

EU should make sexual and reproductive health and rights a priority in external action

- 85% of EU development spending should be dedicated to gender equality as a principal or significant objective
- EU should be a leading advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) abroad, member states should ensure universal access at home
- A new Council configuration needed for member state ministers responsible for gender equality

Amidst a worrying global backlash against the rights of women and girls, MEPs demand more ambition from the EU in the global fight for gender equality.

In a joint vote by MEPs on the Development Committee and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, MEPs adopted a report on the EU's Gender Action Plan III by 48 votes in favour, 5 against, and 7 abstentions.

In the text agreed at committee level, MEPs demanded greater ambition, increased support, and concrete earmarked funding for gender-targeted initiatives in the EU's external action budgets. MEPs want 20% of official development aid (ODA) spent by EU member states to go on projects with gender equality as a principal objective, and for 85% of overall EU ODA to be dedicated to programmes with gender equality as a major objective.

Access to SRHR at risk

MEPs express concern that a backlash against women's rights and gender equality is undermining access to SRHR inside and outside the European Union. In particular, the report says legislative rollbacks on abortion undermine the protection of women's health, rights and dignity. The EU should be a leading example worldwide in terms of promoting SRHR, MEPs add, and call on member states to ensure universal access to SRHR in their territories.

The EU should focus on providing relevant information, education and access to SRHR, MEPs say, including pre-natal care, safe and legal abortion and contraception. To support this effort, MEPs want the EU to consider SRHR a priority in the EU's external action funding programming.

With the report highlighting the disproportionate impact – economically and socially – the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women and girls, EU member states should convene a new Council configuration that brings together member state ministers responsible for gender equality.

Rapporteur [Chrysoula Zacharopoulou](#) (Renew, FR) said: “The European Union must support women and girls around the world who seek to control their own fate. Structural adjustments are necessary to foster changes - on sexual and reproductive health and rights, on a life free from violence, on economic empowerment, and on the green and digital transformations. The EU has a duty to pursue this feminist diplomacy. But if it is to enjoy any credibility, it must also uphold the rights and dignity of women within its own borders.”

Next Steps

The report will now be submitted to a vote in the European Parliament as a whole in plenary, currently planned for the 7-10 March 2022 plenary session.

Further information

[Committee on Development](#)

[Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)

[Rapporteur: Chrysoula ZACHAROPOULOU](#)

[Gender Action Plan III](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2020 on Gender Equality in EU's foreign and security policy](#)

[Procedural File](#)

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