade unions. The creation of large scale funding programmes will decrease their possibility to benefit from the EU project funding. To ensure that smaller NGOs will have access to EU funding also in the future, smaller grants must continue to exist alongside the bigger grants. Moreover, funding for NGOs and civil society must not only be available for projects, but must also support Need for operational funding, not only project funding.

**Gender equality as clear objective and earmarking of financial support for women's rights and gender equality within key programmes and funds**

Although many of the specific funds- and programme- regulations still need to be presented, the lead words seems to be "streamlining" and "flexibility". Smaller programmes are being merged into larger ones, and there are less earmarked funds. Concretely this means that the funds' management teams will have more power over the use of the resources. In the absence of guarantees, this approach is not acceptable.

Concretely, gender equality must be introduced as a specific objective in the Proposal for the Rights and Citizenship Programme, and a minimum amount of earmarked funding for gender equality must be defined. Specific funding to continue and step up EU actions (Daphne) to end violence against women must also be re-introduced.

The drafting of the regulations for the different instruments is an opportunity to define gender equality objectives and targets, along with technical requirements for gender mainstreaming. It is particularly important that the regulations for the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund contain clear gender equality targets as well as earmarked funding in addition to mainstreaming actions. Other EU programmes, such as LIFE, Horizon 2020, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Health for Growth programme, the Consumer programme, and the Programme for social change and innovation, must also include gender equality objectives and mainstreaming targets.

**External relations**

In the current financing period there is only one funding programme that earmarks resources for gender equality (Investing in People programme). This is far from sufficient given the importance of gender equality in reaching the MDGs, but also in building democratically, economically, and sustainable societies.

A significant increase of earmarked funding for gender equality is needed in the EU Development Cooperation Instrument, in the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, and in the future EU Stability instrument.

Gender equality should also must be much more clearly stated as a core objective, and coupled with earmarked funding, also in other EU programmes for external action.