



## **Evaluation**

# **of the EU's external action support to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment (2010-2018)**

**Final Report**

**Volume I – Main Report**

November 2020

*Evaluation carried out on behalf of the European Commission*



© Pictures on the section pages

- *Children with the teacher in Nepal. EU DIVA - Development Communication Network Platform (Section 2)*
- *Women working in renewable energy for agro-processing in Gambia. EU DIVA - Development Communication Network Platform (Section 3)*
- *Handicraft worker in Myanmar. EU DIVA - Development Communication Network Platform (Section 4)*
- *Speech about women's rights in Kambata. EU DIVA - Development Communication Network Platform (Section 5)*
- *Doctor and nurses in Pakistan. UNHCR/ Roger Arnold (Section 6)*
- *Myanmar girl with tablet computer. Shutterstock/Wong Szefei (Section 7)*



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# **Evaluation of the EU's external action support to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment (2010-2018)**

*This evaluation was commissioned by the  
A4 MFF, Programming and Evaluation Unit of  
the DG NEAR, in association with  
DG DEVCO Results and Evaluation Unit  
(European Commission)*

**Implemented by Particip GmbH**



*The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' points of view which are not necessarily shared by the European Commission or by the authorities of the countries involved.*

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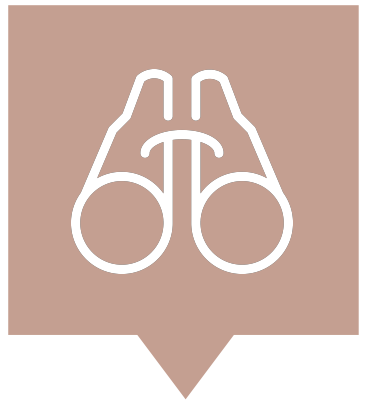
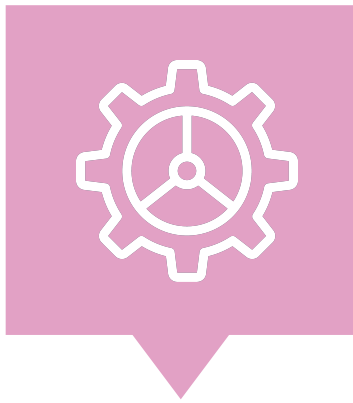
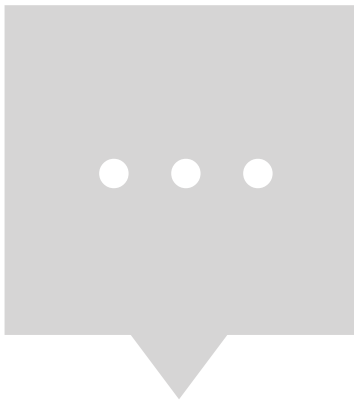
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The evaluation was implemented by Particip GmbH and managed by the DG NEAR's A4 MFF, Programming and Evaluation Unit, in collaboration with DG DEVCO Results and Evaluation Unit.

The authors accept sole responsibility for this report, drawn up on behalf of the Commission of the European Union. The report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission.



1

2

3

Executive summary

Introduction

Key methodological elements

Overview of the EU external action in the area of GEWE

P3

P7

P9

P15

Objectives of the evaluation  
Use of the evaluation's results  
Evaluation scope

Overall methodological approach  
Data collection and analysis and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis  
Challenges and limitations

The global framework  
The EU internal policy framework  
The EU external action policy framework  
Implementing the EU external action policy framework  
The intervention logic  
Mapping of EU support to GEWE



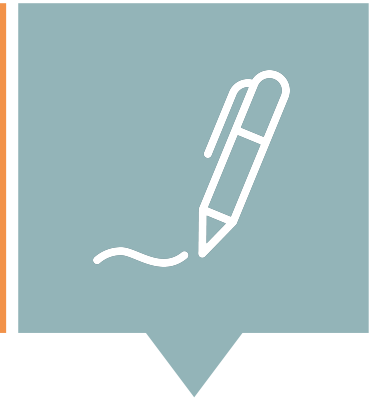
4



5



6



7

Main findings

Overall assessment

Conclusions

Recommendations

P25

P72

P76

P85

- EQ1 - Policy and strategic framework
- EQ2 - Leadership and accountability
- EQ3 - Gender mainstreaming
- EQ4 - Coordination and EU added value
- EQ5 - Partnerships
- EQ6 - Instruments and modalities
- EQ7 - Effects on physical and psychological integrity
- EQ8 - Effects on economic and social women's empowerment
- EQ9 - Effects on women's voice and participation
- EQ7-9 - Sustainability

- C1 - Policy ambition
- C2 - Overarching strategic framework
- C3 - Leadership and accountability
- C4 - Expertise
- C5 - Intra-EU coordination
- C6 - Strategic vision at country level
- C7 - Gender mainstreaming
- C8 - Partnerships with national government and international organisations
- C9 - Partnerships with CSOs
- C10 - Monitoring & Evaluation
- C11 - Results

- R1 - Continue with the Gender Action Plan, while improving it
- R2 - Ensure stronger leadership on GEWE
- R3 - Place gender nearer to the top within the EU institutional environment
- R4 - Improve EU gender expertise, especially at the country level
- R5 - Develop a shared strategic vision at country level
- R6 - Step up efforts for continuous gender analysis and application
- R7 - Introduce stringent rules for the application and monitoring of gender mainstreaming
- R8 - Consolidate partnerships with international organisations
- R9 - Enhance the involvement of CSOs in EU support to GEWE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

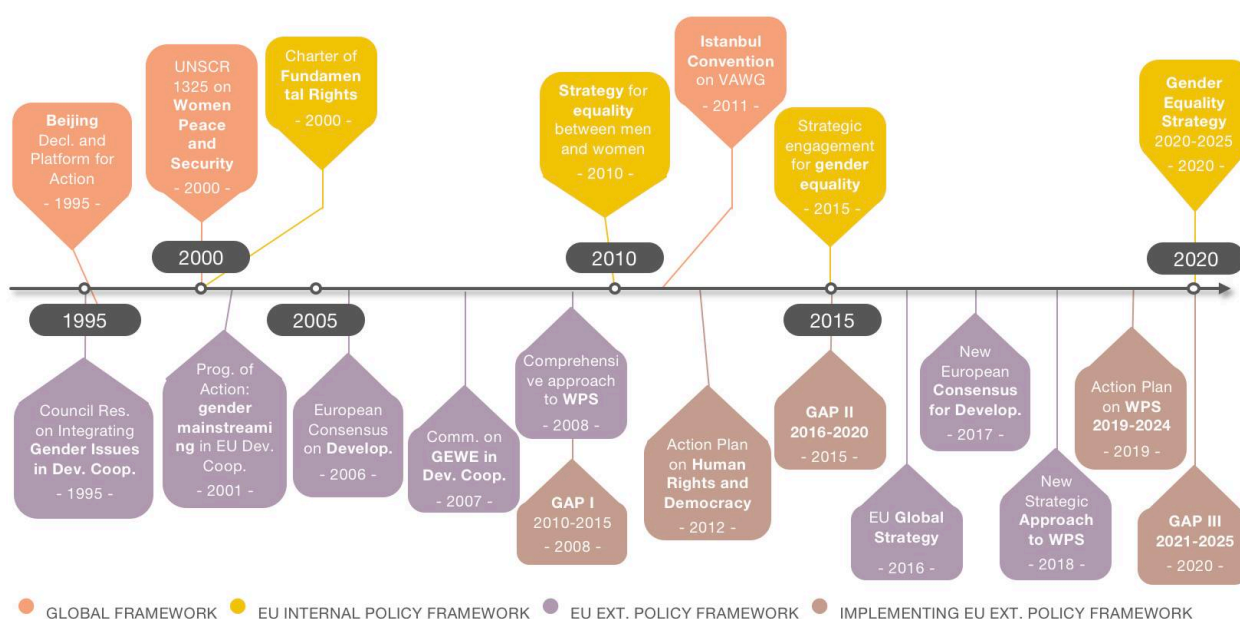
# EVALUATION OF THE EU'S EXTERNAL ACTION SUPPORT IN THE AREA OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

### PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Provide an independent, evidence-based assessment of the contribution of European Union (EU) external action support in the area of Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment (GEWE).

**GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE:** All third countries.

**TEMPORAL SCOPE:** This study covers the period **2010-2018** for the Enlargement region and **2014-2018** for the other regions.



### CONTEXT

As a **core value** enshrined in the EU's treaties and legislation, including those of EU Member States (MS), GEWE is central to EU relations with third countries.

The EU's reference framework for external action in the area of GEWE has also built on **global frameworks** such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

In 2008, the EU launched the first EU Gender Action Plan (GAP I). GAP I was adopted with a view to support gender equality both outside the EU and

inside the Commission services involved in development cooperation. In 2015, the EU adopted a successor action plan, GAP II. GAP II strengthened the emphasis on an EU institutional culture shift related to GEWE, embraced more explicitly all areas of EU external action and outlined the EU's strategic objectives around three thematic pillars: i) women's and girls' physical and psychological integrity; ii) empowerment of women and girls and promoting their socio-economic rights; and iii) strengthening voice and participation of women and girls.

# Key findings

- ▶ The overall policy framework for EU external action in the area of GEWE significantly improved during the period under review. However, at the country level, a clear strategic vision on GEWE was often lacking among European actors (EU and EU Member States – EU MS).
- ▶ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have often been a cornerstone for implementation of EU support; but, the quality of partnerships has been uneven, and the challenge of adequately responding to needs of grass-roots organisations remains unresolved.
- ▶ Previous evaluations of EU external action on gender (2003, 2015) called for fundamental changes in EU institutional culture. This has not yet occurred. Important capacity building needs persist and improvements in leadership and internal accountability have been slow and uneven across European actors.
- ▶ There have been advantages in the various financing instruments and modalities available to the EU to support GEWE. However, weaknesses in gender mainstreaming have led to an inadequate use of the mix of modalities and instruments available to support GEWE in an integrated and strategic way.
- ▶ Even after several decades of efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming in EU external action, successes remained limited during the period under review. This reflects the slow changes in institutional culture highlighted above.
- ▶ There were positive achievements in all thematic areas where the EU has provided substantial support. In particular, EU made notable contributions to the strengthening of normative frameworks, including through actions promoting the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the specific interventions focussing on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The EU has also enhanced CSO actions in the area of VAWG in many countries.
- ▶ Although the full potential of joint EU programming and implementation is still to be harnessed, EU external action has added value to what EU MS could have achieved on their own related to GEWE. This applies especially to joint work in international fora; less so, and with high variability, to cooperation at the country level.
- ▶ A lack of strategic and integrated approach as well as difficulties in scaling up efforts based on successful experiences hampered the effectiveness of EU support to GEWE, particularly in the work done with CSOs.
- ▶ While European actors have forged partnerships and joint initiatives with relevant international organisations such as UN agencies, coordination with these organisations at country level, especially to strengthen policy dialogue and the role played by national women’s machineries in national policy processes, has remained insufficient.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation followed a **theory-based** approach that relied on **mixed methods** to assess EU support in the area of GEWE. The design chosen revolved around multiple case studies, with data collection activities being carried out during an extensive desk phase and a (partially remote due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic) field phase. To guide data collection and analysis, the team prepared a detailed evaluation matrix, structured around **nine evaluation questions (EQs)**:

- Six EQs focused on the EU strategic framework, EU approaches to implementation and the EU’s institutional culture shift on GEWE.
- Three EQs focused on the GAP II key thematic areas:
  - physical and psychological integrity of women,
  - economic and social women’s empowerment and
  - women’s voice and participation.

The combination of tools and methods used for data collection and analysis varied according to the different EQs, but multiple sources were systematically used to triangulate the information collected. These activities included an extensive documentary review, a financial analysis on EU external action, phone and face-to-face interviews and three online surveys.

The main challenges encountered were coping with gathering data on outcomes and impacts, the inconsistency of some datasets at EU level, obtaining documentation on non-spending activities (e.g., policy dialogue), and coping with the field phase in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**18 CASE STUDIES**  
 Comprising twelve country case studies, two regional case studies, one thematic case study on gender mainstreaming in budget support, and three EU MS action case studies.

**9 FIELD VISITS**  
 A total of nine extensive missions were held (four took place in-country and the rest were done remotely with, in several cases, support from experts based in the partner country). The team also carried out seven “lighter” remote missions (with a more limited number of interviews).

**2.000 DOCUMENTS**  
 Over 2.000 documents consulted on a range of GEWE-related issues (including an average of roughly 80 documents per case study).

**290 INTERLOCUTORS**  
 More than 290 interlocutors were interviewed (both remotely and face-to-face in Brussels or during the field and remote missions).

**3 E-SURVEYS**  
 Implemented, at both the global and country level, which provided responses from over 600 respondents (officials from EU Delegations, governments, EU MS Embassies, donors and international partners, CSOs)





# Conclusions

Based on the findings presented in the answers to the evaluation questions, the team identified 11 conclusions grouped in three clusters.

## POLICY LEVEL

### 1 Policy ambition

The high policy ambition of the EU in the area of GEWE has translated into increased attention to GEWE in most dimensions of EU external action, but no quantum leap has been observed during the period under review.

### 2 Overarching strategic framework

From 2015 on, GAP II has served as a useful tool for providing overarching strategic directions and for demonstrating the EU's commitment to GEWE; however, tailoring this 'open architecture' to specific contexts and translating it into a coherent strategic framework at country level have turned out to be challenging.

## INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

### 3 Leadership and accountability

Despite unambiguous political messages at the highest level of the EU, the EU GEWE agenda has been pushed more by a few highly committed staff than by strong senior management engagement.

### 4 Expertise

While genuine efforts have been made to strengthen gender expertise within the EU, overall gender capacity has remained too weak to ensure an effective implementation of the EU's policy commitments in the area of GEWE.

### 5 Intra-EU coordination

Despite some challenges, there has been good communication within EU services and among European actors; overall, there has been strong EU added value in EU external action in the area of GEWE.

## PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### 6 Strategic vision at country level

At the country level, EU external action in the area of GEWE often did not reflect a strong strategic vision based on clear priorities and a sound analysis of, e.g., the most pressing needs, the most effective entry points, and the most appropriate sequencing.

### 7 Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has remained weak with three general aspects largely explaining the limited improvement in this area: i) the lack of EU strategic vision on GEWE at country level; ii) the lack of understanding of the concept of 'gender mainstreaming', in particular its strategic nature; and iii) the mismatch between the EU policy ambitions in GEWE and the resources mobilised to achieve them. However, significant gender-targeted funding in bilateral cooperation has had strong positive effects on gender mainstreaming.

### 8 Partnerships: national government & international organisations

The EU has substantially strengthened its partnerships with international organisations (esp. UN agencies and the Council of Europe).

and this has enhanced EU external action in the area of GEWE at various levels; however, coordination with these organisations at country level, especially to strengthen the role played by national women machineries in national policy processes, has remained insufficient

### 9 Partnerships with CSOs

While the EU's substantial support to CSOs active in GEWE has led to many positive experiences, the EU has yet to find an approach to ensure a more strategic and more comprehensive partnership on GEWE with these actors at country level, including a stronger involvement of grass-root organisations in EU external action.

### 10 Monitoring & Evaluation

There has been a lack of monitoring and evaluation at both local and national levels, which has significantly hampered accountability and learning.

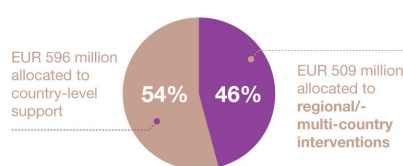
### 11 Results

Despite the broad relevance of EU external action in the area of GEWE, visible results at the macro-level have been limited; achieving them has been hampered by weaknesses in the design of EU support to GEWE, but also by adverse contextual factors as well as challenges that are beyond the capacity of one single actor like the EU to address.



**EUR 1.106 billion**

were contracted for gender-targeted interventions, during the period 2014-2018



**Targeted GEWE support reached a peak in 2018**  
with EUR 424 million of contracted amount in this area that year

### Most of the committed amounts went to Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa received 52% of the total gender targeted support, and the Enlargement region 3% of the total



**66%**

of the targeted interventions treated Physical and Psychological Integrity (including VAWG)



**EUR 507 million**

Support channeled via UN agencies, mainly UN Women, UNDP and UNICEF



**EUR 432 million**

Support channeled via CSOs, represented by 15% Women's organisations

# Recommendations

*Based on the conclusions, the team developed nine recommendations, each underpinned by a limited set of concrete actions to be taken to enhance EU external action in the area of GEWE.*

POLICY LEVEL	<b>R1</b>	<b>Continue with the Gender Action Plan, while improving it</b>	The EU and EU MS should develop a successor strategy to GAP II capitalising on the experience gained under GAP II (and before), while clarifying some concepts and better presenting the interlinkages between the dimensions underpinning the framework.
	<b>R2</b>	<b>Ensure stronger leadership on GEWE</b>	The EU should step up efforts to ensure strong leadership on GEWE of EU's top management at Headquarters (HQ) and country level.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	<b>R3</b>	<b>Place gender nearer to the top within the EU institutional environment</b>	The EU should ensure that, at HQ and country level, decision-making processes (incl. on programming) systematically involve staff or structures with a clear mandate related to GEWE.
	<b>R4</b>	<b>Improve EU gender expertise, especially at the country level</b>	The EU should improve gender expertise at all levels, but special efforts should be made at the country level, including allocation of resources for systematic mobilisation of project-based gender experts.

PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL	<b>R5</b>	<b>Develop a shared strategic vision at country level</b>	The EU should develop a strategic vision of what to do, and how, with regard to GEWE at country level which supports policy dialogue and is shared by all main European actors.
	<b>R6</b>	<b>Step up efforts for continuous gender analysis and application</b>	The EU should sustain recent efforts made in developing gender analysis, while stepping up efforts to ensure their ownership by EU staff and national stakeholders and strengthen national statistical capacity in partner countries.
	<b>R7</b>	<b>Introduce stringent rules for gender mainstreaming</b>	The EU should implement more stringent measures to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in new interventions and monitor gender mainstreaming in implementation.
	<b>R8</b>	<b>Consolidate partnerships with international organisations, specially at country level</b>	The EU should consolidate partnerships with international organisations at country level, including through increased staff awareness of existing joint initiatives and better linkages of EU support with international processes led by UN agencies.
	<b>R9</b>	<b>Enhance the involvement of CSOs in EU support to GEWE</b>	The EU should enhance the involvement of CSOs, including women's organisations, in EU support to GEWE, including through better integrating them in initiatives on GEWE at country level and more adapted support to grass-root organisations.



# 1.

# INTRODUCTION



## Objectives of the evaluation

The **purpose** of this evaluation is to provide an independent assessment and evidence on the contribution of EU external action support in the area of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). Its **specific objectives** are the following:

- to assess in both qualitative and quantitative terms the relevance, conditions of implementation and performance of EU external action to promote GEWE and its mainstreaming, particularly its efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and the EU added value;
- to assess whether the EU's policy and operational response on GEWE in partner regions (EU Plans of Action on GEWE covering the periods 2010-2015 and 2016-2020) have triggered new approaches and rendered EU external action support more effective, targeted, gender-responsive and efficient;
- to assess: i) the coordination and complementarity of the European Commission (EC) services, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and EU Members States' external action; ii) the coordination and complementarity between EU external action support and other non-EU donors' and actors of development policy; iii) the coherence of EU GEWE policy in external action with other relevant EU external policies; and iv) the coherence of EU external action support with international legal commitments to GEWE.

### Gender mainstreaming – a definition

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 established gender mainstreaming as the global strategy for promoting gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action called on governments and other actors to “*promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.*”

In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), defined gender mainstreaming as: “*...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*”

# Use of the evaluation's results

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the evaluation's results will be **used** to:

- inform the future development of the policy framework on: i) GEWE practices in the external action context (i.e. a potential successor of the Gender Action Plan (GAP)), including in relation to changes in the EU's institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments; and ii) broader global and/or regional external relations' frameworks, indicating, among others, the challenges to be addressed;
- advise on improving strategies and tools (planning and design of interventions) of the EU external action actors;
- to the extent possible, contribute to improving the programming, monitoring, reporting and implementation of current action programmes

in the concerned regions based on lessons learned from the evaluation on GEWE practices that have supported transformative change and from an analysis of the condition under which GEWE interventions have provided results; and

- suggest priority areas to be tackled by the EU external gender policy and strategy within the next programming period 2021-2027 for external financing instruments.

It also assesses the opportunities and challenges of financing for gender equality under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and the prospective Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) III.

## EVALUATION SCOPE

### Geographic scope



Enlargement and Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and South-East Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean regions



EU external action financed under relevant thematic and geographic instruments or programmes



The analysis covers spending and non-spending actions, and all EU aid delivery methods and channels

### Thematic scope



Physical and Psychological Integrity



Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Economic and Social Empowerment



Political and civil rights – Voice and Participation, of girls and women

#### Thematic focal areas

#### Horizontal focal area



Institutional culture shift

### Temporal scope



The temporal scope of this evaluation is 2010-2018

# 2. KEY METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS



# Overall methodological approach

The evaluation's **methodological framework** was designed to develop an understanding of what works and what does not and under which conditions, so that lessons can be drawn and applied to future support efforts. It follows DG DEVCO's evaluation approach and methodology<sup>1</sup>, DG NEAR's methodological guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation<sup>2</sup>, as well as other international best practice and guidance in evaluations. The

evaluation follows a theory-based approach that relies on mixed methods. In line with the ToR, its approach was finalised by the evaluation team during the inception phase and discussed and agreed upon with the Inter-service Steering Group (ISG).

The evaluation was conducted in **four main phases** between June 2019 and September 2020, as summarised below.



ISG – Inter-Service Steering Group (ensures quality control by the Commission); SEM – Seminar to discuss the final report with a broader audience

## EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

Managed and supervised by the **DG NEAR Unit A4 MFF, Programming and Evaluation, and DG DEVCO Unit DGA2.04 Evaluation and Results**, the evaluation progress was also closely followed by the ISG, chaired by DG NEAR A4 and DG DEVCO DGA2.04, and consisting of representatives of DG NEAR, DG DEVCO, the European Commission's Secretariat General, DG MOVE, DG RTD, DG ECHO, DG JUST, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), the Foreign Policy Instruments' (FPI) European Commission directorate, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and EU Member States (Sweden, Germany and Spain).

## INTERVENTION LOGIC, EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION PROCESS

The overall Intervention Logic (IL) (as presented in

section III) visualises the reconstructed theory of change; it constitutes the backbone of the evaluation. Based on this IL, draft Evaluation Questions (EQs) presented in the ToR and the preliminary work carried out in the inception phase, nine EQs have been formulated to capture the complexity of the EU support to GEWE and examine its effects. These EQs have been clustered into two broad categories: i) Transversal EQs; and ii) Sectorial EQs (see Table in the next page). Each EQ is structured around a limited number of Judgement Criteria (JC) which are assessed through the analysis of specific indicators – see Volume II.

The evaluation process adopted a **systematic approach that used various building blocks to gradually construct an answer to the EQs**. The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation have been formulated on the basis of the answers provided to the EQs.

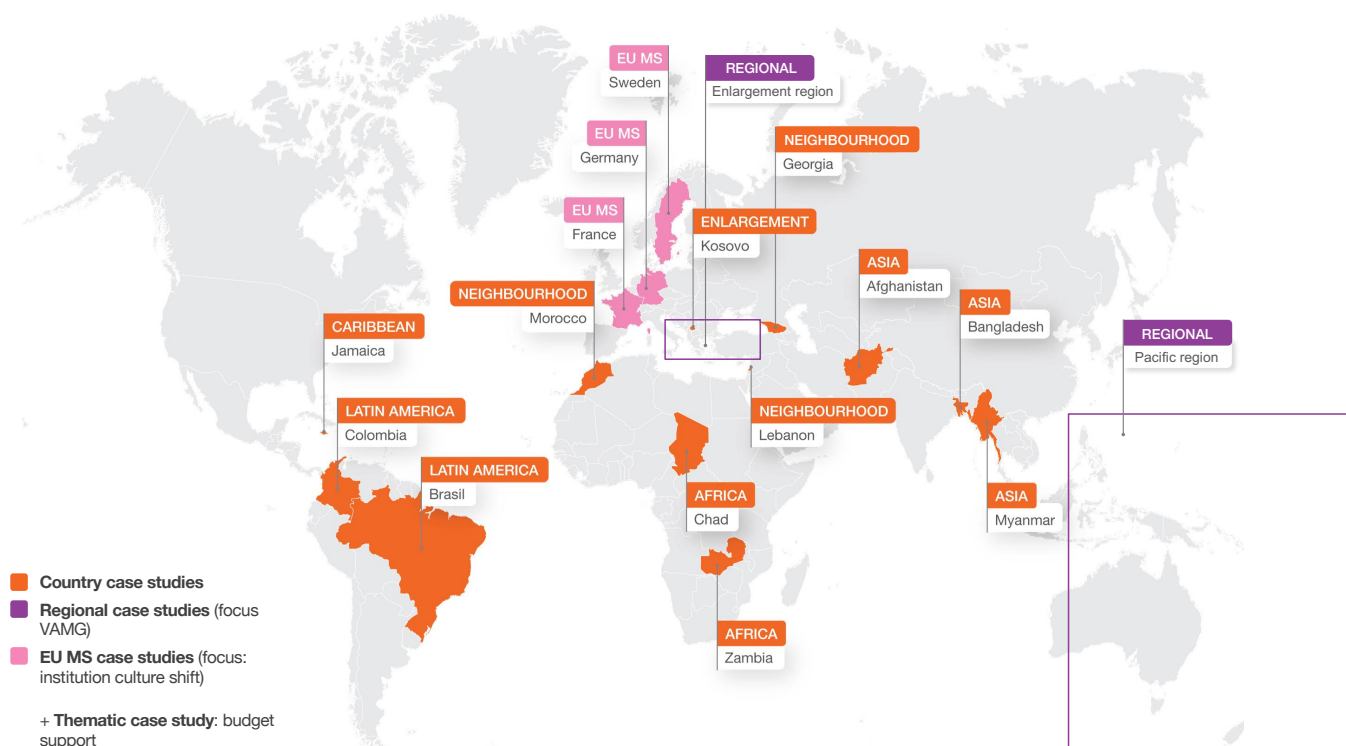
<sup>1</sup> [https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation\\_guidelines/wiki/en-methodological-bases-and-approach-0](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/en-methodological-bases-and-approach-0)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/near\\_guidelines.zip](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/near_guidelines.zip)

## EQs' COVERAGE OF THE DAC AND EC-SPECIFIC EVALUATION CRITERIA

EQ \ Evaluation criteria	Relevance	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Impact	Sustainability	EU value added	Coherence	Coordination & complementarity
<b>Transversal EQs: Strategic framework, design and implementation</b>								
EQ1. Policy and strategic framework	•••		•				•••	
EQ2. Leadership and accountability	•	••	•••		••		••	
EQ3. Gender mainstreaming in EU external action	•••		•••		••		••	•
EQ4. Coordination and EU added value	•	••	••		•	•••	•••	•••
EQ5. Partnerships	•		•••		•	•	•••	•••
EQ6. Instruments and modalities	•••	•••	••		•			•
<b>Thematic EQs: Effects of EU Support</b>								
EQ7. Effects on physical and psychological integrity	•		•••	••	•••			
EQ8. Effects on economic and social women's empowerment	•		•••	••	•••			
EQ9. Effects on women's voice and participation	•		•••	••	•••			

## SELECTED CASE STUDIES



## SELECTED CASE STUDIES

In close consultation with the ISG, the team selected 18 case studies (12 country case studies, two regional case studies, one global thematic case study on gender mainstreaming in budget support, and three “lighter” EU MS case studies) – see Figure in the previous page.

The selection process was intended to ensure a sample that reflects inter alia geographic diversity (at both the regional and the country level), the relative size of EU financial allocations, and the three focal areas that correspond to the thematic scope outlined in the ToR. These case studies are presented in Volume IV of this report.

# Data collection and analysis and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has compelled the evaluation team to remain flexible and innovative in the face of unprecedented ethical, methodological and operational challenges. From the onset of this global health crisis, the priority of the evaluation team has been to adhere to the **principle of ‘do no harm’** by ensuring the well-being and safety of all the partners and interlocutors involved in the evaluation process. In that regard, sensitive data collection and communication with the stakeholders have remained fundamental objectives throughout the process.

Out of the ten field missions planned during the desk phase and aiming at testing hypotheses developed during that phase, four took place in-country (*Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia and Kosovo*), while the others were carefully re-planned by the team to take place remotely. Practically, this meant the introduction of so-called **remote field missions**, whereby the evaluation team met with relevant in-country stakeholders via phone or internet platforms.

Against such backdrop, effective and efficient backstopping capacity to support the evaluation team in planning and coordinating the remote data collection process has proven to be crucial. Overall, this challenging period has been well handled by the team who has managed to be in touch with a large variety of stakeholders. Supported by national experts, the evaluation team has been able to meet with all local respondents that had been identified during the

desk phase and could therefore capitalize on a rich source of data and insights. The team is confident that the quality of the data and information collected was not impaired by the situation, albeit some relevant informal information that can usually be collected during or implied from on-site face-to-face meetings might have been missed.

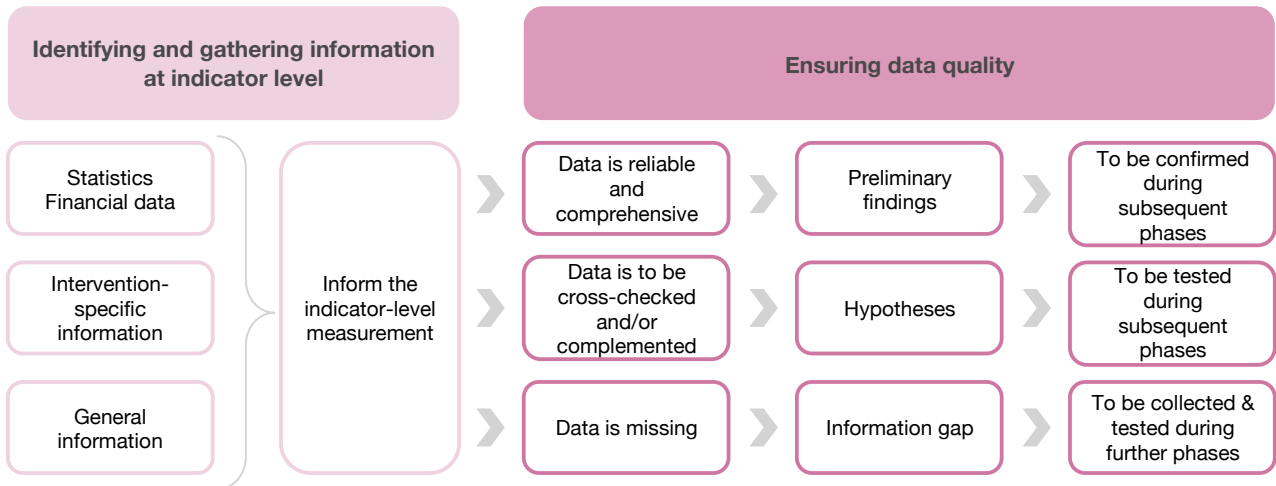
## DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Overall, the evaluation matrix, including the Judgement Criteria (JC) and indicators which structured each EQ, provided the overall framework for **data collection** and analysis. Data collection activities were carried out mainly during the desk phase and the (remote) field phase. The combination of data collection methods and techniques varied according to the different JCs, but, multiple sources were systematically used to triangulate the information collected. These activities included extractions and analysis of information available in the Commission’s external relations database ‘CRIS’, document collection from EU’s national and international partners, phone and face-to-face interviews, email queries as well as two online surveys at both the global and country level which provided responses from over 600 respondents.

During all phases, the evaluation team verified that the set of methods and techniques was sufficiently broad to ensure a high level of data reliability and validity of conclusions, and identified gaps to be filled and hypothesis to be tested in the following phase.



## DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

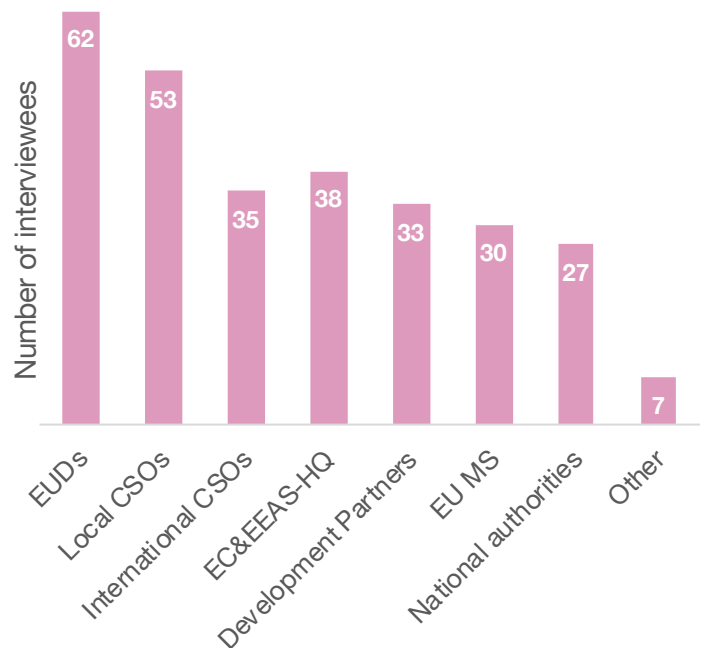


Where possible, the evaluation team has combined the use of qualitative and quantitative data and relied on both primary and secondary data sources, within the given resource and time constraints.

During all phases, the evaluation team verified that the set of methods and techniques was sufficiently broad to ensure a high level of data reliability and validity of findings and identified gaps to be filled and hypothesis to be tested in the following phase. In total, over 2.000 documents were consulted on a range of GEWE-related issues (including an average of roughly 80 extra documents per case study). More than 285 interlocutors were interviewed (both remotely and face-to-face in Brussels or during the in-country visits). The Figure in the right provides an overview of the persons that were interviewed. As mentioned above, as part of the data collection process, **three E-surveys have been implemented**: i) one focussing on respondents based in partner countries in the Enlargement region; ii) one focussing on respondents based in partner countries in other regions; iii) one focussing on global level stakeholders.

The E-surveys allowed for the documentation of stakeholders' (EU Delegations' officials, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, respective EU MS Embassies, other donors and international partners, civil society organisations) perceptions on a number of topics

## STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED



such as co-ordination, EU policy and institutional environment and the usefulness of various aid delivery methods. The surveys were based on short questionnaires structured around the main JCs and indicators which needed to be informed by this data collection tool. More detailed information can be found in the E-Survey reports, in Volume III.

# Challenges and limitations

This evaluation did not face major or unusual challenges that would not have been encountered in any EU global thematic evaluation, at least until the COVID-19 outbreak. Like other evaluations, it faced a few external challenges over which the evaluation team had

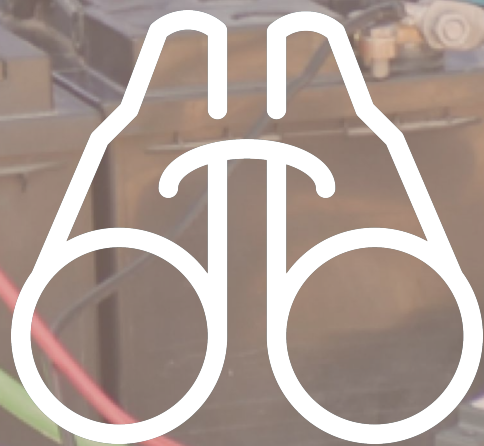
limited control (e.g., large scope of the evaluation, limited time available for implementation, etc.). The most important challenges and limitations, together with steps taken in mitigation, are presented below.

Challenges	Situation encountered and mitigation response
<p><b>Coping with the non-consistency of data sets at EU level</b></p>	<p>The team faced some difficulties in extracting consistent datasets from internal EU information system for all years, regions, EU institutions covered by the evaluation (e.g., a consistent dataset on training could only be produced for the period 2016-2019, and, even for this period, the data may not have covered all training carried out in all EU institutions). However, these difficulties did not constitute an obstacle to the identification of the overall findings of this evaluation.</p>
<p><b>Obtaining data on non-spending activities</b></p>	<p>Political and policy dialogues are complex with a multitude of cause and effect linkages to be tested. The documented effects of these dialogues are often not available or tracked in documents. The evaluation team has carefully analysed the data available on this topic in the External Assistance Management Report (EAMRs) and other sources (e.g., GAP II reporting) and has integrated these issues in the E-Surveys for corroboration. In addition, the team conducted in-depth interviews with high-level EU staff at EC/EEAS Headquarters (HQ level) and in partner countries (EUD level) with a particular focus on questions related to policy dialogue.</p>
<p><b>Gathering data on outcomes and impacts</b></p>	<p>The team faced some difficulties in measuring outcomes and intermediate impacts of GEWE-related interventions, especially given the lack of sex-disaggregated data in this field and the considerable volume of EU support which is relevant in this area. Much of the reporting done by EU staff focusses on processes, activities and inputs rather than high level results (outcomes and impact), thereby leading to a lack of knowledge on the longer-term assessment of impact and sustainability. The team has overcome this challenge by: i) combining a macro-level analysis on trends at partner country level with a more detailed assessment of the effects – or likely effects – of selected EU-funded interventions which were illustrative of the EU portfolio in the areas under review; and ii) focussing the assessment on the identification of main barriers and factors of success.</p>
<p><b>Coping with the field phase due to the COVID-19 pandemic</b></p>	<p>As mentioned above, the challenge was to deploy flexible tools, methods and approaches to foster exchanges with key stakeholders, even if done remotely. The objective was to avoid putting unnecessary pressure on public institutions and local interlocutors in the data collection process. The online surveys helped complement remote interviews by providing additional views on key elements and allowing for a quantitative analysis for each respondent groups and at aggregated level. Finally, the national experts (working in tandem with the international for each country) were particularly helpful during the remote field phase to contact stakeholders based in the country and facilitate remote interviews.</p>

The image shows three women in a workshop or field setting. They are wearing light blue button-down shirts and blue hard hats. The woman on the right is also wearing a yellow headscarf. They are gathered around a table with several solar panels and electronic equipment. One woman is holding a blue cable connected to a device. There are boxes of 'MUSTAT' on the table. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor or semi-outdoor environment.

3.

OVERVIEW OF  
THE EU EXTERNAL  
ACTION IN THE  
AREA OF GEWE



# The global framework

## From CEDAW (1979) to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and UNSCR 1325 (2000)

Relevant human rights conventions date back at least to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, although the 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** is the first key global gender treaty.<sup>3</sup>

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights adopted in 1993 for the first time explicitly accepts women's rights as human rights, paving the way for their integration into human rights norms and practice. It paved the way for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and the follow-up process and review through the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Also occupying a central role in the context of state fragility and conflict is **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325** (2000), as well as subsequent Resolutions. These international commitments, from which the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda derives, aim to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and ensure: i) women's meaningful participation; ii) prevention of conflict and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); iii) protection of women's rights and from violence and iv) relief and recovery.

## Millennium Development Goals & Sustainable Development Goals

Over the evaluation period, the broadest frameworks for development policies were the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** (2000-2015) and currently are the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** (2015-2030); also called the **Agenda 2030**). The MDGs, while calling for gender equality, limited this, in terms of targets to achieving gender equality in education (MDG 3). In its contribution to the discussions

leading up to adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the EU advocated for inclusion of a more comprehensive stand-alone GEWE goal (SDG 5, 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls') while still identifying gender equality as a cross-cutting priority underpinning all SDGs.

# The EU internal policy framework

## Gender equality as a fundamental right

Both human rights and gender equality are recognised as fundamental values and principles of the EU, and are enshrined in the EU's treaties and legislation, including those of EU Member States (EU MS). Equality between women and men is enshrined in Articles 21 and 23 of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** of the European Union<sup>4</sup>, and in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). In addition, Article 8 of the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** (TFEU) gives the Union the task of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between men and women through all its activities. The EU and the EU MS also committed themselves, in Declaration No 19 annexed to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference which adopted the Treaty of Lisbon, "*to combat all kinds of domestic violence [...], to prevent and punish these criminal acts and to support and protect the victims*". Legislation against **Trafficking in Human Beings** (THB), in particular women and children, has been adopted on the basis of Articles 79 and 83 TFEU, and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme<sup>5</sup> finances, among others, measures contributing to the eradication of violence against women, based on Article 168 TFEU.<sup>6</sup>

## European Pact for Gender Equality

A **European Pact for Gender Equality** was adopted by the Council in 2006 and updated in 2011.<sup>7</sup> In parallel, the Commission developed a reference framework, 'Strategy for equality between men and women', to enhance efforts on gender equality at all levels, which covered the period 2010-2015. The EU's GAP 2010-2015

<sup>3</sup> CEDAW has to date been ratified by 189 States (out of 193 UN member states), obliging them "to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices, which constitute discrimination against women".

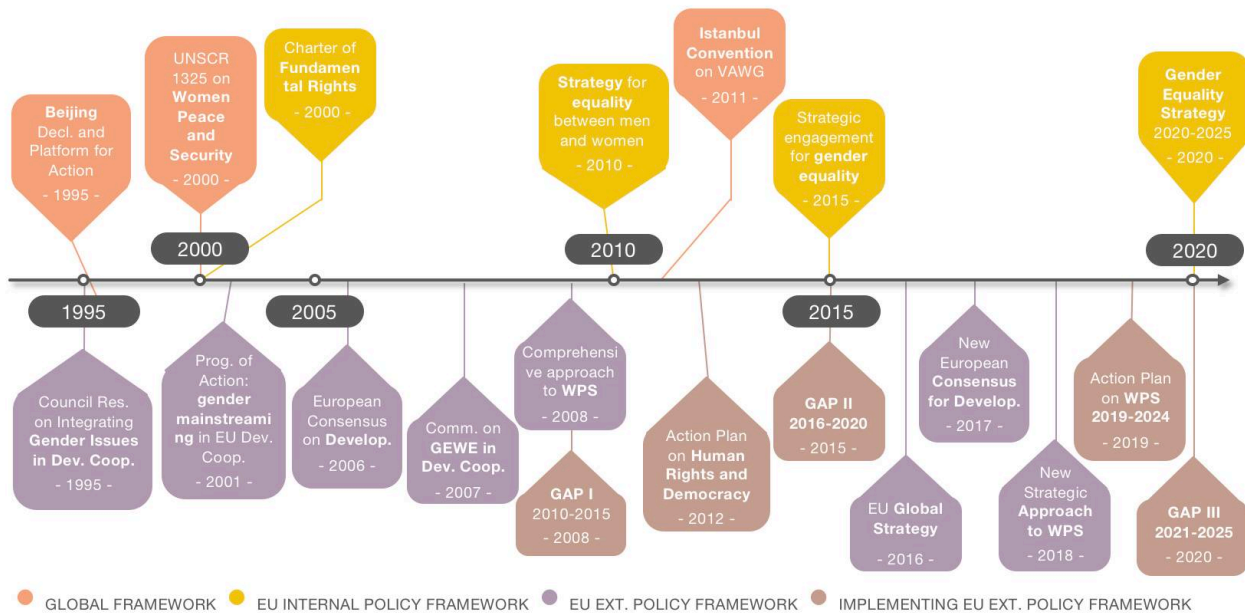
<sup>4</sup> Lisbon Treaty Article 21 states that the EU's external action shall be guided by the principle of human rights and fundamental freedoms amongst others.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm)

<sup>6</sup> See also: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_2.3.8.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_2.3.8.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52011XG0525%2801%29>

## GLOBAL AND EU POLICY FRAMEWORKS ON GEWE



(GAP I), was based on this strategy. In 2015, the Commission published a successor strategy, 'Strategic engagement for gender equality' covering the period 2016-2019, on which the GAP 2016-2020 (GAP II) was based. In March 2020, the EC launched its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

## The EU external action policy framework

### Gender in EU external action policies

EU development cooperation is guided by the TFEU Article 208, which states that the primary objective of its development cooperation policy is the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty. This policy is to be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of EU's external actions.

A number of relevant external action policies also have specific commitments for the promotion of gender equality, for instance the European Consensus on Development (2006, revised in 2017), the European Neighbourhood Policy (revised in 2015), and the Enlargement Policy. All EU external actions are part of, since 2016, the framework of the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>8</sup>

### Key EU external action policies until 2014

The 2006 **European Consensus on Development (ECD)**, written with reference to the MDGs, affirms that women's empowerment is central to achieving all development goals, and requires that gender equality be a core aspect of all policy areas (see section 2, para. 11). Section 4.4 identifies gender equality as a fundamental human right and matter of social justice and commits the EU to incorporating "a *strong gender component*" in all its relations with developing countries. The EU commits itself to a gender mainstreaming approach to ensure that gender equality is represented at all levels and in all sectors through across-the-board support to equal rights, access and control over resources and political and economic voice.

In April 2007, building on the ECD, the EU adopted a **Communication on GEWE in Development Cooperation**.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent Council Conclusions on GEWE in Development Cooperation called on the EU and EU MS to "promote clear objectives and indicators on gender equality and by assigning clear tasks and responsibilities to lead donors to this effect in all sectors". In 2008, the EU adopted an Agenda for Action on MDGs to step up efforts to achieve the MDG targets by 2015 that contained a strong focus on gender equality.

<sup>8</sup> EU (2016): A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> EU (2007): Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation. COM(2007)100.

### Key EU external action policies since 2014

In 2016, the EU adopted the **Global Strategy** for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy<sup>10</sup> for stronger promotion of advocacy for gender equality, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, the systematic integration of a gender perspective and enhanced participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building and placed the economic empowerment of women at the core of EU action. In the **2017 ECD**<sup>11</sup>, written with reference to the SDGs, gender equality is seen as central to achieving the SDGs and is a cross-cutting theme throughout. Gender is placed in the context of a Rights-Based Approach (RBA) and, for the first time, sexual orientation and gender identity are flagged as concerns. The 2017 ECD specifically calls for improved disaggregated data where possible by income, gender, age and other factors to better inform policymaking.

### Trafficking in human beings (THB)

With respect to **THB**, the external dimension is an integral part of the EU legal and policy framework related to this area. THB is embedded in multiple relevant policy instruments, dialogues, agreements, and processes. Globally, the EU upholds the standards and principles of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto and the Palermo Protocol on preventing trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The 2017 Communication stepping up EU action to address THB<sup>12</sup> sets forth as one of the priorities to intensify a coordinated response within and outside the EU, and further sets forth actions to work towards achieving the targets related to trafficking in Agenda 2030.

### The regional dimension

This evaluation covers the Enlargement and Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and South-East Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean regions and hence, several **EU regional policies and strategies** provide supporting elements linked to each region's specificities. These include, among others, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), the Enlargement policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Eastern Partnership

(EaP), Regional South Strategy (2014-2020), Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA), the Joint Africa - EU Strategy, the Joint Caribbean - EU Partnership Strategy. For further details see Annex 3 in Volume III .

## Implementing the EU external action policy framework

### Gender Action Plan I (GAP I, 2010-2015)

In 2008, the EU adopted its **first Gender Action Plan (GAP I, 2010-2015)**<sup>13</sup> with a view to empower women and support gender equality inside the EC and outside the EU. GAP I commits the EU to mainstream gender considerations in all its external action strategies, underpinned by systematic and high-quality gender analysis for all new actions. It also provided the framework for EU action on gender in development cooperation and external actions during that period using a three-pronged approach: i) systematically placing gender equality as an agenda topic for high level dialogue, with follow up on the gender aspects discussed, ii) mainstreaming gender in policies in all areas, including obtaining disaggregated data on the situation of men and women, conducting gender analysis and putting gender-sensitive M&E systems in place, and iii) through specific actions explicitly aimed at reducing gender inequalities.

The **2015 evaluation of EU support to GEWE** was critical almost across the board, but particularly at country level, where it found that EUDs lacked the tools, staff, and/or inclination to implement gender mainstreaming. At EU headquarters (HQ), as well, the institutional architecture and incentives needed to meet the EU's international commitments on gender equality had not been put in place, undermining the potential for an organisation-wide response. While financial commitments had risen over the period, staff and the tools needed by staff had lagged. Accountability was found to be weak, and the EU had failed to invest in developing the country-specific knowledge needed to effectively address gender issues in programming and policy dialogue.

<sup>10</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Official Journal of the European Union C 46, p. 1, 24.2.2006

<sup>12</sup> EU (2017): Reporting on the follow-up to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of THB and identifying further concrete actions. COM(2017)728.

[https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/commission-sets-out-priorities-step-eu-action\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/commission-sets-out-priorities-step-eu-action_en)

<sup>13</sup> EU (2010): "EU Plan of Action on Gender. Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015", SEC(2010) 265 final. [http://aei.pitt.edu/37929/1/SEC\\_\(2010\)\\_265.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/37929/1/SEC_(2010)_265.pdf).

## Gender Action Plan II (GAP II, 2015-2020)

Building on the findings from the evaluation, lessons learnt during GAP I implementation and recent policy developments at EU and global level, the EU's response was the May **2015 Staff Working Document** (SWD) 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020'<sup>14</sup> and associated Council Conclusions. The SWD forms the basis of the EU Gender Action Plan II (GAP II). It called, in particular, for a reformed and revitalized institutional environment for GEWE.

Most significantly, the SWD found that: i) EU institutional architecture and leadership necessary to better deliver on EU policy commitments were not in place, ii) its human resource capacity did not increase commensurate with the volume of work, and as a result, it was impossible to reliably determine the financial commitment to mainstreaming; and iii) gender equality tended to be absent from programme and project monitoring systems and evaluation processes. Overall, the SWD found *"insufficient understanding of context and little use of gender analysis to inform country strategy objectives, programmes, projects and dialogue."*

Responses called for were: i) a rights-based focus, ii) ensuring leadership on gender across Commission services and EEAS, iii) stepped up efforts to ensure Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) with sectors such as trade and migration, iv) improved quality of partnership, coordination and dialogue at all levels, v) improved reporting, evaluation and accountability mechanisms for evidence-based decision making, and vi) more effective use of financial resources. The latter could be accomplished by more gender-sensitive programming, using the full range of actions available, including high level (political) dialogue and budget support; and using available financing instruments' flexibly in a two-pronged strategy consisting of mainstreaming and targeted interventions.

GAP II maintains the **priority areas** of GAP I, yet, aims to reform approaches to create a more meaningful effort towards gender equality in the areas of foreign policy, trade, security and migration. Its concentrates on three themes: i)

women's and girls' physical and psychological integrity – encompassing aspects such as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), harmful traditional practices, domestic violence, sexual and reproductive health rights, conflict-related violence including sexual violence as a weapon of war; ii) empowerment of women and girls and promoting their socio-economic rights; and iii) strengthening voice and participation of women and girls. GAP II lists more detailed **objectives** (20 in number) under each of these areas and requires geographic and thematic actions to demonstrate how they have contributed to selected objectives highlighted in GAP II.

While endorsing GAP I's general goals, GAP II underlines issues related to the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women (incl. VAWG) as priority themes for the EU. It also placed greater emphasis on economic empowerment and strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation than was previously the case. Moreover, while GAP I had a strong implicit focus on development cooperation, **GAP II covers all EU external actions.**

## Other EU gender-specific strategic frameworks

In the 2008 Council Decision on WPS<sup>15</sup>, the EU introduced its **Comprehensive Approach to WPS**. This involves a holistic approach blending peace, security, development, and gender equality. A three-pronged strategy is proposed to: i) integrate WPS issues in the EU political and policy dialogue with partner governments, ii) mainstream gender equality, especially in the context of crisis management and in long-term development cooperation, and iii) support specific strategic actions targeted at protecting, supporting and empowering women. The EU committed to take specific measures promoting implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820, to advance women's role in peace-building, and to integrate gender components into all EU financial instruments with a conflict prevention, crisis management or post-conflict component. The **WPS Agenda (UNSCR 1325 and follow-up resolutions)**<sup>16</sup> is now implemented at EU level through the EU Global Strategy, the new EU

<sup>14</sup> EU (2015), "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020", SWD(2015) 182 final. [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/staff-working-document-gender-2016-2020-20150922\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/staff-working-document-gender-2016-2020-20150922_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> According to the EU Task Force on WPS, the following UNSCRs are included when referring to the work on the WPS Agenda; UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (25), 2272 (2016) and 2331 (2016).

EU Strategic Approach to WPS<sup>17</sup> and its Action Plan<sup>18</sup> as well as the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy<sup>19</sup>. In its 2018 Conclusions on WPS and its annexes (the new ‘EU Strategic Approach to WPS’)<sup>20</sup>, the Council reaffirms the EU’s and EU MSs’ commitments to the WPS agenda and places the WPS Agenda at the centre of the full spectrum of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU Strategic Approach to WPS identifies actions under the key areas of prevention, protection, relief and recovery and under the two overarching and cross-cutting aspects of gender mainstreaming and participation. It emphasises the need for a systematic integration of a gender perspective built upon gender analysis into all fields and activities in the domain of peace and security. It also highlights the importance of meaningful participation and leadership (internally and externally) in all areas of policy. Based on the Strategic Approach, the recent WPS Action Plan (2019-2024) has six objectives and it stresses that its successful implementation requires: i) gender-responsive leadership at all EU levels, from political to managerial; ii) sufficient in-house capacity and capability to systemically integrate a gender perspective and conduct gender analysis; and iii) close dialogue and cooperation with EU MS and the engagement of civil society and other partners, such as multilateral and regional organisations, academia, think-tanks and the private sector.

### EU MS gender-specific strategic frameworks

Gender equality is a core principle in the national legislations and external engagement policies of EU MS. These have influenced aspects of the EU frameworks and its Gender Action Plans, and vice versa. A comparative review of these national frameworks has been done to shed light on a selection of EU MS’s national policy, strategy and institutional framework regarding GEWE, including the main evolutions since 2010 and the linkages with the EU gender policy frameworks. For further details see Annex 3 in Volume III.

## The intervention logic

### Approach to the reconstruction of the intervention logic

This is a theory-based evaluation, meaning that it is based on a Theory of Change (ToC) and underlying assumptions, which corresponds to the Intervention Logic (IL) for the EU external actions related to GEWE. The **‘reconstructed’ IL** presented below builds on the draft IL outlined in the ToR, a detailed review of key reference documents as well as interviews with relevant stakeholders.

The IL is a conceptual model of the causal chain from inputs to outputs, outcomes and impacts (chain of expected results) that the EU had in mind when it planned and implemented its external actions. It provided a **simplified framework** for the evaluation by: i) contributing to the formulation of the Evaluation Questions and its Judgement Criteria (which relate to underlying assumptions to be tested); ii) facilitating the analysis of the EU policy framework (including in terms of coherence), and iii) guiding the evaluation team’s data collection and analysis in the Desk, Field and Synthesis phases.

### Main assumptions

The results chains which underpin the IL are based on a set of general assumptions:

- **Contextual factors:** the global, regional, and national contexts will, if not enabling, at least not prevent progress from being made at the various levels of the ToC. Aspects of “preventing contexts” in partner countries and regions comprise conflict and war which tend to exacerbate the situation of women as victims of violence, including rape, and trafficking in human beings.
- **National stakeholders’ commitments:** national stakeholders (including national authorities) have the will and necessary resources to turn commitments on GEWE into reality, and related institutional environments remain stable.

<sup>17</sup> The EU Strategic Approach to WPS is annexed to the FAC Conclusions on WPS adopted on 10 December 2018 (Council document 15086/18).

<sup>18</sup> EU EEAS (2019)747: EU Action Plan on WPS (2019-2024).

<sup>19</sup> EU (2012): EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy; EU (2015): EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019.

<sup>20</sup> EU (2018): Council conclusions of 10 December 2018 on Women, Peace and Security.



- **Development Partners' contributions:** Development Partners' (DPs) support, especially the one related to specific areas of intervention targeted by European actors, is implemented as expected and in a coordinated manner.
- **EU external action:** the EU interventions are conducted with the best possible quality and efficiency.

Other assumptions regarding the EU include: consistency between EU internal and external policies; adequacy and fitness for purpose of the EU External Financing Instruments; availability of financial and human resources to respond to the policy commitments on GEWE; an institutional environment which remains stable and sufficiently conducive for the implementation of the planned actions, including sufficient information flows from HQ to the country level (EUDs/EU MS embassies) and from the country level to HQ.

### Non-linearity in the IL

Although the reconstructed Intervention Logic in the diagram below presents a logical succession of cause-effect relationships (from inputs to impact), change related to gender equality does not always follow the pattern of a linear results-chain. Instead, there is often an **intertwining of diverse intended outcomes**, in which the changes occurring at the level of outputs and outcomes may influence the outputs and outcomes in another results-chain. Also, outcomes in one area can potentially reinforce outcomes in another area.

### Inputs

The GEWE-related external action implemented by the EU covers two types of Inputs:

- (Internal dimension) political and policy commitments as well as capacity building targeting European institutions.
- (External dimension) spending and non-spending activities implemented in third countries. They include both gender-targeted and other gender-sensitive activities. Spending activities cover various aid delivery methods such as grants, Twinning, blending/investment financing, contribution agreements, construction, equipment supply and service contracts using EU procurement rules, and budget support. Non-spending activities cover policy dialogue, coordination and advocacy at

all levels. It is useful to further split policy dialogue into two types, operational and technical dialogue with national counterparts up to Ministerial level and higher-level dialogue at Ministerial level, or even at the level of Heads of State or government.

### Outputs

These inputs are projected to lead to concrete **short-term results** ("Outputs"<sup>21</sup>) in four distinct but connected areas, which do not only target partner countries and regions but also the EU itself:

- At EU level, the ToC anticipates an *institutional culture shift* within the EU characterised by stronger leadership and accountability, better knowledge, strengthened cooperation and coordination, and enhanced engagement in international partnerships on GEWE. For the sake of brevity, and even if this evaluation goes beyond GAP II, these outputs are clustered according to the GAP II Horizontal objectives labelling (i.e. "Priority area A"). Outputs achieved within the EU are expected to reinforce outputs at the partner level.
- Outputs at the level of partners include, first, changes at the level of national and regional institutional *systems* which should create a more "enabling environment" to achieve longer-term GEWE objectives. This is expressed not only by the existence of gender-specific and gender-sensitive policy, legal and institutional frameworks, policies and institutions, but also strengthened national mechanisms to track and understand progress on gender equality, and increased CSO capacity and engagement on GEWE.
- Outputs affecting partners also include changes at the *individual / behavioural level*, for example, raised awareness of women's rights, and implementation of targeted actions to strengthen women's and girls' empowerment. A critical element underpinning these changes in behaviour among partners are actions which contribute to changing individual perceptions of social gender norms. In particular, the EU expects to contribute to behavioural change in decision making and eliminating discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes at family and community level, through public education, media

<sup>21</sup> The Evaluation recognizes that some expected short-term results ("outputs") in the ToC can appear partially beyond the direct realm of influence of EU-funded activities and can thus be seen as "lower level" outcomes.

campaigns, work with women's grassroots organisations and engaging with women as much as men of all ages.

- Outputs at the partner level also include changes at the community level with the establishment of local mechanisms supporting women's and girls' empowerment. Critical to this approach is that these mechanisms are not imposed from outside the community by partner organisations but rather involve a consultative and participatory process which models the empowerment principles each partner is trying to achieve.

### Outcomes

The ToC foresees that these combined outputs result in higher level intermediate or specific **outcomes** covering three main dimensions: i) Strengthened gender-sensitive public and non-public service delivery ("supply side"); ii) Reduced social norms hindering GEWE; and iii) Reduced barriers regarding an equal access to public services, decision-making processes and economic opportunities for women ("demand side").

Consistent with the elements of draft IL presented in the ToR, the team has used the GAP II pillars to categorise expected outcomes in three main thematic areas: i) physical and psychological integrity, including reduction of all forms of violence against women; ii) women's and girls' economic and social empowerment; and iii) women's and girls' voice and participation.

### Intermediate impacts

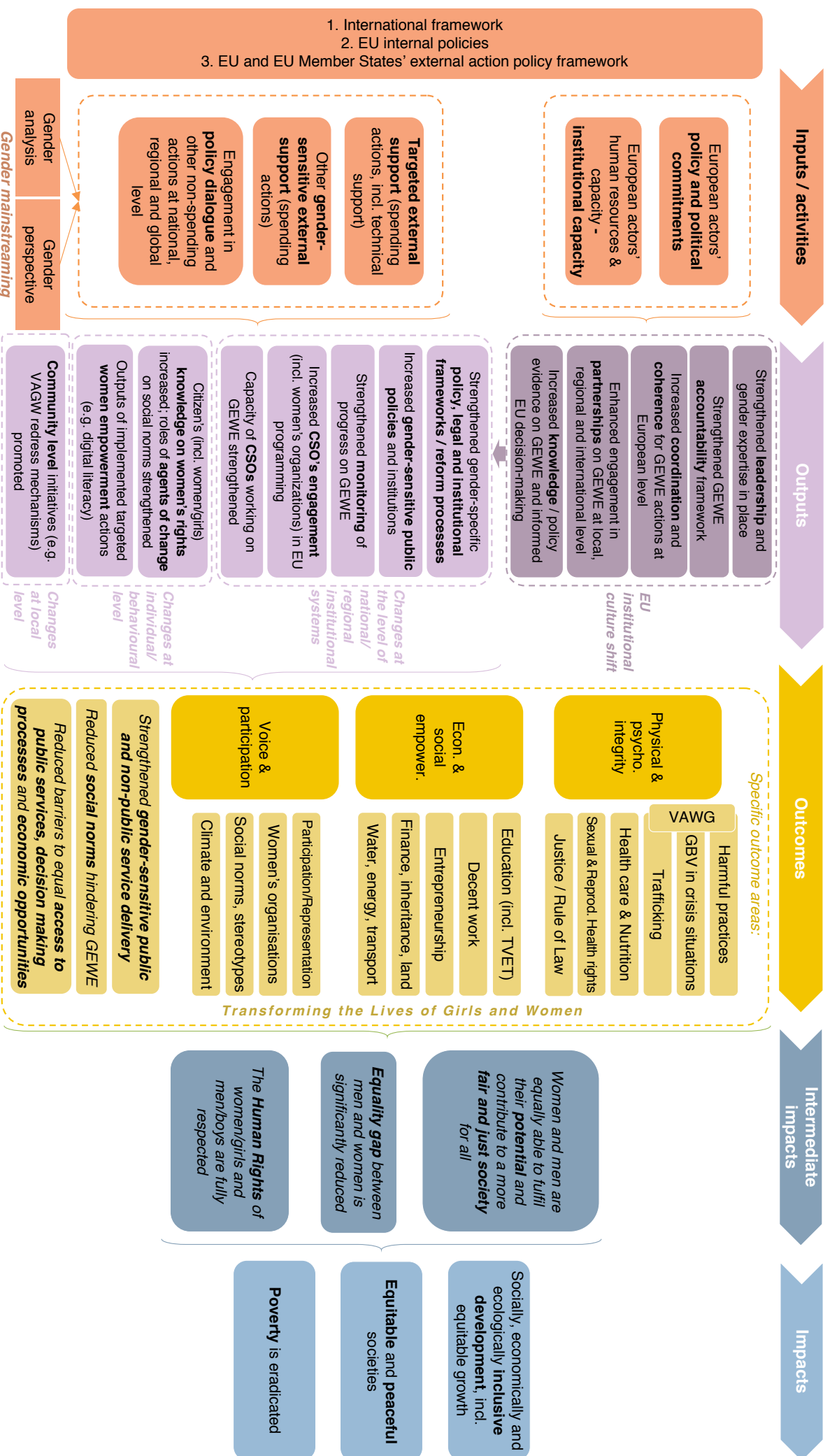
Collectively, it is anticipated that these outcomes for the benefits of women and girls will lead to **intermediate impacts** for societies at large in which: equality gaps are significantly reduced, everyone – women and men – is able to fulfil their potential and contribute to a more fair and just society for all, and where the human rights of all people, regardless of gender, are fully respected.

### Longer-term impacts

Finally, it is projected that these intermediate impacts to result in three general **longer-term impacts**, namely: i) the achievement of socially,

economically and ecologically inclusive development, including smart and sustainable social and economic growth; ii) the existence of equitable and peaceful societies; and iii) the eradication of poverty.

# The simplified Intervention Logic diagram



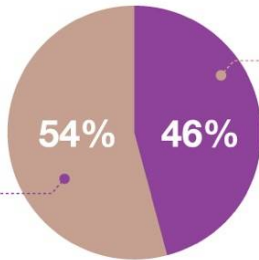
# Mapping of EU support to GEWE

## Main findings of the mapping of gender-targeted support



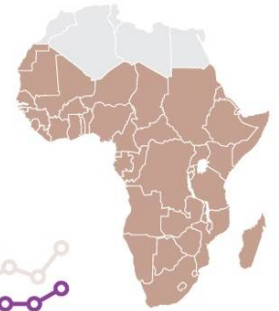
**EUR 1.106 billion** were contracted for gender-targeted interventions, during the period 2014-2018

EUR 596 million allocated to country-level support



EUR 509 million allocated to regional/-multi-country interventions

Most of the committed amounts went to Africa. The support was mostly financed through geographic instruments.



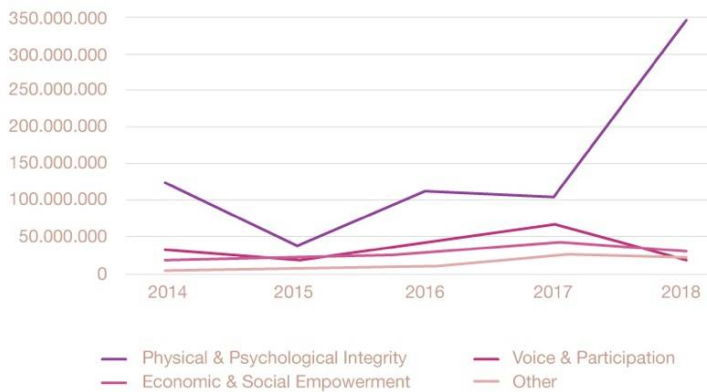
**EUR 575 million**  
Sub-Saharan Africa received the highest financial gender-targeted support



**EUR 38 million**  
The Enlargement region received the lowest financial gender-targeted support

### Evolution of EU gender-targeted funding by thematic area

Targeted GEWE support reached a **peak in 2018**, with nearly EUR 424 million of contracted amount in this area that year. This was driven by the Spotlight Initiative, which accounted for over half the yearly amount.



**66%** of the targeted interventions treated Physical and Psychological Integrity (including VAWG)



**EUR 507 million**  
Support channeled via UN agencies, mainly UN Women, UNDP and UNICEF



**EUR 432 million**  
Support channeled via CSOs, represented by 15% Women's organisations

## Findings specific for the Enlargement region



Amounts more than doubling from EUR 1.6 million in 2010 to EUR 8.4 million in 2018 with a notable peak in 2017 - 12.7 million



**EUR 53.7 million** total contracted amount between 2010 and 2018



Increased emphasis on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

## Findings on non-targeted support



EU support marked as gender-sensitive (G1) represents 40% of total EU external action (contracted amounts) during the period under review



Gender-sensitive support (contracted amounts) considerably increased between 2014 and 2018, more than doubling in absolute values



**55%** of EU external action has been marked as gender blind (G0) during the period under review, followed by a clear downward trend between 2014 and 2018

# 4. MAIN FINDINGS



# Cluster 1: Strategy and implementation

## EQ1 - Policy and strategic framework

To what extent has the EU external policy and strategic framework been conducive for gender-responsive programming and implementation of EU external action?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**At the overall level, the policy and strategic framework for EU external action in the area of GEWE was well developed and has been significantly strengthened during the period under review. However, at the country level, a clear strategic vision on GEWE was often lacking among European actors (EU and EU MS).**

The policy and strategic framework related to EU's external action support to GEWE has been consistent. Although key reference documents have not put a strong emphasis on the main international frameworks which have been foundational to the global gender equality agenda in the last two decades, the EU policies and strategies rightly built on them.

The broad framework established permitted the EU to include a wide range of GEWE dimensions in its external action and facilitated the provision of responses to important partner country needs. There has been a growing focus on VAWG in EU external action, which reflects an increasing

awareness at global level, and among EU decision-makers, of the important needs in this area in most partner countries. However, there has been insufficient emphasis in EU key reference documents on the interlinkages within the overarching strategic framework that underpinned the EU support to GEWE.

EU external action in the area of GEWE has been characterised by a strong place given to CSOs both as a target and channel of EU support. This reflected the traditional role played by these actors in the gender equality agenda as well as the importance given to them in the EU policy framework. It also, to some extent, reflected the low integration of GEWE in bilateral cooperation.

At country level, implementation of EU external action in the area of GEWE was not guided by a strategic framework adapted to the specific country context and based on a clear identification of the priorities. The weak strategic orientations were further compounded by the lack of a clear and commonly shared model within the EU of what gender mainstreaming entails ([see also EQ3](#)).

## Internal and external consistency

### A coherent policy and strategic framework

**The policy and strategic framework related to EU's external action support to GEWE has been internally and externally consistent.** There are no contradictions between, e.g., the EU commitments to the WPS agenda<sup>22</sup>, the European Consensus on Development<sup>23</sup>, and the 2016 EU Global Strategy.

All documents underpinning EU external actions relating to GEWE are also coherent with the Agenda 2030 and international covenants in the area of GEWE, notably CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform and UNSCR 1325 and its follow-up resolutions on WPS. These frameworks are foundational to the global gender equality agenda because it is from them that the multitude of international commitments related to GEWE, still evolving at all levels, derives. Whilst GAP II references all main international frameworks, it does not strongly highlight their importance in policy developments in the area of GEWE at partner country level.

<sup>22</sup> As spelled out in the 2008 Comprehensive Approach to WPS and the 2018 New Strategic Approach to WPS.

<sup>23</sup> Considering both the 2017 Joint Statement and its predecessor from 2006.

## Comprehensiveness and responsiveness to changing contexts and needs

A policy and strategic framework embracing all key aspects of equality and empowerment

**The EU policy and strategic framework has been comprehensive; however, there has been insufficient emphasis put on the interlinkages between the dimensions underpinning this framework in key reference documents.** The EU's external policy and strategic framework related to GEWE has embraced all key aspects of equality and empowerment, although the attention to climate change and resilience related challenges, especially women's role as key actors in ensuring sustainable management of natural resources/biodiversity, has remained limited.

While the mapping of EU support to GEWE shows a balanced attention to a variety of thematic areas during the period under review, there has been an increased emphasis on VAWG across EU financing instruments and regions in recent years.

The development of GAP II has allowed a better integration of the concept of transformative change in the EU policy and strategic framework. However, while the three-pillar structure presents a simple and useful framework, there are overlaps between the thematic pillars and important interlinkages between the respective thematic sub-areas<sup>24</sup>. As highlighted in this evaluation (see EQ3 and EQs7-9), EU staff have tended to overlook the multi-faceted nature of GEWE when applying the GAP II framework at country level, partly reflecting the insufficient emphasis put on the interlinkages within the GAP II framework in key reference documents.

A framework responding well to change in context

**The EU policy and strategic framework has evolved in line with changes in contexts and greater emphasis on specific GEWE dimensions at international level.**

In recent years, the EU has responded well to changes at global level, especially renewed momentum on the work around GEWE and, in particular, VAWG. It has taken fully part in (and has often been the initiator of) global initiatives on GEWE such as the revision of the EU Comprehensive Approach to UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

External action responsive to partner countries' needs, but lacking strategic directions

**Overall, EU external action has been responsive to partner countries' needs in the area of GEWE; however, it has lacked strategic orientations at country/regional level.** In the countries reviewed, there has been alignment to national strategic frameworks related to GEWE (the development of which the EU contributed to in some instances). In the context of GAP II, most EUDs, often jointly with EU MS, have identified specific thematic objectives to pursue in priority which often corresponded to important challenges faced by the partner countries. In general, implementation of EU external actions has been largely aligned with these priorities. However, the selection of thematic priorities was mostly made as a reaction to GAP II reporting requirements, and not to fulfil a strategic (forward-looking) purpose based on a clear identification of needs and opportunities of action.

A disconnect from national women machineries and a heavy reliance on civil society for gender-targeted support

**Whilst there has been some engagement with national women machineries, the primary focus of EU gender-targeted support has been to support civil society in the area of GEWE.** As illustrated in the mapping of EU support (see Volume III), CSOs and UN agencies represent the biggest channel of funding for gender-targeted interventions. The strong focus of gender-targeted support on (both international and national) CSOs and actions at the local level is consistent with the importance given to the support to CSOs in the overarching EU policy framework for external action. However, a disadvantage of overreliance on CSO support in the absence of a strategic

<sup>24</sup> In particular, there is a strong link between the different objectives outlined under the 'Physical and Psychological Integrity' GAP II thematic pillar under which actions to reduce VAWG fall, and key objectives under the GAP II's other two thematic pillars ('Political and civil rights - Voice and Participation' and 'Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Economic and Social Empowerment').

framework common to development partners is that the resulting actions have sometimes not reinforced the national policy framework or have not contributed to a coherent set of initiatives at the country level. It also reflects the limited integration of GEWE in bilateral cooperation funded under geographic instruments, which largely resulted from weak government interest in GEWE in many partner countries and weaknesses in integrating a gender perspective in EU programming (see EQ3). As a result of generally weak partner country interest, and despite increasing efforts by EU staff to ensure gender mainstreaming in EU external action, GEWE is still not a strong dimension of many large, bilateral sector programmes that are core elements of EU external action.

## Gender mainstreaming in the EU strategic framework on GEWE

Gender mainstreaming, a central concept in the EU strategic framework...

**All EU key reference documents recognise the importance of ‘gender mainstreaming’.** EU policy and strategic documents<sup>25</sup> emphasise the importance of ensuring that an effective gender perspective is fully *mainstreamed* into EU internal processes, procedures and practices, as well as in external cooperation strategies and individual interventions. This is in line with the internationally agreed definition of gender mainstreaming which sees it as a strategy (or plan of action) to achieve GEWE – See box in section 1.

Several development agencies adopted a dual approach (sometimes called twin-track strategy) after the Beijing Conference in 1995, which consisted in combining gender-targeted actions and gender mainstreaming. The EU, and some EU MS (e.g., *Germany*), adopted a three-pronged approach, which consisted in adding policy dialogue to this dual approach.

All EU key reference documents agree on some fundamental dimensions of gender mainstreaming. In particular, gender analysis, which identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context, is seen as the starting point to fully integrate a gender perspective in EU external action.

... but interpreted in different ways during implementation

**However, gender mainstreaming is interpreted in different ways during policy implementation.** There is some coherence in the way concepts related to *gender mainstreaming* are mentioned in EU key reference documents. However, GAP II does not explicitly refer to internationally agreed definition of gender mainstreaming and it does not in (and of) itself provide a methodology for gender mainstreaming.

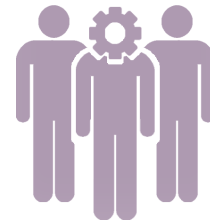
In practice, the EU has not operated with a clear and commonly shared model of what *gender mainstreaming* entails. As highlighted in EQ3, EU staff have not seen gender mainstreaming as a comprehensive approach, which can be reinforced by gender-targeted actions, to achieve gender equality. Instead, the way the EU policy framework was implemented led to the introduction of dichotomies between gender-targeted support and gender mainstreaming, which reduced the strategic nature of gender mainstreaming. Moreover, very often the development of gender analyses, which launch the process of gender mainstreaming, has become an end in itself.

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, the 2007 EU Council conclusions on GEWE in Development Cooperation.



## EQ2 - Leadership and accountability<sup>26</sup>

To what extent have European actors in EU external action responded to EU accountability commitments and internal capacity building needs on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**Both the 2003 and 2015 gender evaluations called for fundamental changes in EU institutional culture. This has not occurred. Important capacity building needs persist and improvements in leadership and internal accountability has been slow and uneven across European actors. The policy and strategic framework related to EU's external action support to GEWE has been consistent. Although key reference documents have not put a strong emphasis on the main international frameworks which have been foundational to the global gender equality agenda in the last two decades, the EU policies and strategies rightly built on them.**

Progress on GEWE has been closely tied to EU leadership – the level of interest of the senior persons in charge – which has been variable and dependent on personal initiatives, especially (but not only) at EUD level. The situation has also been uneven across EU MS. GEWE has not been institutionalised either at HQ nor in EUDs, which is the result of several factors. In particular: i) GEWE is still not seen as a shared 'high priority' by middle and senior managers and incentives to promote the gender equality agenda are limited; ii) despite some improvements, women are still underrepresented at senior level (especially, in EUDs); and iii) the role of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) is not always

understood nor institutionalised.

At EUD level, few GFPs are high up in the organigram; they are relegated to specific operational sections, typical examples being EUD operational sections focussing on social sectors, civil society, and human rights. Capacity and workload are also an issue – many GFPs are juggling multiple dossiers, with insufficient time to properly deal with gender as foreseen by GAP II. EUDs in all regions are facing these issues.

While there have been some improvements in internal accountability, mechanisms in place are still insufficient to substantially contribute to an EU institutional culture shift on GEWE. The EU has gradually introduced specific reporting requirements on GAP II implementation in their internal management system (such as EAMRs), which has represented a major improvement in internal accountability. However, the quality of the information provided is uneven.

Moreover, weaknesses in annual GAP II reporting by all European actors involved in EU external action have been identified. The format and data collection process remain cumbersome and represent an additional workload with no dedicated additional resources allocated. EU MS development partners at country level generally perceive GAP II reporting as a requirement imposed by the EU, not a joint tool for learning and accountability purpose.

## Leadership on GEWE

**Leadership commitment is key for gender mainstreaming**

**It emerged strongly from various sources that leadership commitment was crucial for gender mainstreaming at the level of teams and units.** GAP II GFP survey, interviews and country evidence gathered and reviewed here all confirmed the importance of leadership engagement. Senior management commitment is particularly important for ensuring that GEWE is integrated into all policy dialogue, especially at high level. Heads of Delegation and EU Ambassadors can accomplish a great deal, even if no Gender Champion was in place.

<sup>26</sup> This EQ covers key dimensions of the institutional culture shift called for in previous EU gender evaluations and in GAP II: leadership, accountability and gender expertise. As highlighted in GAP II, which makes references to the 2007 Council conclusions on GEWE, to achieve the necessary institutional culture shift, the EU should "Ensure dedicated leadership on gender equality across Commission services and the EEAS including by developing incentives and disincentives at all levels. This involves increased accountability, through better defining expected results, tracking resources, monitoring and evaluations."

Leadership remains too much dependent on personal interest and engagement

**Leadership on GEWE has increased at global and country level, but the situation is variable across EUDs and EU MS and depends on the level of interest of the senior persons in charge.** Dependence on personalities also means that, within some EUDs, the degree of leadership has fluctuated over time. Thus, the situation is uneven and dependent on personal initiatives. GEWE has not really been institutionalised. The last GAP II annual report found a significant increase in Senior Gender Champions at EUD and EU MS level. However, in only four of the 10 countries reviewed here were Gender Champions appointed, and none of the EU MS reviewed using the gender champion approach as described by GAP II. More of concern, one third of EUD staff who responded to the E-survey perceived little or no increase in leadership on GEWE since 2014. In EU MS, though challenges remain, leadership on GEWE has been strengthened over time. In Sweden, for instance, the ratio of women to men in the position of Heads of Mission was 40% in 2017 and is almost 50% today.

Good practice Incentive systems to promote GEWE

In **Sweden**, incentives to encourage mid-level and senior managers to promote GEWE within their areas of responsibility are based on a culture that views advancing gender equality as a proud common objective. There are also motivational rewards for integrating gender aspects in foreign policy as part of the Feminist Foreign Policy system, inter alia in the form of recognition from the Ambassador for Gender Equality

and publication of good examples at Swemfa.se.

In **Germany**, GIZ has created a mechanism to promote the inclusion of GEWE in technical cooperation programmes through a ‘Gender Competition’, which awards grants in different categories within GIZ units or country offices.

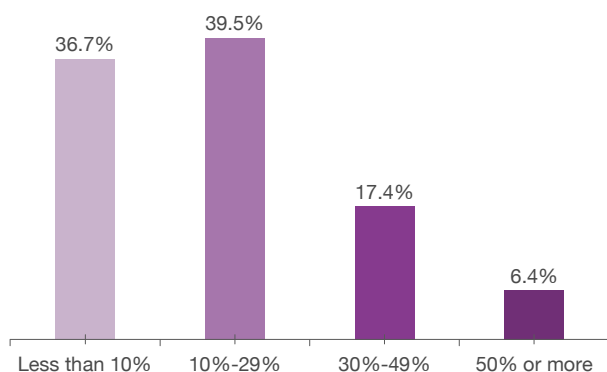
▫ see EU MS case studies (Volume IV) for further details

GEWE is still not fully institutionalised

**The failure to fully embed GEWE in EU institutions, at HQ, in EUDs and, to some extent, in EU MS, is the result of several factors.** The role that incentives<sup>27</sup> can play in fostering the championing of GEWE at all levels and reinforcing the perception of staff that GEWE is a top priority shared by all in their organisation doesn’t seem to have been fully recognised yet. While some EU MS have accompanied the development of accountability processes on GEWE with the establishment of incentives mechanisms (see the good practices identified above in the case of Sweden and Germany), incentives for middle and senior managers to promote GEWE are insufficient, especially at EU HQ level. In addition, women are still underrepresented at senior level, and the role of GFPs

is not always understood. As of December 2018, only 25% of Heads of Delegation were women, an increase compared to 2016 (20%), but still indicative of a serious gender imbalance.<sup>28</sup> At HQ, GFPs remain few in number and sometimes operate in isolation from other services. At EUD level, capacity and workload are an issue – many GFPs are juggling multiple dossiers, with insufficient time to properly deal with gender. In the 2019 GFP survey, 76% of GFPs spent less than one third of their time on their GFP responsibilities – a slight improvement compared to 2015 (93%), but far from the 40-60% target in the GAP II guidance note. In the specific area of the Common Security and Defence Policy

**PROPORTION OF AN AVERAGE WEEK SPENT BY GFP ON GEWE ACTIVITIES**



Source: 2019 GFP survey.

<sup>27</sup>These include, among other, non-monetary incentives that could be provided at different levels of the human resource management system, fostering an institutional culture in which addressing gender equality becomes a core objective of the organization, and the development of mechanisms coupled with accountability processes to encourage its mid to senior level managers as well its other personnel to integrate GEWE issues and approaches in their work. For further details see Volume II.

<sup>28</sup>Although women are also underrepresented at HQ level, the situation is more balanced – women represent around 40% of middle (incl. Heads of Unit) and senior (incl. directors) managers.

(CSDP) Missions, the role of the Gender Advisors and the system for appointing GFPs have improved in recent years yet, according to GAP II reporting, yet in 2018, only three out of ten civilian CSDP Missions were headed by a woman and two out of eight EU Special Representatives were women.

## Technical expertise

Some increase of technical expertise at HQ level

**The level of technical expertise on women's human rights and GEWE within the EU has steadily increased, partly due to training.** Almost all EUD staff responding to the E-survey said there had been a significant increase in the availability of HQ gender expertise since 2014. Both the E-survey and GAP II reporting reveal, however, that gender expertise is unevenly spread across DGs DEVCO and NEAR and, within DGs, across services.

DG DEVCO has offered gender-specific training and integrated gender into other training activities, covering also NEAR countries. DG DEVCO initiated a new Technical Assistance (TA) desk on 'Gender-Responsive, Rights-Based Approach' (GR-RBA) in 2018, which also covers the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions. In the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, a joint 'IcSP and PI Gender, Age & Diversity Facility' was contracted in 2019. The European Security and Defence College provided courses to CSDP staff on GEWE and WPS. Three civilian CSDP missions provided advice or training to EUDs in 2017/2018.

There has been an increase in staff with specific gender expertise at EC/EEAS level, including through the mobilization of EU MS seconded national experts. According to interviews, their presence has proved useful.

EU MS have dedicated specific resources to training and raising awareness among their officials, however, results and take up levels in the different EU MS under review have been uneven so far.

A heavy reliance on external expertise at EUD level

**At EUD level, there has been an overall increase in GEWE expertise, and a number of good practices emerged from the country case studies; however, there is still a heavy reliance on external expertise.** Given capacity constraints, externalisation of expertise (in the form of TA, short-term experts, national consultants, etc.) has been more the rule than the exception. HQ and EU MS have also externalised significantly (e.g., contracted 'help desks'). While this can be cost- and time-efficient, externalisation of expertise can be to the detriment of building capacity within the EU; at country level, there is also the risks associated with the quality of the expertise provided. A particular challenge is recruiting experts who have gender and sector-specific skills and a clear understanding of the local context.

Good practice  
**Technical expertise on GEWE**

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia pioneered the system of a cross-mission Gender Focal Point (GFP) network that has expanded over the years and in different CSDP missions. There is staff in each office and thematic unit providing advice and guidance on gender mainstreaming and driving forward gender equality initiatives. Members of the GFP network are also key drivers for special campaigns addressing VAWG, as well as for capacity building and training on gender issues.

In seeking ways to improve gender mainstreaming and increase gender balance within the mission, the EUMM has reinforced their recruitment and assessment process in a holistic way. This has included, among other measures, reviewing job descriptions, establishing mixed human resources panels, training on unconscious bias and including gender as an assessment criterion in the Performance Evaluation Reports (PER) of all staff.

▀ see *Georgia case study (Volume IV) for further details*

Frequency of gender training insufficient to maintain knowledge level

**Despite the increase in training over the years, the situation is less than fully satisfactory.** Sector trainings increasingly included a gender component. However, the number of sectors doing so remains low. In several countries reviewed, the last training on GEWE was organised when a country-level Gender Analysis was carried out, meaning only once in the last 4-5 years. Not only do skills acquired depreciate, but turnover means that many people in post have never received training. In the 2019 GFP survey, over a third of respondent GFPs in EUDs and HQ had not completed a training where gender was the main topic in the two previous years. Stand-alone training is also insufficient to foster and build an institutional cultural shift related to GEWE. Also problematic, a disproportionately low percentage of persons participating in trainings were senior staff (e.g., Directors, Head or Deputy Head of Delegations / Division / Unit).

Most of the documented increase in number of persons trained since 2016 is driven by participants in RBA trainings that included a gender component. While there is a risk that gender is subsumed under human rights, where it must compete with all the other relevant rights concerns, the combined approach (RBA and gender mainstreaming) has been well received by training participants so far and can be seen as an efficient way to diminish the number of “mainstreaming obligations” according to interviews.

GFP function too often marginalised

**The GFP function is still too often marginalised. The crucial question is whether the GFP is located close to senior management;** i.e., “above” sector teams, or is located in a specific EUD sector team (often in the team covering issues related to governance, human rights and/or CSOs). GFPs are not senior enough or sufficiently well-positioned in the EUD to fully take part in relevant decision-making processes or have significant influence on other teams. According to the 2019 GFP survey, 36% of GFPs are still Junior Managers, Administrative Staff or Other (incl. interns) and 39% of them are at the middle-level (e.g., Head of Section, Team Leader, Project Manager) or at the top level of the hierarchy (e.g., Head of Unit, Head of Cooperation). The remainder are technical staff. That represents no significant change since 2015. A similar situation exists at HQ. Nearly three quarters of the GFPs surveyed were women, and GFPs are not sufficiently high up in the hierarchy of the units.

Good practice GFP positions in the organisation

DG NEAR decided to change the place of its Gender coordinator within the organisation. The position was moved from a thematic unit to the Centre of Thematic Expertise on Rule of law and Fundamental rights, a team with a more horizontal function within the organisation. This has contributed to enhance the visibility of the Gender coordinator, give her a more strategic viewpoint on key programming issues and connect her better to other thematic networks.

Similarly, some EUDs have established a GFP position close to the senior management. In Senegal, the GFP function is held by the deputy Head of Cooperation who is also in charge of other cross-cutting functions such as M&E and joint programming. This position gives him privileged access to information on EU cooperation in the country and facilitate the implementation of actions to ensure gender mainstreaming in new interventions.

## Accountability and Reporting

**While there have been significant improvements, internal accountability mechanisms in place are still insufficient to substantially contribute to an EU institutional culture shift on GEWE.** The most notable improvement in internal

Despite improvements, internal accountability remains too weak to boost the institutional cultural shift

Progress needed regarding GAP II's five minimum standards

GAP II reporting is useful but could be improved

accountability has been the strengthening of the annual EAMR reporting system. In 2015, the EU introduced specific reporting requirements on GAP II implementation in the EAMR system, which were gradually strengthened in the following years.

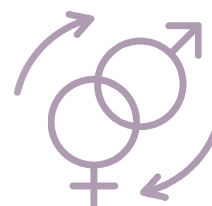
Notwithstanding this and other improvements, internal accountability mechanisms still suffer from weaknesses. There has been only a very limited integration of GEWE in job descriptions at EUD, HQ and EU MS level. Few targets were defined in the GAP II results frameworks and a few Institutional Culture Shift indicators were not fully reported on.

**GAP II identified five minimum standards of performance for a successful institutional culture shift.** Interviews show that these standards of performance are useful. GAP II reporting has monitored their attainment. However, there has been insufficient efforts (including from senior management) to understand why some of the standards were not met and learn from, for instance, the justification provided for the actions marked as 'G0' in the OECD DAC gender equality marker system<sup>29</sup>. As highlighted in the last GAP II annual report: ***“far more progress is still needed to implement the EU's gender equality policy in external relations and attain these five minimum performance standards.”*** The decline in compliance with the standard of selecting and reporting on GAP II objectives in various regions (e.g., Central America, Central and Western Africa, Asia and the Pacific) is a worrying trend. It also points to a lack of understanding of these standards of performance by EU staff and insufficient engagement of senior management to enforce them.

**Based on evidence from interviews, and the E-survey, GAP II reporting is useful but falls short in several ways.** There is an over-emphasis on quantitative indicators at the expense of results-oriented qualitative ones, reducing effectiveness for strategic use in identifying promising practises and lessons learnt. The format and data collection process are perceived as cumbersome and representing an additional workload with no specific additional resources allocated. As proof of both, some EUDs ended up resorting to external TA to support them in this exercise. There have also been difficulties with the gathering of EU MS contributions at partner country level through EUDs. EU MS development agencies at country level generally perceive GAP II reporting as a requirement imposed by the EU, not a joint tool for learning and accountability purpose, and some have not contributed to GAP II reporting despite being active in GEWE.

## EQ3 - Gender mainstreaming

To what extent has the EU ensured gender mainstreaming in EU external spending and non-spending actions?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**Even after several decades of efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming in EU external action, successes remained limited during the period under review. This reflects the slow changes in institutional culture highlighted above (see EQ2).**

While GAP II has resulted in increased attention to the production of gender analyses, these have tended to be one-off exercises and the

disappointing appropriation of these analyses by EUD staff and partners at national level has undermined the sustainability of efforts in the area. Acknowledging the shortage of data disaggregated by sex in most sectors and areas, EU support geared towards the strengthening of national statistical capacities has been too limited. However, as developed also in [EQ2](#), in many countries, the main problem has not been the lack of data or analyses but the lack of staff capacity, incentives, and senior management willingness to apply what capacity that there is.

<sup>29</sup> EU staff are required to justify why an action is marked as G0 i.e. it has no discernible gender dimension.

The mainstreaming concept is still not consistently understood by different EU staff and actors. International frameworks, which underpin the EU policy and strategic framework, recognise gender mainstreaming as an approach to achieve GEWE; one which can be reinforced by applying a rights-based approach and complemented by gender-targeted actions (see EQ1 – Policy and strategic framework).

However, fundamental constraints, particularly at EUD level, have too often reduced gender mainstreaming to a box-ticking exercise not contributing to any overarching gender equality strategic goal. Lacking a clear strategic goal, “priorities” (country level GAP II objectives) have often been selected “ex post”, based on what the EU was already funding. This contributed to EU support to GEWE being small and scattered (apart from in some sectors such as education). As gender must compete with other priorities, EU staff often perceive mainstreaming to add an additional layer of complexity to the already difficult process of formulating a new intervention. Gender expertise when available, whether in the form of a qualified GFP or external expertise, has too often been underexploited. Senior management enthusiasm is, in some cases, low, reducing accountability for failure to mainstream gender.

The level of targeted support has remained limited over the period under review; this is particularly true for the part of the EU portfolio funded through geographic instruments (bilateral/regional programming). In GAP II, the EU set a target of 85% of the new interventions to be marked as G1 or G2 (using the OECD gender equality policy maker system). While the last GAP II report published in 2019 shows steady progress towards

this target, the recent pace of this progress will be insufficient to reach the goal by the end of 2020. The gender-marker counts made in the context of GAP II give only a partial picture of the proportion of EU external action fully integrating a gender perspective since: i) they focus on the number of new interventions without taking into account their size (financial volume) or the overall increase in the volume of EU external action; ii) due to inconsistencies in the way the marker system is used, the approach does not fully address the quality of the integration of a gender perspective in the design of new interventions.

The introduction of GAP II has strengthened the EU’s engagement in GEWE policy dialogue, including high-level dialogue at country-, regional-, and global level. However, given the limited integration of GEWE into bilateral (geographic) programming, EU engagement in policy dialogue at country level has often consisted more of general advocacy on GEWE issues than concrete discussion of national priorities and how the EU can contribute to addressing them. GEWE is often presented aspirationally, not with a solid, evidence-based rationale why the country will directly benefit from addressing GEWE issues. There has also been a certain disconnect between EU engagement in policy dialogue at country level and EU support to GEWE through gender targeted (G2) or interventions where gender is mainstreamed (G1).

## Gender analysis

Systematic uptake and follow-up of increasingly available gender analyses still lacking

**While GAP II has resulted in increased attention to gender analysis, this has been uneven both in quantity and quality.** Moreover, take-up by EUD staff and other stakeholders (e.g., National Authorities, development partners, CSOs) has been disappointing, resulting in little collective ownership. Regarding sector-specific analyses (as opposed to “comprehensive” gender analysis), the country case studies point to an increased investment in this type of studies, with greater involvement of national stakeholders. While the EU financed little basic research on gender, most of the general gender studies that were carried out had a strong focus on EU programmatic aspects.

**Gender analysis has tended to be a one-off exercise; once done, rarely updated, gaps identified rarely filled.** The lack of appropriation of these gender analyses by EUD

staff and national partners undermines the sustainability of efforts in this area. Senior management vetoed bids by GFPs to use the bilateral programming Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF) envelope to carry out gender analyses, whether comprehensive or sector. Admittedly, because of the scarcity of gender-sensitive data and the complexity of the area, requiring both conventional socioeconomic methods with a gender-studies perspective, the costs of credible analysis are high. In country case studies, positive experiences of sector gender analysis have been illustrated by *Morocco* and *Zambia*.

**Good practice  
Gender analysis  
at sector level**

In Zambia, the EU funded a sector gender analysis built around an assessment of the existing measures taken to promote GEWE in the energy sector, the largest area of EU-Zambia bilateral cooperation (11th EDF). The study has been financed under a EU MS and other development partners. It has created synergies with other EU and EU MS-funded initiatives in the sector. By assessing the measures taken so far and shedding light on how inequality operates in this specific sector this sector-specific tool, specific sector intervention (Increased Access to Electricity and Renewable Energy Production – IAEREP). The assessment

has invoked and built upon the government of Zambia's history of commitment to promoting gender equality and has successfully involved key stakeholders from the civil society, including the private sector, as well as together with the broader Zambia Gender Analysis, has been used to inform the development of new interventions aimed at enhancing the policy, legal and capacity-building frameworks for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

▀ see *Zambia case study (Volume IV) for further details*

**Sex-disaggregated data too scarce to implement detailed gender analysis and adequately monitor GEWE actions**

**The shortage of data disaggregated by sex in all sectors and areas has been a major constraint.** The EU has supported the strengthening of national statistical capacities in only a few of the countries reviewed. However, in several countries (e.g., *Myanmar*), the EU was in advanced discussions on the provision of support to national statistical capacity on GEWE in 2019. Some countries (e.g., *Colombia*, *Morocco*) also show that the increased integration of GEWE into EU budget support and the development of Gender Responsive Budgeting resulted in increased EU efforts to strengthen national statistical capacities on GEWE. In some Eastern Partnerships countries such as *Georgia*, the EU provided TA to the national statistical agency (GEOSTAT) on gender-related indicators. There are also some regional specificities. In the *Enlargement region*, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has provided technical support to the national women machinery and statistical offices through an IPA-funded intervention aiming at developing EIGE's Gender Equality Index and a Gender Statistical Database for all countries in the region, under the scope of the project funded by the DG NEAR.

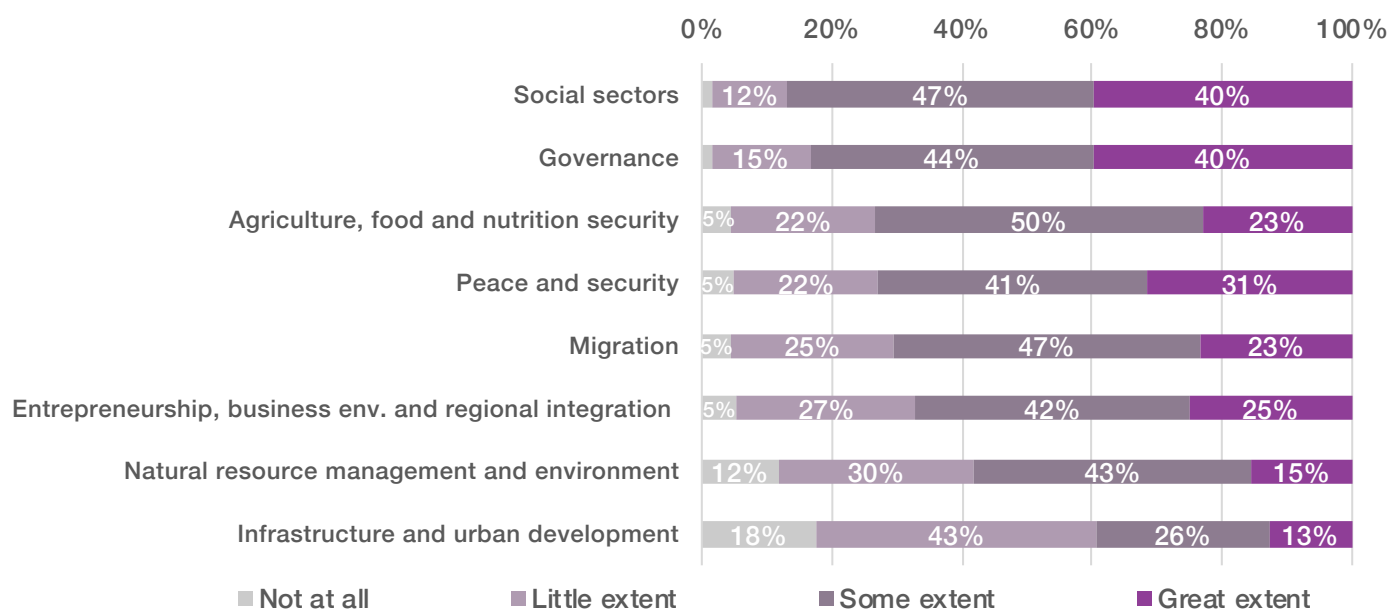
The scarcity of gender-sensitive data is not the main problem. The evaluation team reviewed 55 Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs) for the period 2014-2020 covering all regions, and in only one case found an explicit reference to a gender analysis. At the end of the evaluation period, supply of gender evidence sometimes exceeds demand for and actual utilisation of it. As developed also in answering EQ 2, the problem is not the lack of data or analyses; the problem is the absence of staff capacity, incentives and senior management will to apply what is there.

## Integration of a gender perspective in spending actions

**The volume of EU support marked as gender sensitive (G1 marker) substantially increased in the first years of the period under review but, it has remained flat thereafter.** In GAP II, the EU set a target of 85% of the new interventions to be marked as G1 or G2 (using the OECD gender equality policy marker system<sup>30</sup>). The last GAP II report reviewed by the team (published in 2019) shows steady progress towards this target, but the recent pace of this progress will be insufficient to reach the target by the end of 2020. In 2018, the number of new actions marked G1 or G2 reached: 55% in the *Neighbourhood* and *Enlargement* regions, compared to 43% in 2017; 68% in the other regions compared to 66% in 2017, 59% in 2016 and 52% in 2015. These indicators give only a partial picture of the proportion of G1/G2 interventions in EU external action since they focus on the number of new interventions without taking into account the size (financial volume) of these interventions. A more detailed analysis carried out by the team confirms an increase in the volume of EU support marked as gender sensitive (G1 marker) in the first years of the period under review, but highlights a stagnation thereafter, especially in terms of proportion of the overall volume of EU external action.

This analysis also confirms evidence from other sources of information (E-survey, interviews, review of project documentation), which points to a higher degree of integration of a gender perspective in the social sectors (education, health) than in areas such as trade, infrastructure and private sector investment. The social sectors have traditionally been the ones where a higher level of attention has been placed on GEWE issues and interviews show that EU staff managing interventions in these sectors is generally more gender sensitive than their colleagues'. One sector that stands out for an increasing degree of gender mainstreaming is Agriculture and Rural Development, where specific training has been developed and where partnerships have been established with organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) which have increasingly paid attention to GEWE in their actions.

### INTEGRATION OF GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN EU SUPPORT ACROSS SECTORS



Source: Evaluation's country-level E-Survey.

<sup>30</sup> The OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker is used to show the importance given to gender equality in the design (especially the objectives) of an intervention. It is based on a three-point scoring system: G2/Principal, G1/Significant, G0/Not targeted. For instance, G1 is often explained as gender equality being mainstreamed in the design of an intervention, without it being the principal reason for undertaking the intervention.



The gender marker system provides a too optimistic picture on gender mainstreaming and is still used inconsistently

**Overall, the evidence gathered shows some improvements in the integration of a gender perspective in sector interventions, but not to the extent suggested by the gender marker system.** The evidence analysed here suggests that the gender marker system presents two limitations. First, due to inconsistencies in the way it has been applied, it is not possible to make definitive observations on the extent of the evolution in gender mainstreaming in EU external action. Second, the quantitative scoring approach does not address the quality of gender perspective integrated in the design of new interventions i.e., many interventions marked G1 are actually not integrating well a gender perspective – see further details below.

However, the evidence gathered from other sources (E-survey, interviews at the general level, GAP II reporting, interviews and documentary review carried out in the context of the case studies) points to some positive trends in both quantity and quality (e.g., *Morocco, Jamaica, and Colombia*, in all three of which gender-related indicators have been increasingly well integrated in budget support).

Gender mainstreaming in EU external support is too often still limited to a box-ticking exercise, not contributing to any overarching strategic goal

**Although there have been significant improvements in some countries, the evaluation reveals many limitations in the way gender has been mainstreamed in EU external action in recent years.** In most countries/regions, gender mainstreaming tends to be reduced to a simple perspective emphasising sex-disaggregated data, identification of women as a target group, and sometimes concentration on economic rather than more fundamental social, cultural, and political aspects of GEWE. Broader issues of power relations are rarely made explicit or addressed. Sections on cross-cutting issues in programming and project design templates are often used reactively and hastily rather than as a planning guide.

The EU is not the only organisation facing challenges in applying gender mainstreaming. Over the last two decades, multiple studies<sup>31</sup> have documented the failure of international organisations regarding gender mainstreaming, due to lack of priority, resources and accountability, but also to challenges in staff understanding of what gender mainstreaming really meant. As highlighted below, the EU appears to have only partially learned from the experience gained on gender mainstreaming by other multilateral and bilateral cooperation institutions.

To improve gender mainstreaming, the EU has taken various measures at HQ and EUD level, especially since the launch of GAP II. At the overall level, the EU has invested in increasing the availability of gender analysis (see above) as well as in expanding gender training (see [EQ2 - Leadership and accountability](#)). There have also been improvements in the way GEWE is integrated in EU procedures including, for instance, adjustments made to the DG DEVCO “Companion to financial and contractual procedures” and the action document template used for the design of new interventions to better integrate a human rights-based approach, which is also used by DG NEAR. Interviews highlight some positive contributions of all these measures to enhancing gender mainstreaming in EU external actions.

However, fundamental constraints, particularly at EUD level, have too often reduced gender mainstreaming to a box-ticking exercise not contributing to any overarching gender equality strategic goal (see [EQ1 - Policy and strategic framework](#)). Lacking a clear strategic goal, GAP II objectives have often been selected ex-post based on what the EU was already funding. This contributed to EU support to GEWE, apart from areas with obvious gender implications, as in health and education, being often small and scattered.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., NORAD (2006): Lessons from Evaluations of Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation.

Good practice  
Action document

In Zambia, the EU has increasingly mainstreamed GEWE in non-targeted sector programmes. These efforts have transpired, for instance, in action documents such as that of the intervention 'Support to the Sustainable Commercialisation of Zambia's Smallholder Farmers', financed through the 11th EDF. Gender equality is considered to be a significant objective of the intervention. The action document proposes to mainstream gender equality into the result areas, activities and indicators, and to commit to further gender analysis, with a proposed focus on women's economic empowerment and nutrition. GEWE is integrated into all

four results areas. In addition, the action document foresees the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, and almost all output indicators in the logframe are disaggregated by sex. Overall, most sections of the document (including risks and lessons learnt sections) integrate GEWE-related elements, with a window for improvement regarding the strengthening of its gender analysis and intervention logic.

➤ see *Zambia case study (Volume IV) for further details*

Too many  
obstacles and  
challenges  
remain at EUD  
level to fully  
mainstream  
GEWE

What are the principal constraints at EUD level? **Instead of being mainstreamed in EU external action, gender competes with other priorities at various levels and the mainstreaming concept is still not consistently understood.** EU staff, pressed for time, may have little appetite for gender mainstreaming if they perceive it to add an additional layer of complexity to the already difficult process of formulating a new intervention – particularly if the partner government has little interest in GEWE. The mainstreaming concept – only vaguely presented in GAP II – is still not consistently understood by different EU staff and actors (see EQ1 - Policy and strategic framework). Gender expertise when available, whether in the form of a qualified GFP or external expertise, too often is underexploited. The result repeatedly emerges from country case studies: the combination of weak partner interest, reduced accountability due to low engagement by senior management and the lack of clear EU strategic orientation at the country level results in gender-sensitive interventions being small and scattered, in many cases implemented by CSOs, with corresponding failure to fully engage governments. While interviews highlight that some staff within the EU still debate the merits of pursuing 'fundamental and emancipatory' or 'pragmatic and incremental change', the fact is that EU support has resulted in little of either one.

Gender-targeted  
support is still  
too low to foster  
gender  
mainstreaming

**The level of gender-targeted support has remained low over the period under review; this is particularly true for the part of the EU portfolio funded through geographic instruments (bilateral/regional programming).** While there has been an upward trend in EU-funded targeted gender support (in absolute values) during the period under review<sup>32</sup>, targeted support has remained below 3% of all support funded through the EU external financing instruments, a share that seems to have fluctuated around 2% in recent years<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, the increase in absolute values mainly resulted from a surge in targeted support in 2018 (almost +90% compared to the previous year), which is largely explained by the EU-UN global Spotlight Initiative to eliminate VAWG (EUR 220 million contracted in 2018). Excluding this initiative, there was no upward trend

<sup>32</sup> The trend is visible for both the period 2010-2018 in the IPA region and the period 2014-2018 in the other regions.

<sup>33</sup> These figures correspond to estimations made by the evaluation team based on the information available. Several issues limit the possibility to carry out a precise calculation of the amounts going to gender-targeted support. In particular, the gender marker system has not been used in a consistent way across years and EU services, which means that interventions marked as G2 do not correctly reflect the EU portfolio of gender-targeted support. A first analysis of the EU portfolio performed by the team showed that a small proportion of interventions marked as G0, i.e. no gender dimension in the intervention, did in fact target gender explicitly, hinting at issues pertaining to the usage and accuracy of the gender marker. The fact that in some cases the marker is applied at decision level and others at contract level also points into the direction of a lack of coherence and consistency in its use. The need to compile data from different databases which don't easily allow to extract information in the same way (e.g. details on EU trust fund interventions are recorded in a different database) limit the possibility to make precise calculations. However, the team has implemented various corrective measures to ensure a high degree of consistency in the final calculations and reduce margins of error. The team thus considers these estimations as very close to the reality.

in geographic instrument funding going to gender targeted support.

The analysis carried out at the level of the country case studies confirms the absence of an upward trend in the volume of targeted interventions. In some countries (e.g., *Bangladesh* and *Jamaica*), gender-targeted interventions represented a minor proportion (3% and 5%, respectively) of the country-level support (contracted amounts) funded through both thematic and geographic instruments during the period 2014-2018. Although positive evolutions can be observed in terms of gender mainstreaming, this low level of targeted support has not been compensated by a substantial increase in quantity and quality in gender mainstreaming.

Good practice  
**Use of gender-targeted / earmarked funds**

In the Pacific region, the regional EU has increasingly started to mainstream GEWE in non-targeted regional programmes. The Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP), financed in partnership with Sweden, has been aimed at supporting sustainable management and development of fisheries in the region. PEUMP has integrated a strong gender and human rights-based approach since its design, recognising the need to put GEWE at the core of sustainable development and including gender inclusive Key Result Areas. A specific provision has been made to ensure the recruitment of a gender expert

(full-time staff within the Programme Management Unit) for the entire duration of the programme, and at least EUR 1.5 million (around 3% of the total budget) has been earmarked to ensure that the project is implemented in a gender-sensitive way and adequately mainstreamed. In addition, the programme foresees specific training, capacity building and research activities on gender and RBA with key stakeholders and programme staff.

➤ see *Pacific region case study (Volume IV)* for further details

## Integration of a gender perspective in non-spending actions

Strengthened engagement of EU in high-level policy dialogue on GEWE

**The introduction of GAP II has strengthened the EU's engagement in policy dialogue, including high-level dialogue, on GEWE.** The case studies reveal many examples where Heads of Delegation have raised GEWE-related issues in their dialogue with national counterparts, the high level of visibility of such efforts, and the potential role they can play in strengthening actions supported in the context of specific EU-funded interventions. As highlighted in the GAP II reporting and confirmed through interviews, VAWG, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, and the implementation of the WPS agenda have been standing items of political and human rights dialogues/sub-committees. during the period under review. The EU has also engaged in ad hoc discussions on GEWE issues (e.g., in relation to the WPS agenda or issues of women's economic empowerment) with regional/inter-governmental bodies such as the African Union (AU). At the global level, the EU was active in all relevant multilateral fora during the period under review. This includes participation of European actors (EC/EEAS and EU MS) in the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the quarterly sessions of United Nations Human Rights Council and the annual session of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee. The EU has also actively advocated for GEWE in other for a such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the G7 Summit.

Limited integration of dialogue on GEWE into bilateral (country) programming

However, EU engagement in policy dialogue at country level has often consisted more in general advocacy on GEWE issues than concrete discussion of national priorities in the area of GEWE and how the EU can contribute to addressing them. The evidence gathered through the case studies or the review of the general documentation (e.g., GAP II reporting) shows a strong engagement of EUD and EU MS staff in special country level events such as the ones frequently organised around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) in November and the International Women's Day in March of each year. Top management (Ambassador or Head of Cooperation level) have often actively taken part in these events. In several instances (e.g., *Kosovo*, *Chad*), there have also been ad hoc exchanges between the EU top management and "key influencers" such as women parliamentarians.

However, given the limited integration of GEWE into bilateral (geographic) programming, dialogue on GEWE has often represented more an opportunity to make joint hortatory statements than an opportunity to discuss strategic options and how to pursue shared GEWE-related goals through cooperation. In the reviewed countries, the EU engagement in GEWE-related high-level dialogue has had the tendency to be only weakly connected to the EU support provided through bilateral programmes. Instances where strong policy dialogue took place are limited to a few cases (e.g., *Morocco*, *Chad*) where large gender-targeted support programme were implemented by the EU. The example of *Colombia* (Agriculture / Rural Development sector) shows that the integration of GEWE into budget support (through specific indicators) has created strong opportunities for policy dialogue on GEWE.

In general, from a beneficiary point of view (and sometimes from EUD staff point of view, as well), GEWE has often remained a minor irritant, which may also mean that it is not being presented well by the EU and other stakeholders involved in policy discussions at country level with a solid, evidence-based rationale behind it that shows how the country will directly benefit from addressing GEWE issues. As a result, the integration of a gender perspective in sector dialogue, including in policy dialogue related to budget support, has usually been limited.

The fact that gender is often not high on the priority list of partner countries' governments partially explains the general limited scope/depth of the GEWE-related policy dialogue that took place in recent years. As also discussed under [EQ5](#), the EU's engagement with national women's machinery has often been limited, and that machinery (despite EU support to it in a few instances) has often been marginalised in the broader partner country institutional framework. While some exceptions exist (e.g., *Morocco*, *Serbia*) and despite a strong partnership at the global level, there is limited evidence that UN agencies (e.g., UN Women) and European actors at country level (EUD and EU MS local embassies/agencies) have established a strong joint approach to policy dialogue in the area of GEWE.

Good practice Engagement in dialogue in Enlargement region

In the **Enlargement region** the EU has successfully approached policy dialogue in the area of GEWE at country level by building upon the longstanding expertise of UN agencies, particularly UN Women, in supporting and liaising with local authorities and gender equality mechanisms. In both **Albania and Serbia**, for instance, the EU has supported UN Women's local chapters in implementing Gender Equality Facilities (GEF) to technically support the adoption of EU gender equality

*acquis*. These GEFs result from policy dialogue between national authorities, UN Women, the EU and EU MS.

In Kosovo, the EUO/EUSR is an active member of the Security Gender Group (SGG), established in 2009 by UN Women and co-chaired by UN Women, the OSCE and KWN. In 2019, the group achieved the amendment of the criminal code.

▀ see *Enlargement region and Kosovo case studies (Volume IV)* for further details

## EQ4 - Coordination and EU added value

To what extent has the EU maximized the EU added value and European cooperation potential in external action related to GEWE?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**Although the full potential of joint EU programming and implementation is still to be harnessed, EU external action has added value to what EU MS could have achieved on their own related to GEWE. This applies especially to joint work in international fora; less so, and with high variability, to cooperation at the country level.**

At HQ level, coordination activities between the main European actors involved in external action in the area of GEWE (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI, EEAS and EU MS) took place on a regular basis. However, these activities often focussed on information sharing and, in some cases, GEWE-related training. Meetings within the EU MS group of gender experts have, to some extent, been a source for lessons learning and networking. Yearly GFPs meetings in Brussels have been a useful opportunity to discuss and collectively reflect on the implementation of GAP II.

Exchanges with other European actors have been more uneven. The EC (DG NEAR) has strengthened its linkages with the EIGE in recent years. Exchanges on GEWE between the main European actors involved in EU external action and the European Investment Bank remained limited. While DG JUST, the EC's line DG leading on gender equality within the EU, has regularly exchanged with EEAS, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR on EU external action related to GEWE, more bridges could have been built between the work on GEWE within the EU and EU external action.

At the country level, overall coordination between the EU and EU MS has been good, and there have been efforts to integrate GEWE in EU joint programming, although the degree and quality of these efforts varied from one country to another. The EU has increasingly added value to the European external actions through the leverage exercised as a leading actor in policy dialogue, its role in donor coordination, its close partnership with CSOs, and in many – but not all – cases simply due to its position as the largest European donors in terms of funding volume. However, EU MS have often been guided and bound by their own national country or regional strategies and the EU's scope to directly exert influence over the EU MS approaches to GEWE in general and gender mainstreaming mechanisms has been limited. Moreover, because of inadequate processes, GAP II reporting has contributed only to some extent to strengthening coordination between European actors at country level.

While coordination mechanisms covering GEWE at country and HQ level are operational, they do not achieve their full potential to make an effective contribution to policy monitoring and joint development of strategy and guidance for the implementation of EU commitments in the area of GEWE. In particular, beyond joint contributions to GAP II reporting and a small number of joint efforts in the context of the production of gender analyses, joint European GEWE-related initiatives in the area of monitoring, evaluation and research have remained limited.

## Coordination between European actors

**Close coordination on GEWE between European actors in high level dialogues**

**In international fora, the EU and EU MS generally, but not always, speak with one voice on GEWE.** As highlighted above (see EQ3 - Gender mainstreaming), the EU has actively coordinated with EU MS to come up with joint positions in international fora such as the Commission on the Status of Women. Although divergences have been apparent on a few topics (e.g., sexual and reproductive health<sup>34</sup>), in general, the EU and EU MS

<sup>34</sup> The increased resistance in several EU MS towards the inclusion of SRHR components in EU policy (particularly on abortion) appears to have hampered EU's ability to position itself as a global leader on SRHR. For further details, see, for instance, ECDPM (2019) 'SRHR – Opportunities in EU external action beyond 2020' and EP/FEMM Committee (2018) 'Study on SRHR and the implication of conscientious objection'.

have spoken with one voice on GEWE in these fora. In recent years, joint efforts were particularly visible in relation to the development of the WPS agenda at global level.

**At the country level, EU Delegations and EU Member States' embassies use informal and formal public and political events,** such as launch events for programmes or campaigns to feature gender equality issues exclusively or prominently. The same applies to some high-profile occasions, e.g., the International Women's Day, the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia or the 16 Days of Activism on GBV. However, this is by no means a fully systematic approach.

Coordination mechanisms covering GEWE at HQ level do not fully achieve their potential yet

**At HQ level, while coordination mechanisms covering GEWE seem to be functioning, they do not fully achieve their potential yet in making an effective contribution to policy monitoring and joint development of strategy and guidance for the implementation of EU commitments in the area of GEWE.** Joint activities between European actors, e.g., EC, EEAS, EU MS and EU agencies have been mainly confined to the exchange of ideas and GEWE related training, and to a lesser extent to the joint development of strategy and policy monitoring. Interviewees saw a stronger role for the EC to expand on the current HQ level exchanges in order to strengthen the sharing of lessons learned, discuss division of labour and to work together more closely. EEAS as well as each Commission Directorate-Generals / Services and each EUD have appointed GFPs who have played an important role in advising and coordinating all efforts and actions related to the implementation of GAP II. The CSDP missions and operations already had a GFP. GFPs from EUDs, CSDP missions and HQ (DEVCO, NEAR, ECHO and FPI) gather during a few days once a year in Brussels to exchange information and good practices. This event has been a useful opportunity to discuss and collectively reflect on the implementation of GAP II, including on issues such as gender mainstreaming in EU external action and the role of media in addressing VAWG.<sup>35</sup>

Some collaboration between EC services (esp. DG NEAR) and the EIGE has also taken place. In 2013, shortly after starting its activities (in 2010), EIGE initiated its cooperation in the *Enlargement* region with an IPA-funded programme focussing on providing expertise and technical support to replicate monitoring methods and tools used in the EU, such as EIGE's Gender Equality Index and Gender Statistics Database. In the *Enlargement* region, EIGE also coordinates a regional platform for cooperation on GEWE which involves a variety of stakeholders at EU (incl. DG NEAR, DG JUST) and partner country level, meeting bi-annually.

DG JUST, the EC's line DG that was leading on gender equality within the EU during the period under review, has been regularly involved in exchanges with EEAS, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR on EU external action related to GEWE. However, some interviewees (including in the Neighbourhood South region) highlighted that more bridges could have been built between the work on GEWE within the EU and EU external action.

Regular exchanges within the EU MS group of gender experts

**The value of twice-yearly EU MS group of gender experts mostly lies in exchange of experience and lessons, in networking as such, thus providing inputs also in further developing own approaches, e.g.:**

- *Sweden's* participation in the Gender focal point network at the EU level providing, inter alia, concrete inputs and proposing links to the discussions and meetings of the EU Task Force for WPS.
- The EU Gender Expert Group's meetings allowing *France* to draw on useful lessons and networking to support the country's own approach to integrating GEWE in its foreign policy; the exchanges also helping to coordinate shared positions in the context of the G7, which France presided in 2019.

Some EU MS coordinated with EEAS on training related to WPS. At EU level, some

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?page=2,11,1096>

exchanges on GEWE also took place in CODEV meetings. EU MS have been strongly involved in the development of external action financing instruments, including in the setting of targets such as the 85% target related to the number of EU-funded interventions marked as G1 or G2 in the OECD policy marker system (see EQ2 - Leadership and accountability).<sup>36</sup>

Good coordination between European actors at the country level

**At the country level, overall coordination between the EU and EU MS is usually good.** While the situation varies from one country to another and the number of joint support initiatives remains limited, the cases studies did not reveal any major differences between the geographic regions nor in relation to the development level of the respective countries. In general, the EU has taken an active (often leading) role in donor coordination.

Cooperation on monitoring, evaluation and research remain limited

**Beyond joint contributions to GAP II reporting<sup>37</sup> and a small number of joint efforts in the context of the production of gender analyses at partner country level, joint European GEWE-related initiatives in the area of monitoring, evaluation and research at HQ, regional and country level remain limited.** Even in countries where the EU and some EU MS active in the area of GEWE developed a joint country-level GAP (e.g., *Chad*), this merely supported information sharing and did not serve as a framework for strategic planning or monitoring of European efforts in this area. A notable exception is the 2019 report '*Gender-based Discrimination and Labour in the Western Balkans*' which was co-funded by the EU and Sweden and is one of the very few joint initiatives at multi-country level.

There is an overall opening for greater EU-MS joint assessment, and programming in the area of gender

**There have been genuine efforts to integrate GEWE in EU joint programming although the degree and quality of gender mainstreaming in joint programming processes varies from one country to another.** The GAP II Report 2018 presents a generally positive balance sheet of coordination, including in terms of EU joint programming. However, *Palestine* is given as the only concrete example where "*the new 'Gender Country Profile' contained recommendations on the use of the GAP II's objectives and informed the EU's joint programming results-oriented framework for 2017-2020, which was extensively sex-disaggregated.*"

During the period under review, joint programming in the area of GEWE was still at its early stages. It has suffered from the challenges inherent to joint programming, including diverging political priorities in some contexts and the existence of different programming cycles between the EU and EU MS. There has also been some disconnect between joint programming processes and other processes involving EU MS at country level such as CSO Roadmap. However, interviews confirm that: i) EU joint programming has increased in recent years and, in several countries, the EU and EU MS made efforts to integrate GEWE in this process; ii) EU joint programming is expected to increase substantially in the coming years. The documentary review shows that, in some countries, joint programming where GEWE is well integrated is already under way. For example, in *Burkina Faso* the EU and MS agreed on a detailed work plan, provisions for close cooperation and coordination, including a mapping of gender-related interventions which is de facto an outline for a division of labour. Gender is also prominently and comprehensively included in joint programming processes for *Honduras* based on a 2018 gender analysis, and – in a less detailed approach – in joint programming for *Senegal*. While the same applies to a few countries included in the sample, with the strongest evidence present for the ongoing process in for example *Morocco*, in other countries joint programming was absent, which made it difficult to integrate GEWE in an overall joint process involving EU MS.

<sup>36</sup> See also [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628251/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628251\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628251/EPRS_BRI(2018)628251_EN.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> See also the section below on Complementarity between European actors.

## Complementarity between European actors

A broad range of mechanisms helps achieving some degree of complementarity at country level, despite the absence of an overall approach

**While there is no general institutionalised or commonly agreed approach to coordination on GEWE in general, and division of labour and burden-sharing in particular, in many cases complementarity and, to a lesser extent, synergies have been achieved through a broad range of formal and informal as well as regular and *ad hoc* mechanisms.**

E-Survey results at country level provide an overall rather positive picture on complementarity: a clear majority was to a great extent or some extent of the view that EU support has been complementary to the support provided by other international development partners (82%), and that it promoted the development of joint actions with other international development partners (incl. EU MS) (74%).

Among other, regular exchanges between EUD and EU MS and joint participation in working and coordination groups, which are led by either European or non-European actors (e.g., *Kosovo, Lebanon, Zambia*) were contributors to enhancing complementarity. Complementarity was also achieved through: i) coordinated positions in policy dialogues (e.g., *Brazil, Zambia*); ii) coordination within trust funds (e.g., *Myanmar, Colombia*) or with regards to budget support (e.g., *Jamaica*); and iii) jointly agreed objectives related to gender interventions or speaking with one voice on gender among European actors (e.g., *Chad, Zambia, Afghanistan, Myanmar*). Myanmar is a case in point: while there is no formally agreed division of labour in the specific area of GEWE, a high level of complementarity exists in the approaches, funding and non-funding actions of the EU and EU MS.

The small number of positive examples of synergies achieved between European actors includes the Western Balkans region where the EU and some EU MS (e.g., *Sweden* and *Austria*) have provided complementary support to the same organisations working in the area of VAWG, which has indirectly created synergies between these actions. However, there is no evidence that synergies were actively sought. In some countries such as Afghanistan, some synergies in EU-EU MS relations were created through the joint release of the new Roadmap for engagement with the civil society. In *Afghanistan*, the Roadmap includes a short analysis of gender-responsive programming. Among the country case studies, only in *Myanmar* and, to a lesser extent, *Brazil* has EU has been proactively developing and promoting synergies at national and regional level and with a wide range of stakeholders. In *Morocco*, there have been some recent promising examples of synergies, particularly through the provision of budget support, created between EU and EU MS efforts in the area of GEWE

Good practice  
**Complementarity  
between the EU  
and EU MS**

Coordination between the EU and EU MS on gender issues in Colombia have increasingly become systematic over the years, achieving good complementarity and certain level of articulation, particularly in relation to the post-Peace Accords context and rural development. Though no formal division of labour is in place, the EU, Sweden and Spain have achieved a consistent level of complementarity on these

issues. While, for instance, the EU has supported women's networks that mainstreamed gender equality and women's rights during the peace process and pleaded for gender-responsive provisions in the Peace Accords, Sweden has taken part in the International Accompaniment Component of the Final Peace Accord with a specific responsibility to promote and support a gender-sensitive



approach to the implementation of the stipulations of the Agreement. Spain, on its part, together with the EU, FAO and UN Women has been an instrumental actor in supporting the rural development agenda and has

advocated for stronger normative frameworks related to VAWG, including in the post-conflict context.

▀ see *Colombia case study (Volume IV) for further details*

**GAP II: an integrative tool, but an inadequate reporting process**

**While GAP II has provided a conducive framework for joint efforts, GAP II reporting has contributed only to some extent to strengthening coordination between European actors.** The GAP II 2018 report indicates that “*the implementation of the GAP II is playing a key role in streamlining and leveraging resources, as well as strengthening the voice of the EU in support of GEWE. While much has been achieved thus far, much still remains to be done*”. The integrative effect of GAP II is confirmed by some country case studies. In Colombia, coordination and consultation on GEWE have become more systematic in the context of GAP II.

However, as already highlighted above (see EQ2 - *Leadership and accountability*) GAP II reporting has faced many challenges. In particular, the participation of EU MS present in a given county in GAP II reporting has been uneven. The reporting process has been perceived as very cumbersome by many EU MS (as well as EU staff in EUDs) and GAP II has sometimes been seen by EU MS staff deployed at country level as an EU and not an EU-EU MS framework. Most of the observations from the country level on the inadequacy of the current reporting process coincide with the points highlighted in interviews carried out with EU MS at HQ level.

## EU added value

**The EU has clearly added value in the area of GEWE to the actions of the EU MS**

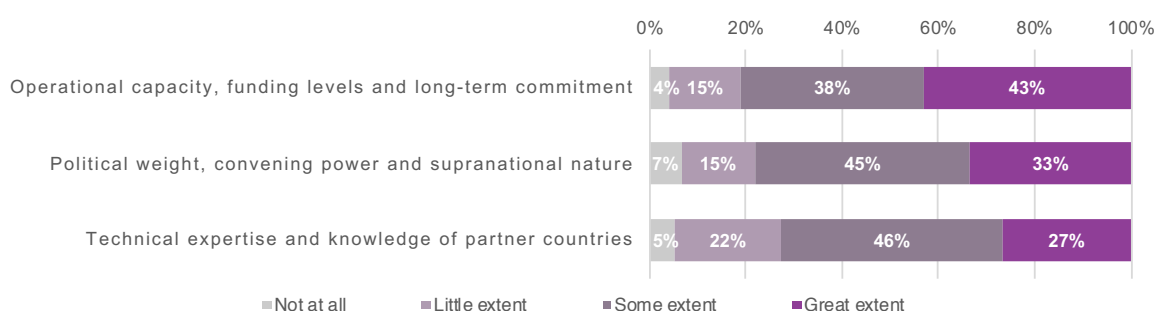
**In most countries analysed, the EU added value to the European external actions through its presence in a broad range of sectors, its coordination efforts, its leverage exercised as a leading actor in political and policy dialogues, its close partnership with CSOs and in many – but not all – cases simply due to its position as the largest European donors in terms of funding volume.** This finding clearly emerges from the case studies, from the E-survey reports and from numerous additional interviews. For instance, a comparison of the E-Survey Report at HQ level and the E-Survey Report at country level shows a strong convergence. The overwhelming majority of respondent groups agree to a great or some extent that the EU possesses political, operational and technical value added compared to the EU MS, with operational added value achieving the highest combined scores.

**Actions of EU MS in the area of GEWE are guided and bound by their own political priorities**

**While the EU has actively tried – often successfully – to enhance coordination on GEWE with EU MS at partner country level, there is no direct evidence that EU MS have adopted their own GEWE planning and gender mainstreaming mechanisms at country and global level due to influence and support of the Commission/EEAS.** As the result of regular EU-EU MS exchanges on gender-related issues within a variety of contexts and fora at country level and, to a lesser extent, at regional levels, EU and EU MS’ approaches to GEWE tend to converge towards joint positions vis-à-vis national governments and other stakeholders. In the field of research and innovation, the EC promotes an institutional change approach, including support to research organisations for the implementation of gender equality plans (GEPs). GEPs will become an eligibility criterion for legal entities applying for funding under the next framework programme, Horizon Europe. EU’s firm commitment to gender equality has started being a catalyser for action at national level.

However, the EU's scope to directly exert influence over the EU MS approaches to GEWE in general and gender mainstreaming mechanisms, in particular, is generally limited but varies across EU MS. *Sweden* does not seem to have been guided by the EU's approach and established an active and strong network of partnerships with other key global level GEWE stakeholders based on the country's own concepts and strategies. In the case of *France*, the country's Gender and Development (GAD) strategy 2013-2017 and its International Strategy on Gender Equality 2018-2022 have been partly guided by GAP I and GAP II. In general, in their GEWE-related actions at country level, the EU MS have often been more guided by the specific priorities of their bilateral cooperation with the country than by the EU support to GEWE.

## EU ADDED VALUE



Source: Evaluation's country-level E-Survey

## EQ5 - Partnerships

To what extent have the European actors ensured partnerships on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment with other key stakeholders at local, national, regional and international level ?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**While European actors have forged partnerships and joint initiatives with relevant international organisations such as UN agencies, coordination with these organisations at country level, especially to strengthen policy dialogue and the role played by national women machineries in national policy processes, has remained insufficient. Moreover, while CSOs have often been a cornerstone for implementation of EU support, the quality of partnerships has been uneven, and the challenge of adequately responding to needs of grass-roots organisations remains unresolved.**

The EU and EU MS have supported all major global initiatives on GEWE during the period under review. At the global level, the EU has established strong linkages with UN agencies – including in the form of large joint initiatives – and, in some regions, with

other international organisations such as the Council of Europe. However, collaboration with UN agencies was often more confined to the funding of specific joint initiatives than on establishing partnerships at the technical level.

In almost all countries reviewed, the EU has also actively participated in donor coordination groups and fora; in some cases with positive effects on the local stakeholders' ability to engage with GEWE. However, GEWE-related joint initiatives (between European actors and other key stakeholders) in the area of monitoring and evaluation have been limited. Some EU MS have provided substantial long-term support to National Women's Machineries and, although not a lead actor in several countries, the EU has also increasingly been engaged in this area.

The EU has actively supported CSOs<sup>38</sup> as actors in

<sup>38</sup> According to the EU definition (COM(2012)492), CSOs "include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations." Where possible, this evaluation has distinguished five general categories of CSOs: i) international NGOs/think tanks, ii) national NGOs (not exclusively focussing on actions in the area of GEWE), iii) women's organisations and networks at national level, iv) grass-roots organisations; v) other organisations.

project implementation in the area of GEWE and EU programming has, generally, been based on active consultations with CSOs (especially international and national NGOs/think tanks). However, the degree and quality of the partnership established with CSOs, including women's

organisations and networks, varied considerably between countries. Moreover, the EU has struggled to adequately respond to the specific needs of grass-roots organisations.

## Partnerships at global level

**EU and EU MS are strong global players in the area of GEWE**

**In the context of high-level meetings, the EU and EU MS have actively sought to strengthen linkages with other major global players active in the area of GEWE.** A very broad majority of respondents to the E-survey at HQ level are convinced that the EU has actively promoted coordination and exchange of information between European actors and other key stakeholders (e.g., UN agencies) at global level. Cornerstones of the EU's global partnerships in the area of GEWE are the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET). The EU and EU MS agreed on making a single Official European Statement in CSW meetings; coordination on EU side is usually ensured by the EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and DG JUST, with direct involvement from DG DEVCO and DG NEAR or other line DGs such as DG EMPL, depending on the topics.

The EU has made some strategic use of other high-level meetings to promote GEWE. On the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2019, the EU and the UN hosted a high-level event on the Spotlight Initiative, inviting all countries, leaders, civil society representatives and local ambassadors to join the movement and take action to end VAWG. In the context of the G7 Summit, the EU and Canada co-chaired the first-ever meeting of women foreign ministers in September 2018. This gathering, convened at the highest political level, aimed to identify innovative ways of jointly addressing crucial foreign policy challenges. Participant pledged to build a network of governments and CSOs to advance GEWE. At the ministerial meeting, the G7 also launched the 'WPS Initiative', wherein members identified specific partner countries for enhanced implementation. The EU selected Bosnia and Herzegovina. In August 2018, the initiative's efforts led to the establishment of a roadmap for its implementation. Furthermore, 'WPS' was chosen as the first priority in the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on crisis management for the 2019-2021 period.

The three EU MS case studies clearly evidence their substantial efforts in the GEWE arena. Evaluations of the implementation of France's first two (of three) consecutive gender strategies conclude that the country actively promoted GEWE in international fora. In particular, *France* has played a leading role in ensuring the integration of a gender dimension in the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. France chose "fighting against inequality" as a key focus area of its G7 Presidency in 2019. It led to the adoption of a specific G7 Declaration on GEWE and, at EU level, to a campaign promoting the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (shortly 'the Istanbul Convention'). Similarly, *Germany* has used its presidencies or memberships of global fora (e.g., G7, G20, UN's WPS focal points network) to promote GEWE in the global agenda. Examples include Germany's active

support to the integration a strong gender dimension in the SDGs. Sweden has also established an active and strong network of partnerships with other key global level GEWE stakeholders. Among many initiatives, the Government of Sweden initiated a network of women mediators who are active around the world and contributed to the establishment of the Friends of Gender Equality Group at the OECD.

EU support to GEWE has actively promoted the development of joint actions with other international development partners, often with a focus on funding UN-implemented initiatives

**Collaboration with UN agencies has substantially increased during the period under review, although with more emphasis on the funding of specific joint initiatives than on establishing partnerships at the technical level.** According to interviews, there have been regular and very productive exchanges between EC services and UN agencies on GEWE during the period under review. The EU has regularly joined forces with International Labour Organisation (ILO) to initiate large multi-country programmes. In particular, in January 2018, the EU, UN Women and the ILO began a three-year programme, WE EMPOWER (funded by the Partnership Instrument) to promote economic empowerment of women at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries.<sup>39</sup> This initiative was replicated by the Partnership Instrument in Latin America (in early 2018) and Asia (in early 2019).

The EU has funded multiple initiatives led by UN Women at regional level. Notable examples include large programmes on VAWG in the *Enlargement* region and in the *Pacific* (see EQ7 - Effects on physical and psychological integrity). An increased collaboration also took place between DG DEVCO and UN agencies working on food security, nutrition and agriculture. The 2016 High-level event "Step It Up Together with Rural Women to End Hunger and Poverty" organized in Rome by FAO and the EU, in close collaboration with IFAD, WFP and UN Women, has been a major milestone in the partnership between the EU and the Rome-based agencies.

The partnership between the EU and UN agencies culminated with the launch of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund 'Spotlight Initiative' in September 2017. This global initiative, capitalised by an initial commitment of EUR 500 million, led to the design of specific regional programmes in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

These initiatives confirm the perception of almost all respondents to the E-survey at HQ level, i.e. that the EU support to GEWE has actively promoted the development of joint actions with other international development partners.

## Coordination at country level

An active engagement in donor coordination, but uneven support to NWM

**In almost all countries reviewed, the EU actively participated in donor coordination groups and fora, with, in some cases, some positive effects on the ability of local stakeholders' ability to engage with GEWE. However, in several cases, despite important needs to strengthen the National Women's Machineries, the EU has not been among the lead actors in this area.** Examples for contributions to nationally-led gender coordination mechanisms / National Women's Machineries include *Chad, Colombia, Morocco, Myanmar* and *Serbia*. However, the country case studies (see Volume IV) clearly evidence that the degree and quality of EU contributions differed according to the specific national situation and context conditions and often the extent to which the respective governments had already established or at least supported coordination mechanisms. A more detailed analysis reveals that the mere existence of a national coordination mechanism is not sufficient to effectively promote GEWE and that much depends on the level of stakeholder commitment ownership, such as this was case in *Myanmar*. Moreover, in several instances, other organisations such as UN WOMEN and UNFPA have had a more active role (including through a more long-term partnership) than the EU regarding strengthening National Women's Machineries.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/projects/we-empower-g7>

Results of the E-survey at country level broadly confirm the findings of the country sample analysis. A majority of the respondents thought that the EU relied on national coordination mechanisms / national women's machineries; however, a smaller share of the respondents considered that the EU aimed at strengthening national coordination mechanisms / national women's machineries. Interestingly, respondents from EUDs tend to have a more negative perception of the 'extent on which the EU rely on and strengthen national coordination mechanisms and national women's machineries' than other stakeholder groups who participated in the survey.

Despite limited overall joint efforts in the area of M&E, some promising practices at the local level emerge

**Overall, there is limited information and data available on GEWE-related joint initiatives (between European actors and other key stakeholders) carried out in the area of monitoring and evaluation. This points to limited joint efforts in this area.**

The GAP II 2018 main report does not mention approaches to, and examples of, joint monitoring and evaluation but indicates "*the often-limited use of gender analysis for action design, and of sex-disaggregated data for action monitoring and evaluation*", a finding confirmed by the evaluation team in several country case studies. Despite this rather bleak overall situation, it is worth noting that EU M&E activities have often included consultations with EU MS and other development partners. In several countries reviewed, there have been attempts to develop a mapping of donor support to GEWE though often with mixed results so far. The GAP II 2018 annual report also mentions some interesting cases: in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the EUD has shared M&E tools with relevant development partners active in the area of GEWE; in *Mozambique's* education sector, a joint monitoring mission by Finland and Italy led to recommendations and immediate action on GBV; in *Ethiopia*, development partners, including the EU, agreed to introduce mechanisms for structured monitoring and regular reporting from a gender perspective.

While implementing partners (e.g., UN Women or specific CSOs) carried out various M&E activities in the context of the EU-funded project/programme implementation the team could not identify many truly "joint" initiatives in this area. *Sweden* financed some evaluation studies carried out by CSOs (in Western Balkan region - 2018 'Mind the GAP report) and the IPA-funded EIGE programme mentioned above ([see the Good Practice box on the Enlargement Region above](#)) is supporting IPA beneficiaries to develop a national gender index using the methodology applied at EU level as well as to strengthen national statistical capacities in the area of GEWE.

## Civil society organisations' involvement

Efforts to involve CSOs in EU external action in the area of GEWE yielded best results where they were involved in policy process along the lines of CSO Roadmaps

**In general, the EU has actively sought to involve CSOs (especially international and national NGOs/think tanks) in EU external action in the area of GEWE.** Evidence from EAMRs, Annual Activity Reports, CSPs, programme/project documents and interviews converge regarding the strong involvement of CSOs (especially international and national NGOs/think tanks) in EU programming in general and in EU support to GEWE in particular.

At global level, in the context of the Framework Partnership Agreements it established with 25 networks of civil society, the EU supported three civil society umbrella organisations focussing on advocacy on GEWE and women's participation in policy processes. General exchanges with CSOs on GEWE issues took place in the Policy Forum on Development established by the EC in 2013. More specific exchanges on EU external action in the area of GEWE were organised in the context of the formulation of GAP II in 2014-2015 and of its successor strategy in 2019-2020.

Across the country sample supported civil society initiatives and activities included all spheres of gender equality including VAWG, access to justice, economic empowerment, political participation and peace building. In the *Enlargement region* and *Colombia*, CSOs (especially national NGOs/think tanks) have somewhat contributed to all stages of the EU project cycle, i.e. programming, design, implementation including, to a lesser extent, in policy dialogue, and monitoring and evaluation. In other countries, civil society has been involved in the design of specific EU-funded interventions in support of GEWE (*Myanmar, Colombia*), and participated in stakeholder consultations on all EDF programmes in the framework of programming and mid-term review exercises (*Zambia*). It appears that Jamaica was the only sample country where a research organisation, namely the University of the West Indies Institute for GAD Studies, was directly involved in EU-supported consultations on GEWE.

Close cooperation with CSOs in the area of GEWE mainly surfaces in cases where the EU has developed a specific strategy to support national CSOs and involve them in policy processes - i.e. where there have been genuine efforts to develop and implement the CSO Roadmaps.<sup>40</sup> In these cases (e.g. *Morocco*), the partnership took the form of more regular and structured exchanges.

Persisting challenges to involve certain types of CSOs, especially grass-roots organisations

**However, the degree of women's organisations' involvement varied between countries; moreover, the EU has not managed to adequately respond to the specific needs of grass-roots organisations active in the area of GEWE.** In general, the degree of involvement of women's organisations very much depended on whether GEWE received attention in EU in the overall bilateral programming (see also EQ3). According to the GAP II annual report, in 2018, EU engaged with women's civil society organisations and academic institutions working on GEWE in many instances to enhance policy dialogue and action formulation. However, despite this generally positive assessment the report also highlights that more is needed, e.g., regarding their involvement in context and problem analyses, including for the evaluation of programmes and policies and in terms of overall cooperation with organisations that play key roles in promoting and supporting GEWE.

In particular, both the financial situation of grass-root organisations active in the area of GEWE and managerial and operational capacities remain of concern hampering them to meet the requirements of EU funding at both grant application and implementation/reporting level (e.g., *Chad, Morocco*).

Limited CSO involvement in M&E and long-term partnership based on joint learning

**CSO involvement in learning and monitoring and evaluation of EU external action in the area of GEWE has been substantial only in a few cases.** In *Afghanistan*, the EU worked closely with the Government and CSOs partners (international and national NGOs/think tanks) to enhance policy baselines, indicators and proper monitoring mechanism for National Adaptation Plan 1325. In *Zambia*, some CSOs at the community level have been involved in formulation and implementation and will be involved in monitoring. In *Morocco*, the EU recently organised an important learning workshop with a diversity of CSOs active in the area of GEWE.

However, in general, the relationship between CSOs and the EU is often limited to the operational level ("*the EU is a source of funds*"). Reports and surveys generated through such cooperation are usually not analysed to feed into future activities, or only to a limited extent. These are clearly missed opportunities for learning – for both CSOs and EUDs. Moreover, as highlighted under EQ6, in many cases, the approach and modalities used by the EU to support CSOs (e.g., calls for proposals launched at global level) limited the opportunities to establish sound long-term GEWE-focussed partnerships with CSOs, including women's organisations.

<sup>40</sup> Since 2012, in most partner countries, EUDs have elaborated 'Country Roadmaps for EU Engagement with Civil Society' usually covering the periods 2014-2017 and 2018-2020. These Roadmaps, which usually build on a large consultation process, are designed to provide a comprehensive, coherent and shared analysis of EU and EU MS of the civil society landscape, its enabling environment as well as the obstacles, constraints and opportunities faced by CSOs.

The political context in the partner country also play an important role. Difficulties in working with civil society were encountered in *Chad* where the operation of CSOs is restricted.

**Good practice  
CSO (learning)**

In March 2020, the EU organised a large capitalisation workshop with women's organisations and other CSOs active in the area of GEWE in **Morocco**. The two-day event was organised in Tangiers (in the North of the country) and focussed on taking stock of the support provided to the Moroccan civil society on GEWE and better defining the EU's priorities in this area.

The regional TACSO project has been supporting CSOs in the **Western Balkans and Turkey** since 2009 and is currently in its 3rd implementation phase. One of the project components targets the mutual learning and knowledge sharing between EU and

CSOs in terms of strategies, actions and skills, helping CSOs to establish and efficient and constructive dialogue with the EU by ensuring that the information on EU support is available and efficiently communicated, e.g. through facilitating CSO consultation processes. In the course of the project, for instance, the initial design of IPA III was presented at the Western Balkans and Turkey Regional Civil Society Forum in early 2020 in order to provide space for civil society to contribute to the development of IPA III.

▣ see *Morocco and Enlargement region case studies (Volume IV)* for further details

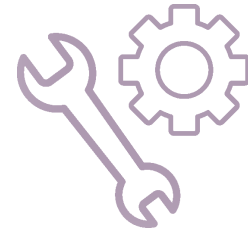
**A strong  
commitment to  
involve CSOs in  
GEWE-related  
actions at EU MS  
level**

**For France, Germany and Sweden, EU MS all covered by the sample reviewed in this evaluation, CSO engagement is part and parcel of their support to GEWE although they approach the work with CSOs in sensibly different ways.** *France's* multi-stakeholder GAD Platform is key for civil society engagement, for example on the elaboration of the government gender strategies and approaches. *Germany* has been working actively to involve CSOs in different aspects of GEWE work, both internally within Germany and at the global and national levels. In particular, civil society actors are regularly consulted in developing gender related strategies and action plans, specifically with regards to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Civil society and research organisations are involved in implementing Germany's GAP and the related annual roadmaps. *Sweden* has been quite active in working with CSOs on GEWE, including at the policy dialogue level. It works systematically to balance its bilateral cooperation efforts at the government-to-government level with support of and partnerships with a diverse set of CSOs. CSOs are involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for UNSCR 1325. In particular, the Swedish MFA meets with a reference group, which includes CSOs<sup>41</sup> twice per year to discuss progress of the NAP. The Government of Sweden also holds regular meetings with CSOs in the context of the Foreign Service's yearly Action Plan for the Feminist Foreign Policy.

<sup>41</sup> Concord, Kvinna till Kvinna, IKFF, Röda Korset, 1325 policy group and Operation 1325.

## EQ6 - Instruments and modalities

To what extent have the various aid modalities and financial instruments, and their combinations, been appropriate to promote gender-responsive EU external action at local, national, regional and global levels?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**There have been clear advantages in the various financing instruments and modalities available to the EU to support GEWE. However, weaknesses in gender mainstreaming (see EQ3) have led to an inadequate use of the mix of modalities and instruments available to support GEWE in an integrated and strategic way.**

The EU has used the entire range of instruments available to finance its support to GEWE through both gender-targeted and gender sensitive interventions. There has been some coherence in the way instruments were used. The use of thematic instruments for gender-targeted support, which had a strong focus on CSO support, has brought clear advantages, especially in countries where the political context influencing bilateral cooperation was not conducive for a strong integration of GEWE into EU bilateral programming. However, unless accompanied by increasing gender mainstreaming in bilateral interventions, over-emphasis on thematic instruments will impose limitations in the long-term.

The project approach, including calls for proposals, has played a large role in EU gender-targeted support; however, the way the modality was used posed a problem of supporting integrated approaches and establishing sound long-term partnerships with the diverse types of CSOs working on GEWE in partner countries (see EQ5 –

Partnerships). Alternative approaches to traditional EUD-managed calls for proposals have been mixed so far, partly due to difficulties in finding the right intermediary organisation while keeping transaction costs at a reasonable level.

The EU support to GEWE has increasingly relied on other modalities such as budget support, which shows promising results including integrative effects within the EU portfolio of bilateral interventions. Gender mainstreaming in blending operations is still in its infancy, but there is increasing awareness among International Financial Institutions (IFIs) of the need to step up efforts in this area.

So far, while some complementarity exists between actions financed under different instruments and modalities, the EU has not often actively sought to achieve synergies within its portfolio (including between the local, national and regional levels), which, as highlighted in other EQs, contributed to EU interventions often being too scattered to achieve consolidated results.

The EU has increased the integration of GEWE into M&E processes and there have been some good practices in terms of learning at project level; however, EU learning on GEWE has been limited by the scattered nature of the EU support in the area, the low degree of institutionalisation of learning mechanisms within the EU, and weak gender capacity available at the HQ and country levels.

## Financing instruments

**A strong emphasis on thematic instruments in gender-targeted support**

**The mix of financial instruments used by the EU is characterised by an extensive use of thematic instruments for gender-targeted support.** At the aggregated (global) level, geographic and thematic instruments have been used equally to provide gender-targeted support during the period 2014-2018. However, a detailed analysis of the EU portfolio reveals that the situation differs strongly across levels (especially, regional vs bilateral) of interventions and countries.



Thematic instruments (esp. the DCI-GPGC<sup>42</sup> budget line on gender equality and the EIDHR instrument) have been extensively used to fund gender-targeted support in Asia (80% of total gender-targeted funding) and Latin America (89% of total gender-targeted funding). The situation is more balanced in other regions, which is largely explained by the fact that: i) in Sub-Saharan African and the Neighbourhood South region, a few large gender-targeted programmes (e.g., budget support operation in Morocco) have represented an important share of the total EU gender-targeted funding in the region; ii) some geographic instruments (e.g., ENI and IPA) have funded regional Civil Society Facilities (CSF) which have been major providers of gender-targeted funding at regional level while operating in a similar way as programmes financed under thematic instruments. The overall substantial use of thematic instruments reflects the emphasis put on CSO support in the EU external action related to GEWE, as highlighted in other parts of this report.

The IcSP has been used to promote the EU's WPS agenda. The IcSP's strong commitment in this area is shown in several interventions specifically targeting GEWE and effort put into mainstreaming GEWE in various thematic areas such as mediation and dialogue, natural resources and conflict, security sector reform, as well as support to civil society in conflict affected contexts.

The analysis of OECD DAC gender policy marker reveals important geographic disparities during the period under review (2014-2018). A substantially higher share of interventions<sup>43</sup> have been marked as 'gender-sensitive' (G1 marker) in Asia (65% of DCI-Asia funding) and Latin America (55% of DCI-Latin America funding) than in other regions (45% of IPA funding and around 1/3 of EDF and ENI funding).

The PI has been used to fund a gender-targeted intervention focussing on Latin America and Europe multi-region coverage (Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business), with a focus on cross-regional linkages and mutual interest consistent with the legal basis of the instrument. Mainstreaming in other PI interventions has been limited although some improvements can be observed in recent years.

Thematic instruments have been useful in very specific contexts

**Thematic instruments only have a limited potential to substantially influence EU's effects on GEWE at country level.** As highlighted in some E-survey responses and confirmed in the country case studies, the use of thematic instruments has presented clear advantages in terms of engaging on GEWE where limited opportunities to address GEWE through bilateral cooperation existed. It has also helped to put a stronger focus on the most vulnerable groups of the population in the partner countries. However, some interviewees and E-survey respondents called for a stronger 'mix' of instruments highlighting the limited potential offered by thematic instruments to truly enhance EU's ability to substantially influence GEWE at country level.

Despite positive examples, limited synergies between instruments

**While some complementarity exists between instruments, the EU has not often actively sought to achieve synergies between instruments in its support to GEWE.** There has been a certain degree of consistency in the thematic focus of interventions funded under the various thematic instruments. A majority of CSO-LA gender-targeted funding has covered GAP II thematic D priorities (voice and participation). EIDHR and the DCI-GPGC thematic budget line on GEWE have had a stronger focus on GAP II thematic priority B (physical and psychological integrity) than on other priorities.

There are a few cases (e.g., *Colombia*) where the EU has actively sought to link some gender-targeted interventions funded between instruments. Moreover, in some cases (e.g., *Chad, Zambia*), CSO support provided through bilateral programmes (geographic instruments) focussed on some organisations that had previously received funding from the EU through thematic instruments.

<sup>42</sup> The Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) programme is one of the two global thematic programmes funded under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI).

<sup>43</sup> The analysis has been made on 'financial volumes' (contracted amounts).

However, overall, there have been limited examples of synergies between instruments, especially between thematic and geographic instruments, but also between regional-level support and country-level support. In the *Western Balkans*, interviewees characterised overall information flows between Brussels and EUDs as good, but highlighted, as well, the frequently encountered problem that EUDs feel they have insufficient information regarding (and control over) regional initiatives designed by and managed from Brussels. A similar observation was made by EUD staff in other regions.

### Good practice Mix of instruments

In **Chad**, grant mechanisms established in the context of major sector programmes funded through the EDF such as PRAJUST 2 in the justice sector have allowed to ensure some continuity with EIDHR in the support provided to CSOs active in the area of VAWG (e.g. the women's organisation Union des Femmes pour la Paix – UFEP).

In **Colombia**, the EU has increasingly and coherently invested in programmes related to rural women in the context of the peace-building efforts as well as in other areas including agriculture sector reform and economic empowerment in rural communities. It has identified rural women as a key strategic element in programming and, in recent years, it is through this lens that support to GEWE

has been consistently delivered through a variety of instruments and modalities, including Budget Support and the European Trust Fund for Peace under the bilateral envelope, and various projects funded through thematic instruments (e.g. EIDHR, IcSP and CSOLA). Building on this mix of instruments and modalities, the EU has made incremental efforts to integrate GEWE-related issues, and particularly the rural women lens, into policy dialogue in the framework of the EU accompaniment to the peace agreements as well as in negotiations with the national authorities (for instance, in the context of budget support negotiations).

▀ see *Colombia and Chad case studies (Volume IV)* for further details

## Modalities and funding channels

### A central role played by the project approach in the EU support to GEWE, but with mixed results in certain areas

**The project approach, including calls for proposals, has played a large role in EU gender-targeted support; however, this, to some extent, posed a problem in terms of establishing sound long-term partnerships with the diverse types of CSOs working on GEWE in partner countries.** The project approach, including calls for proposals, has been used under both thematic and geographic instrument. A large share of this support was channelled towards CSOs. It has allowed to cover a wide range of thematic areas in EU external action related to GEWE and provide support in very diverse geographical settings (see EQ7 - Effects on physical and psychological integrity - EQ8 - Effects on economic and social women's empowerment - EQ9 - Effects on women's voice and participation).

However, using the calls for proposal modality, the EU has struggled to adequately respond to the specific needs of grass-roots organisations and establish sound long term partnerships with CSOs on GEWE. Both the financial situation of grass-roots organisations active in the area of GEWE and their managerial and operational capacities limit their ability to meet the requirements of EU funding at grant application and implementation/reporting levels. Results of alternative approaches to traditional calls for proposals (e.g., PAGODA agreement with international organisations) have been mixed so far, partly due to: i) the difficulties of finding an intermediary organisation sufficiently flexible and well-equipped to respond to local realities; and ii) a failure to agree on a clear definition of roles between the EUD, the intermediary organisation and other stakeholders. There have also been issues of timeliness and high transaction costs with these approaches.

Attention to GEWE in EU budget support yields integrative effect on bilateral co-operation

**There has been increased attention to GEWE in EU budget support; in the few cases where budget support was used to address GEWE issues, it has had an integrative effect on the EU bilateral co-operation.** Outcome indicators used in policy matrices used for tranche release are often sex-disaggregated. As illustrated by the existence of gender-targeted budget support now in two countries (*Morocco* and *Burkina Faso*) and the increasing number of 'gender-sensitive' indicators in recent budget support interventions, there has been an overall increase in the attention given to GEWE in the provision of EU budget support. Moreover, extensive references to EU's engagement in GEWE, including to the GAP II framework, have been included in recent guidelines. New tools/templates developed for the design of budget support contain elements that facilitate gender mainstreaming in this type of support.

The cases of *Morocco* (gender-targeted budget support) and *Colombia* ('gender-sensitive' budget support) show that budget support can have strong positive effects in mainstreaming gender in the rest of the EU bilateral cooperation. EU's engagement in gender-targeted or gender-sensitive budget support was often correlated with increased gender capacity at EUD level. It has also given EUD staff (not only GFPs) unique insights into the opportunities and obstacles to gender mainstreaming in partner countries' sector policies, which have been used to enhance the integration of a gender perspective in the design of EU sector interventions.

However, interviews and the document review reveal that, in most countries where budget support was provided, GEWE was not a priority in policy dialogue. This is partly explained by the still limited integration of GEWE in the design of budget support operations, including the limited incorporation of a gender component in the accompanying measures to budget support (e.g., support to gender-responsive budgeting, support to the strengthening of national statistical capacities on GEWE).

Enhanced coherence within country level trust funds

**The use of country level trust funds brought clear advantages in terms of strengthening the coherence of EU support to GEWE.** There are several cases where the EU provided substantial support to GEWE through country level trust funds (e.g., *Afghanistan*, *Colombia*) or multi donor programmes (e.g. Myanmar). This type of mechanism allowed enhancing coordination and coherence in EU and EU MS support to GEWE. However, there is no evidence that it helped to enhance gender mainstreaming in the rest of the EU's bilateral portfolio.

Gender mainstreaming in blending operations is still in its infancy

**There has been very limited integration of a gender perspective into EU blending operations so far.** There are very few examples of blending operations integrating a GEWE dimension whether through mainstreaming in the design of the operation or a specific gender-targeted component. While national partners' weak interest in GEWE largely explain the situation, interviewees highlighted missed opportunities for EUDs to more actively promote GEWE at project appraisal stage and the very limited use of gender analysis in the design of the operations by the EU and staff from the partner organisations.

There has been little to no integration of GEWE into EU blending operations focusing on the infrastructure sector, which reflects the general lack of gender awareness of staff working in this area, a sector characterised by an overwhelmingly male environment. Some interviewees saw opportunities to do more in operations focussing on the financial sector, which, for instance, could more systematically include a window to finance women's entrepreneurship. A case in point of integration of a GEWE dimension in blending operations is the EU-funded support provided in the context of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)-implemented 'Women in Business' programme in *Morocco*.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The programme consists in providing credit lines to partner financial institutions for on-lending to women-led SMEs as well as TA and risk-sharing for partner institutions.

Gender mainstreaming in blending operations has also been strongly hampered by the persisting low degree of gender mainstreaming in the IFIs institutional environment, which IFIs are themselves increasingly aware of.<sup>45</sup> The limited financial envelope for TA available for some IFIs strongly limits their ability to finance gender-targeted activities within broader programmes. This can be seen as an opportunity for the EU to promote a stronger integration of GEWE within such operations.

## Learning mechanisms

Ad hoc learning mechanisms and weak M&E systems undermine substantial progress on GEWE

**The EU has increased the integration of GEWE into M&E processes and there have been some good practices in terms of learning; however, learning on GEWE has been hampered by the scattered nature of the EU support in this area and weak institutionalization of learning mechanisms within the EU.**

Results frameworks are often too timid with respect to the integration of a GEWE dimension (especially for non-targeted interventions) and, sometimes, too ambitious (for targeted interventions). Moreover, assessments and planning of the means necessary to monitor progress are often inadequate or absent in the project documentation reviewed.

As illustrated by the joint (DEVCO, NEAR and FPI) guidelines on 'Evaluation with gender as a cross-cutting dimension', EU institutions have made clear efforts to better integrate GEWE in M&E processes during the period under review. However, the integration of GEWE in Terms of References for M&E projects is not mandatory nor systematic. The overall weak gender mainstreaming in EU institutions, including the lack of sound gender capacity (see [EQ2 – Leadership and accountability](#)), has resulted in GEWE issues being only partially covered in outputs of M&E activities.

At the global level, the annual meeting of GFP, which has been characterized by a steady increase in attendance in recent years, has played an important role in terms of collective learning for EU staff although some interviewees highlighted the fact that much more could be done to foster exchanges within the network. At the country level, some GFPs have tried to promote learning on GEWE within their EUD and with EU MS. There have also been some specific learning activities embedded in a few gender-targeted interventions. However, overall, EU staff have not benefitted much from such learning. Learning mechanisms have been rarely institutionalised and backed by strong support from the senior management. Learning has also been made difficult by the scattered nature of the EU support in this area.

<sup>45</sup> As illustrated by the 2x Challenge ([www.2xchallenge.org](http://www.2xchallenge.org)), several IFIs decided to step up efforts related to gender mainstreaming in recent years.

## Cluster 2: Effects of EU support in the area of GEWE

### EQ7 - Effects on physical and psychological integrity

To what extent has EU external action contributed to ensuring physical and psychological integrity of girls and women in the public and private spheres?



#### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**The elimination of VAWG is an important issue for the EU and is profiled as such in the EU external action policy and strategic framework. While the gender-targeted interventions in the area of GEWE have been successful, EU external action, for the most part, did not integrate or mainstream relevant physical and psychological integrity issues for girls and women in its non-targeted support.**

In general, the EU's work on VAWG has focussed more on protection than prevention. The majority of actions reviewed concentrated on developing more effective laws and policies to protect the victims of VAWG and services to assist them after they had experienced violence. Although examples of such interventions were identified in all countries reviewed, there was far less support which focussed on working to change the social norms and practices that contribute to high levels of VAWG. As with normative change, this type of action requires a longer-term commitment as in general major social changes can take more than a decade to effect. EU's interventions have been much shorter term.

In its work on VAWG the EU has also been somewhat remiss with regard to ensuring the participation of men (and boys) and traditional leaders in the change process. This represented a major lost opportunity for the EU to effect positive change as the projects which did involve men and traditional leaders in this way consistently showed

positive evolutions towards shifts in social norms. The EU has provided substantial support to CSOs to strengthen their work on VAWG. This support focussed on three main areas: improving CSOs services for victims of VAWG; strengthening their capacity to advocate for positive change at the government level; and the empowerment of women and girls at the community level to help them realise their rights related to VAWG. The support has been largely effective. CSOs have served an important democratic function in holding national and local governments to account and fill in some of key gaps in service provision. However, as important as their work is, most are relatively small organisations and the support provided by the EU through these CSOs has often remained limited in scope.

Overall, the most effective EU-funded approaches to address the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women in the public and private spheres were those which took an integrated approach to the elimination of VAWG. Comprehensive interventions that worked on normative change (including through CSO advocacy) and complemented this work with capacity building of institutions responsible for implementing VAWG related policies and service provision to victims of violence were the most effective and sustainable. This is as they worked on both developing policies and laws and ensuring that these policies were implemented.

### VAWG in the EU policy and strategic framework

**Important attention given to VAWG in EU external action, but only partial integration in non-targeted support**

**There has been a strong focus on VAWG in the EU GEWE policy and strategic framework; while VAWG received considerable attention in gender-targeted support and in some interventions in the area of justice and rule of law, it was largely omitted in the non-targeted support.** The elimination of VAWG is an important issue for the EU and is profiled as such in GAP II. It also represents a key dimension of the EU WPS strategic framework.

Both the inventory carried out in this evaluation and the GAP II reporting show that this area was the focus of a large share of EU external action related to GEWE. In the 12

countries sample reviewed in this evaluation, the GAP II objective specifically focussing on VAWG (Objective 7) has been selected as a priority objective by the EUDs in all but one country.<sup>46</sup> Some recent EU ‘flagship’ programmes such as the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative have the elimination of VAWG as their main objective. This objective was also the focus of many gender-targeted actions funded through thematic instruments at the regional, national and local level (all regions/most partner countries) and through geographic instruments in some countries (e.g., *Zambia*).

It was also an objective pursued in a significant part of the EU non-targeted support provided in the governance sector (incl. rule of law and justice) and, to a lesser extent, in the one provided in the education and health sector. However, it was not a significant focus of non-targeted support in other sectors. This is directly related to a lack of understanding of how to do so in non-targeted support as opposed to being due to a lack of political will. It speaks to the ongoing challenge of the weak gender capacity at both EUD and implementing partner level ([see EQ3 – Gender mainstreaming](#)).

## Strengthening partner countries’ VAWG policy and legal frameworks

### Some notable EU contributions to strengthening policy and legal frameworks

**Where there is some degree of public trust in the government, the EU has been able to support the development and/or strengthening of VAWG policy and legal frameworks.** In the *Pacific* region, for example, the EU, through a UN Women-implemented programme, has had considerable success in supporting diverse policy and legal frameworks, particularly in *Fiji* which is one of just two countries globally that now has an evidence-based VAWG strategy and VAWG national action plan. In *Brazil*, EU support has empowered women mayors leading to better policy making and implementation at the municipal level. Trust has been easier to establish at this more local level where government leaders are better known by the public and often more directly accountable for their actions than national leaders. In *Chad*, EU action has contributed to the adoption of the National Gender Policy’s Action Plan, which includes a strong dimension related to VAWG, and of the justice sector policy, which, amongst other objectives, intends to increase access to justice for victims of VAWG. In *Afghanistan*, the EU has been a major donor in the areas of Justice and Police reforms for the past decade, demonstrating that even where there is an unstable government, it is still possible to effect change, although it requires a longer-term commitment and investment to do so.

The EU has also played a key role in strengthening VAWG policy and legal frameworks in the regions covered by DG NEAR through both its engagement in policy and high-level dialogue, such as in the context of accession negotiations in the *Enlargement region*, and its active support to fostering the ratification process and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Under the EU Research and Innovation programme ‘Horizon 2020’, the EC is supporting an action to collect detailed data on gender-based violence including sexual harassment in academia and research organisations covering at least 15 EU MS and Associated Countries with the view to develop policy recommendations for international research funders on zero tolerance towards VAWG.

<sup>46</sup> The EUD Bangladesh didn’t select VAWG as a priority objective. But, even in this country, the EU funded various interventions focusing on VAWG during the period under review.

**Good practice  
Adoption a  
comprehensive  
approach to  
VAWG**

In the **Pacific region**, the EU has supported a targeted regional project designed to address the high incidence of VAWG. The 'Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls' (PPEVAWG) has been fairly successful to date in strengthening policy and legal frameworks related to VAWG in partner countries in the region, as well as in strengthening the capacity of first responders to VAWG and contributing to changing social norms through integrating VAWG and women's rights education in school curricula in selected

countries in the region as well as through work with national CSOs. The initiative has also advanced in engaging men and traditional partners (including religious leaders) as change agents and the promotion of changes in social norms. To ensure sustainability of the project's results the EU has built in a solid methodology and approach focused strongly on the development of national capacity related to the elimination of VAWG

▀ see *Pacific region case study (Volume IV)* for further details

**A key role played  
by the EU  
support to CSO  
advocacy**

**The EU has also made significant contributions to the strengthening of policy and legal framework in partner countries through its support to CSO advocacy.** This has included actions such that in *Jamaica* where EU actions assisted CSOs engage in policy dialogue on VAWG issues with government. In *Albania*, CSOs, several of which have received various support from the EU in the last decade, have contributed to the formulation of recommendations for the revision and improvements of the Law on Violence in Family Relations and the Penal Code, in view of the Istanbul Convention and the adoption of the WPS Plan of Action.

The EU has also supported the work of women human rights defenders in *Myanmar*, *Colombia* and *Bangladesh*, strengthened their ability to advocate for change and to hold their governments to account. This support is particularly critical as women human rights defenders have faced growing risks and physical attacks from their own governments and in *Colombia*, for example, also from non-state actors such as militia and guerrilla groups still fighting to control land belonging to indigenous peoples and Afro-Columbians. In *Brazil*, this aspect of the work also led to support for CSO's, women's organisations and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) associations to increase their capacity to advocate and influence political leaders on relevant policy and legal framework issues.

## Capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers

**Capacity building  
of duty bearers  
has focussed on  
justice sector  
and service  
providers**

**EU support has tended to focus more on protection than prevention, but there is evidence of contribution to the strengthening of both dimensions.** EU support has placed strong emphasis on training justice sector personnel, the police, social workers, counsellors and educators so that they are able to both respond better to victims of VAWG and in the case of the educators to also work to change social norms among students to serve as a form of prevention. In many countries, the EU has also funded gender-targeted actions which have contributed to improving service and first responder mechanisms such as the establishment of common standards for shelters, how evidence is collected as well as how to interview victims of VAWG so that they are not revictimised, etc. These actions have addressed the fact that protection mechanisms are inadequate in many countries and regions. Related training has also focussed on ensuring that diverse groups of duty bearers are more aware of their obligations to rights holders with regard to VAWG and to equip them with the tools to fulfil these obligations.

Effective and diverse support provided to CSOs working on VAWG

**The EU has contributed to strengthening CSO capacity to assist rights holders realise their rights related to VAWG.** In general, CSO support has focused on three main areas: i) improving CSO services for victims of VAWG; ii) strengthening their capacity to advocate for positive change at the government level; and iii) the empowerment of women and girls at the community level to help them realise their rights related to VAWG. For the latter this ranges from working with sports organisations in the *Pacific* to encourage increased girls' participation and a process for addressing sexual harassment and abuse in sport to a project in *Zambia* in which young people (both male and female) have been supported to become champions of change. All cases reviewed show the importance of building interventions on a detailed understanding the context and identifying clearly the target audience of awareness raising activities. In the context of the EU-funded regional programme 'Ending violence against women' in the *Enlargement region*, a mapping of recent awareness-raising initiatives undertaken by CSOs was conducted to identify initiatives and tools that were shown to be influential successful at country level, whilst also highlighting the limitations in existing knowledge and expertise on behaviour change initiatives in the region.

On the advocacy side of things the EU supported a project in *Colombia* designed to enhance the capacities of women human rights defenders, particularly those living in remote communities, to claim their rights and hold their government and its institutions to account; as well as provided training and building capacity among local CSOs, activists and (women) human rights defenders in *Bangladesh* and *Myanmar*. The EU has also supported several projects to improve the services provided to victims of VAWG - e.g., the provision of free legal aid in Chad and shelter services in the enlargement region. This combination of approaches has been effective in addressing the highly diverse needs of CSOs that work on VAWG issues at the national level.

Mapping of awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives in the Enlargement region

In the context of the EU regional programme 'Ending violence against women' in the **Enlargement region** a mapping was conducted of awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives undertaken by civil society organisations (CSOs) in programme-participating countries over the last five years. This exercise identified a number of initiatives and tools that were shown to be influential and successful at country level, whilst also highlighting the limitations in existing knowledge and expertise on behaviour change initiatives in the region.

This mapping served as a reference for the development of the call for proposals to select civil society organisations to test the advocacy initiatives and tools identified as good practices, planned to be launched in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. Together with baseline and end line surveys, the mapping contributed to a more informed understanding of the potential incidence of advocacy and promotion programmes, and on the gaps that still remain to achieve behavioural change.

Source: Evaluation's Enlargement Case Study

Structural weaknesses in public institutions in some countries limit sustainability

**In many countries the duty-bearers who have a duty of care for those affected by domestic violence are not meeting the obligations laid out in their national legislation; many of these actions undertaken to address this challenge remain inherently dependent on external financing and therefore raise sustainability questions.** This is particularly the case in fragile states or countries with weak and under-funded public sectors. In these instances, the governments often depend upon external funding to provide key staff training related to VAWG (and other themes). This funding is, inevitably relatively short term in nature, and when the EU support ends, often the training will only continue if another funder steps in. To counter this challenge, in the *Pacific region*, for example, the EU supported regional programme on VAWG has supported the development of curriculum on women's human rights and VAWG that has been incorporated into the standard training for teachers thus guaranteeing the sustainability for this type of capacity building.



## Participation of men and traditional leaders

Adequately addressing participation of men and traditional leaders in VAWG actions represents a missed opportunity

**The role of men and traditional leaders is not adequately addressed in most regions.** This was particularly notable in the *Enlargement region* where the evaluation found only limited actions or programme components designed to increase the participation of men and traditional leaders in the promotion of the elimination of VAWG. This was also the case in *Bangladesh, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Myanmar*. Thus, over half of the countries where programming was assessed more in-depth for the evaluation did not really address the issue of the participation of men and traditional leaders.

This represents a huge missed opportunity as where men and traditional leaders have been explicitly included and fostered as change agents, the results have been quite positive. This was particularly evident in the *Pacific region* where the EU VAWG regional programme has been working closely with traditional religious leaders to develop key messages and materials that they can then share with their congregations and work to change social norms regarding VAWG. This is particularly critical in this region which reports the highest rates of VAWG globally.

In *Colombia*, in the past few years, EU actions have also started to integrate components that address new masculinities to work to change social norms related to VAWG, although this is not yet done systematically. In *Zimbabwe*, the involvement of traditional leaders has been successful in campaigns to reduce/ end child early and forced marriages, SGBV and teenage pregnancies. In *Brazil*, the EU has also supported work by LGBTI organisations to change mentalities and stereotypes against LGBTI groups to help reduce and prevent SGBV of LGBTI persons as well as related discrimination. As highlighted in the academic literature, significant change related to VAWG cannot happen without the active participation of men and traditional leaders and the EU now has a sufficient body of evidence related to this as well as a set of lessons learned and best practices on which it can draw in the future.

The recent EU-funded programmes under the EU-UN ‘Spotlight Initiative’ put a strong emphasis on working with men and boys and religious leaders in community-based mobilization efforts, with the view to transform social norms, attitudes and behaviours and address the root causes of VAWG.

## EQ8 - Effects on economic and social women’s empowerment

To what extent has EU external action contributed to socially and economically empowering women?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EQ

**EU support has spanned across almost all aspects of women’s socio-economic empowerment. However, beyond the substantial support provided to education, a large part of the EU support to women’s economic empowerment consists of small actions that have taken place in the context of broad rural economic development programmes funded through geographic instruments. Rarely did the EU provide large support to women’s economic empowerment at country level.**

The EU has been a strong promoter of the ILO’s social protection floor approach which, e.g., has placed strong emphasis on Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) which disproportionately benefit women and girls. While there is some evidence that the EU external action has been coherent with and has contributed to the ILO’s Decent Work agenda, EUD staff show a limited awareness of joint initiatives carried out by the EU and ILO at regional and global level. Equal access to decent work, including women’s participation in the labour

market, has not been a major focus of EU external actions in the area of GEWE until recently. In IPA beneficiaries, the EU support for decent work placed emphasis on inclusion, not on broad employment sector reform programmes. Very little attention in EU external actions has been put on the equal participation of men and women in the care economy and issues of unpaid work. More generally, there has been limited mainstreaming of gender in the EU's social protection work.

Where available, evaluation and monitoring reports of EU interventions in the area of women's socio-economic empowerment systematically highlight some positive short-term effects. The now-ongoing evaluation of EU external action in the area of migration has identified a number of worthwhile decent work-related initiatives targeting women migrants and returnees. Despite these positive contributions, there is no evidence of EU substantial contributions at a broader level. In most countries reviewed, improvements in women's economic empowerment have, at best, been slow at the macro level.

EU support has been hampered by a lack of gender awareness and of interest in GEWE issues on the part of relevant national stakeholders. But, the

absence of transformative effect has also been because the EU-funded interventions themselves were not of transformative scale and scope. The EU has provided a large part of its gender-targeted support in the form of small grants and gender mainstreaming in sector interventions has been limited.

In several countries, the EU has used its support to education/ Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as an entry point for promoting women's socio-economic empowerment. However, as several root causes of gender inequalities were not addressed, these programmes have had only limited direct effects on addressing gender gaps in labour force participation and access to decent work.

The use of ICT to promote the empowerment of women is still an emerging area in EU support to GEWE and it is too early to assess the effects of the recently launched initiatives. At country level, there is little evidence of EU support to the use of ICT to promote the women's economic empowerment. There is no evidence of EU support to access to technologies in policy dialogue, or that gender has been mainstreamed in EU ICT infrastructure interventions.

## Decent work

Access to decent work has not been a major focus of EU support to GEWE...

**Equal access to decent work, including women's participation in the labour market, has not been a major focus of EU external actions in the area of GEWE until recently.** This is confirmed by the strikingly low proportion of E-survey respondents who perceived that the EU had a large engagement or had achieved substantial results in this area (as opposed to their views on areas such as equal access to education and awareness raising in VAWG).

The evidence gathered in this evaluation shows that very little attention in EU external actions has been put on the equal participation of men and women in the care economy and issues of unpaid work. These topics are explicitly mentioned in the latest EU budget support guidelines and templates but are not apparent in the interventions reviewed by the team. The 2019 GAP II annual report (covering the year 2018) highlights the fact that interventions reported as related to GAP II objective 14 are largely "*centred on increasing women's access to employment in general*".

While there is some evidence that the EU external action has been coherent with and has contributed to the ILO's Decent Work agenda, interviews with EUD staff show a limited awareness of joint initiatives carried out by the EU and ILO at regional and global level. The 2018 Evaluation of EU support to social protection found limited coordination between the EU and ILO at field level although the study underlines that EU support to social protection at country and global level has been generally coherent with ILO's work. In particular, the EU has been a strong promoter of the ILO's social protection floor approach which, e.g., has placed strong emphasis on Conditional Cash Transfers

largely benefitting women and girls. However, regarding the broader Decent Work Agenda, the evaluation pointed out that the Agenda's effectiveness in economically empowering women has been limited by the tripartite process, where the partners (Government, trade unions, employers' organisations) often have little interest in the relevant aspects of GEWE. That evaluation of EU support to social protection concluded that there is no evidence of EU gender expertise having been systematically involved in intervention design and implementation; i.e., no evidence of actual mainstreaming of gender in the EU's social protection work.

In *IPA beneficiaries*, the EU support in the area of decent work has been closely related to the accession negotiations and, more specifically, to the 'Social Policy and Employment' chapter of the EU *acquis*. It has mostly concerned two broad sets of objectives: i) support to national and local actors to enhance inclusion programmes targeting children, women, geographically remote populations, and people with disabilities as well as social integration activities for Roma and other ethnic minority communities; and ii) support to national employment and education agencies, with a focus on the implementation of active labour market measures and services, and the promotion of life-long learning policies. Emphasis was on inclusion, not on broad employment sector reform programmes.

In several countries (e.g., *Bangladesh, Morocco*), the EU has used its support to education/TVET as an entry point for promoting women's socio-economic empowerment. However, as further discussed below, these programmes have often had limited direct effects on addressing gender gaps in labour force participation and access to decent work.

... but there has been increased attention to this topic in recent years

**There are examples of growing EU attention to issues of equal access to decent work in recent years.** In *Kosovo*, the EU (with co-funding from Swedish Development Cooperation) has financed a study, published in 2019, which examines gender-based discrimination and labour, as part of a regional initiative to address such discrimination in six candidates and potential candidates to EU accession. There has been growing attention at EU level to women's access to decent work opportunities in rural areas (e.g., *Kenya, Yemen*). This can be seen as a promising area to contribute to reducing the gap in working conditions between women and men in partner countries. The now-ongoing evaluation of EU external action in the area of migration has identified a number of worthwhile decent work-related initiatives targeting women migrants and returnees – e.g., in *Bangladesh, Lebanon*, and the ASEAN region. In 2017, the EU and UN Women also launched a women's rights and empowerment programme aimed at strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in *Iraq, Jordan* and *Turkey*. The activities focus on increasing women's access to financial assets and recovery and income opportunities, while providing immediate and life-saving protection services. The EU is also involved in global efforts to mobilise Corporate Social Responsibility to promote women's access to decent work (e.g., the recently launched WE EMPOWER G7 initiative financed by the EU (via Partnership Instrument under FPI and implemented by ILO and UN Women) and to increase the benefits of global trade for women (e.g., the recent DG Trade-hosted "Trade for Her" conference).

Barriers to increasing women's access to decent work have not been addressed comprehensively

**Progress at country level remains difficult despite some positive short-term effects; barriers to increasing women's access to decent work have not been addressed comprehensively.** In the few country cases where the EU was active in the area of equal access to decent work, there were some positive short-term effects at the local level, these cases also highlight the difficulty of contributing to broader changes at the national level. The case of *Bangladesh* is illustrative and instructive. The EU has been continuously engaged in the area of TVET/skills development over the past decades and has also funded a few projects in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector during the

period under review. Some short-term positive effects are visible. Moreover, at the macro level, the EU, in partnership with ILO, has played a very positive role in strengthening various national measures to prepare women to enter the labour market.

However, very little was done (by the EU, but also by national authorities and other partners involved in this area) to removing the main obstacles to increased labour market opportunities for women. The few projects carried out in the RMG sector have had limited effect at the national level. Overall, recent data shows that the terms of women's participation in the labour market have remained highly discriminatory in the country including harassment at workplaces, and there has even been a recent rise in the concentration of women in low-productivity and low-paid agricultural activities. In general, as also highlighted under other EQs (e.g., [EQ3 – Gender mainstreaming](#)), the evidence gathered in this evaluation shows that interventions carried out in the area of socio-economic empowerment at the local level were often disconnected from EU's engagement in policy dialogue and main EU-funded bilateral interventions in the country.

## Access to economic resources

EU support covered a variety of thematic areas, without explicitly highlighting their interrelations

**Support to access to economic resources spanned across a wide range of thematic areas.** The evidence from the mapping of targeted support, but also from the GAP II reporting and the literature review at global level show that, in all regions, EU support has spanned across almost all aspects of women's economic empowerment. According to GAP II reporting, GAP II pillar C (Economic and Social Empowerment) is the pillar with the highest number of reported actions during the period under review. GAP II Objective 15 (related to women's access to financial services, productive resources, including land, trade and entrepreneurship) has been the third most frequently selected objectives by the EUDs of the 12 countries reviewed in this evaluation (the most frequent ones have been Obj. 7 on VAWG and Obj. 17 on participation in policy and governance processes). Yet this ordering itself is revealing that eliminating VAWG is everywhere a priority, giving women voice comes next, and last on the priority list is economic empowerment. This can somewhat be seen as paradoxical as arguably economic empowerment is one of the most effective ways of giving women voice.

A qualitative analysis of the main themes covered by the EU support in this area shows that, beyond the substantial support provided by the EU in the area of education and TVET, and the few specific cases mentioned above, there has been a strong emphasis in EU interventions on supporting: i) women's entrepreneurship through skills development and access to finance, and ii) the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas in the context of broad resilience programmes or specific agricultural value-chain development interventions. While there are some examples of EU support to increasing women's access to land (e.g., *Cameroon, Malawi*) and the EU has addressed some issues in women's land access through a land governance programme at the global level (in partnership with FAO), this has not been a major area of EU support despite its importance. Neither has the team identified many cases of large support programmes in the rural development and agriculture sector in which strong emphasis is given to integrating GEWE issues in the sector's policy and institutional framework. Exceptions include *Nepal* and, more recently, *Colombia* (see below).

A high level of fragmentation in EU support to access to economic resources

**A large part of the gender-targeted support to women's economic empowerment consists of small actions.** The country case studies illustrate the wide diversity of actions supported by the EU during the period under review. However, the global inventory carried out in this evaluation shows that a large part of the gender-targeted support to women's economic empowerment consists of small actions that have taken place in the context of broad rural economic development programmes funded through

geographic instruments (and, more recently, the EUTF for Africa). Despite GAP II Objective 15 being selected as a priority objective by the EUDs in the 12 countries reviewed, the team identified only two cases (*Afghanistan* in the context of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), and *Georgia* in the context of the last phase of the ENPARD programme) where the EU provided large support to women’s economic empowerment at country level. *Colombia* can be seen as an ‘intermediary’ case as the EU has followed a gradual approach in the country, by increasingly investing in policy measures related to rural women in the context of the peace-building efforts and, only since 2019, planning to support more directly this area in the context of the new agriculture sector reform contract. In all the other countries, the support was provided through: i) individual ad hoc gender-targeted activities financed under thematic budget lines (CSO-LA or DCI-GPGC/Food security); or ii) indirectly in large gender-sensitive bilateral programmes in sectors such as nutrition (programme SAN in *Chad*) and TVET (*Bangladesh*). In recent years, a few countries have also benefitted from EU-supported large multi-country “flagship” programmes such as the ILO-UN Women Win-Win programme in Latin America and Caribbean and, since 2019, the EBRD Women in Business programme in *Morocco*.

**Despite short term effects, no substantial contributions at the broader level**

**Despite short term effects, no substantial contributions at the broader level** Where available, evaluation and monitoring reports of EU interventions in the area of women’s economic empowerment systematically highlight some positive short-term effects. Despite these positive contributions, there is no evidence of EU substantial contributions at a broader long-term level. This is in part explained by the fact that all evaluation and monitoring reports reviewed fall short in terms of analysing broader effects of the EU support at outcome level; in other words, EU contributions are not well documented. More important, though, the lack of transformative broad impact has been because the interventions themselves were not of transformative scale and scope.

In most countries reviewed, key indicators of women’s economic empowerment show, at best, only slow improvements. As illustrated in recent global reports and indexes such as SIGI (OECD) and the Women, Business and Law report (World Bank), gender inequalities remain significant in all areas. Based on the review of the EU support project documentation and the global literature, three major obstacles can be highlighted. First, there are important external factors, in the form of a striking lack of gender awareness.

and of interest in GEWE issues on the part of relevant national stakeholders. Second, weaknesses in the design of the EU support has often limited its effectiveness and impact. Specifically, EU support has considered women as a homogenous vulnerable group, resulting in limited emphasis on increasing women’s agency. The design of EU interventions (or of the supported policy measures) has often occulted the multi-dimensional aspects of women’s economic empowerment and the need to take into account social norms and barriers which impede women’s access to economic resources in many settings. Too often, “taking account” in interventions has consisted of accommodating, not challenging, discriminatory patriarchal systems. Third, the EU has provided a large part of its support in the form of small grants. There is some evidence that these have been useful to innovate and develop elements of more ambitious gender transformative approaches. However, the provision of these grants has rarely been made with a clear vision on how to go to scale with the most successful initiatives and embed them into mainstream development initiatives.

**Acknowledging the above weaknesses, the EU has started promising initiatives in recent years**

**The picture is not entirely bleak.** While overall, gender mainstreaming in EU-funded rural development and agriculture sector interventions has been weak during the period under review, there have been some recent promising evolutions in terms of: i) increased efforts at HQ level to promote gender mainstreaming in this area; ii) in some cases, strengthened approaches to ensure the availability of gender expertise during design and implementation; iii) enhanced efforts in the area of monitoring and learning at global

and local levels. Although needs remain important, the EU has increased its investment in data collection related to gender-specific or sex-disaggregated indicators in this sector, including at regional level. Recent interventions appear to more systematically include sex-disaggregated indicators. The EU has also benefited from increased attention by some of its partners (e.g., Rome-based UN agencies) to strengthen the gender expertise mobilised during the design and implementation of new interventions.

Good practice  
**Gender  
mainstreaming in  
rural  
development**

Since 2013 the EU provides support to rural development and agriculture in Georgia through the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD), whose main goal is to reduce rural poverty. Along its different phases, the programme saw an increasing progression towards a greater gender lens, going from no consideration of a gender analysis in its first phase, to the progressive incorporation of explicit gender targets. In partnership with FAO and UNDP the EU is providing technical capacity in

agriculture and rural development to relevant ministries and supporting gender mainstreaming in its policy documents, including the country's strategies for Agriculture and Rural Development. As a result of ENPARD's efforts, both these documents and their respective action plans have seen a positive progression over the years in their mainstreaming of gender and consideration of the specific needs and challenges of women in the agriculture and rural sectors

▀ see Georgia case study (Volume IV) for further details

## Enabling technology

ICT to support  
socio-economic  
empowerment, is  
still in its infancy  
in EU external  
action

**The use of ICT to promote the empowerment of women is an emerging area in EU support to GEWE and it is therefore too early to assess the effects of the recently launched initiatives.**

At EU policy level, the Digital Single Market for Europe (DSM) strategy which was adopted in May 2015 in recognition of the significant impact of digitalisation on growth and job creation within the European economy. While the strategy makes some general reference to an e-inclusive society, there is no explicit references to GEWE. However, in recent years, as illustrated by the references to this area in the new European Consensus on Development, there has been a growing attention to the opportunities for further translating the key principles of the DSM to the EU international and development cooperation policy framework. As a follow up to 2016 Council Conclusions on mainstreaming digital development in cooperation, in 2017, the EC developed a comprehensive approach on Digital4Development (D4D), and a number of EU-supported initiatives were launched since then, including some focussed on women's participation in the digital world, including Artificial Intelligence, robotic, and gender. Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme, a core instrument at the EU level to support and leverage research and innovation cooperation with partner countries, is addressing the 'gender perspective of science, technology and innovation in dialogue with third countries'. Ten international partners will take part (apart from EU MS and AC) in a dedicated research project, including South Africa, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, India, South Korea and China.

This is an emerging area, and at country level, this evaluation has found little evidence of EU support to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to promote the women's economic empowerment. In the majority of cases, enabling technologies or access to ICTs has not been an explicit area of focus of EU support but rather activities in the context of broader interventions. In *Bangladesh*, an advocacy and

training project working with migrant and marginalised communities developed an ‘app’ to connect with their beneficiaries, develop leadership skills and support community members, mainly women, to timely access available services and to raise their voices against cases of violence. In *Zambia*, the EU has supported interventions across a diversity of sectors (health, agriculture and governance, etc.), where a component of improved access to technologies has been included, although with no effects explicitly reported so far.

*E-survey* results, both at country and HQ level, support the case study evidence that contributions to EU engagement in the area has been limited. There is no evidence of EU support to access to technologies in policy dialogue, or that gender has been mainstreamed in EU ICT infrastructure interventions.

## EQ9 - Effects on women’s voice and participation

To what extent has EU external action contributed to ensuring women’s voice and participation at all levels of the political life?



### SUMMARY ANSWER TO THE EVALUATION QUESTION

**The relative importance of EU support towards strengthening women’s influence on decision-making has grown since 2016. EU support in this area has been consistent, but it has often been confined to promoting small disconnected actions. Results are often meagre, and progress remains limited. Despite some improvements, women remain underrepresented as elected officials, civil servants and political posts, and in their overall influence in decision-making.**

EU support to strengthening women’s voice in the society has had more visible progress. Through its active support to CSOs, including women’s organisations, the EU has made some notable contributions in this area. The EU has effectively contributed to empowering women human rights defenders as agents of change as well as strengthened women’s roles during conflict and

post-conflict years (e.g., in *Colombia*). In the specific area of WPS, however, EU support has often been more focussed on promoting the strengthening of the policy framework and the formulation of strategic guidance than on implementation. Consequently, despite visible progress on equal participation in peace and security in some conflict and post-conflict countries, evidence on the strengthened role of women as mediators, negotiators and technical experts in formal conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and peace-building making remain limited.

EU support to discriminatory social norms doesn’t depict a strategic view required by such a long-term process. On the contrary, actions are mostly scattered and project-based, frequently targeted at addressing VAWG. The EU has been very timid in addressing gender issues of sexuality, and efforts on LGBTI issues remain dispersed and still being addressed at the micro-level.

## Women’s influence on decision-making

**Strong, albeit broad and disconnected support to increase women’s influence on decision-making**

**The EU has consistently supported, through both spending and non-spending actions, efforts to increase women’s influence on decision-making.** EU support has been strong in supporting women in civil society and advocacy efforts and, while broad in direction, it has often been confined to supporting small disconnected actions. A few promising initiatives have been identified showing some levels of increased participation of women in public life and public institutions, one of these being the support for women

in the peace-building process in *Colombia*. Despite these efforts, results remain meagre, partly because of adverse structural conditions which prevent women from taking up leadership or influential positions. In *Kosovo*, the EU has actively worked towards an increase in raising the percentage of women in key institutions at various levels and in the number of autonomous women's organisations participating in legislative processes. However, women remain in an unfavourable situation and, as is also the case in all other countries reviewed, they are still vastly underrepresented as elected officials, civil servants and political posts, and in their overall influence in decision-making.

Relevant role of EU in advocacy for quota legislation

**The EU has played an increasingly pivotal role in advocating for relevant legislation addressing women's underrepresentation in Parliaments.** In both *Chad* and *Kosovo*, for instance, although both countries had passed legislation establishing female quotas, there was still a lack of coherence between these policy and legislative commitments and the actual implementation of the laws. In both cases, although the context and the form of EU's engagement in policy dialogue differ, the EU has advocated for the implementation of these laws by urging key national stakeholders and raising the issue in relevant policy dialogues at country-level.

Effects of relative increase of actions addressing women's participation still to come

**The relative importance of EU support towards strengthening women's influence on decision making has grown since 2016.** However, while having increased the number of actions is laudable, across the case studies it emerges that effects are usually still to be seen. The case of *Afghanistan* appears as surprising example which accounts for some successes in strengthening the role of women in decision-making processes through two projects that prioritised outreach to women to broaden democratic participation in the electoral process.

Too little attention to women's decision-making in other topics

Support to increase women's influence on decision-making has been mostly concentrated in advocating for an increased participation in elections or to address underrepresentation as public officials. Under this pillar, the EU has also supported the empowering of women as human rights defenders and peace-making agents which, in line with the EU's strong attention to the WPS agenda, has contributed to visible progress on equal participation in peace and security in some contexts. Decision-making or political influence in other topics, however, have been much less addressed by EU support. Mainstreaming gender in decision-making in the topic of climate change and environmental issues, for instance, received very little attention in the period under review. On a similar note, evidence of EU support to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has been limited during the period under review, with a few cases in which EU support has contributed to strengthening.

## Women's voice in the society

Notable contributions by EU support to CSOs in increasing women's voice

**The EU has supported, through both spending and non-spending actions, efforts to increase women's voice and participation. Through its active support to CSOs, including women's organisations, the EU has made some notable contributions to strengthening women's voice in society.** In *Colombia*, for instance, the EU has supported the strengthening of women's roles during conflict and post-conflict years, especially through empowering a wide range of women's organisations at national and local level. In *Kosovo*, the EU has supported local and grassroots CSOs as well as women's networks at various levels. It has paid attention to contributing to equal representation in various working groups and discussion fora related to the peace processes. In *Afghanistan*, the EU has been particularly successful in facilitating the



engagement of CSOs in discussions with the government through trilateral EUD-government-CSO meetings that have strengthened the voice of civil society, including women's and grassroots organisations.

Some progress on equal participation in peace and security (WPS)

**In the specific case of WPS, there has been visible progress on equal participation in peace and security, particularly at policy and institutional level.** At policy level, the EU has promoted WPS through policy documents and strategic guidance (e.g., replacing the 2008 Comprehensive Approach to WPS by the Strategic Approach on WPS in 2018). At institutional level, along with human rights, gender perspectives were integrated into the overall European Security and Defence College (ESDC) training programme, and a Principal Advisor on gender was installed under the HR/VP in 2015, tasked with working, *inter alia*, on WPS.

**However, for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building (CPPB), evidence is less robust on the strengthened role of women** as mediators, negotiators and technical experts in formal conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and peace-making, and results remain limited to a few country-specific cases. Country case study notes for the conflict and post-conflict countries depict that there have indeed been some effective advances regarding the participation of women in peace and security, particularly with regard to *Colombia*, *Afghanistan* and *Myanmar*, which have resulted in greater attention to the WPS agenda and have emphasised the role of women in peace-building processes.

Potential of ICTs for GEWE has been disregarded

**EU support to an increased use of ICTs as a catalyst for political and social empowerment of girls and women, and to promote their rights has been negligible.** In most countries, enabling technology was not a focus area of EU assistance at all. However, a few examples illustrate that the EU has been increasingly attempting to use ICTs and new technologies in thematic areas such as inclusive democracy and women's political participation and as a means for campaigning, advocacy and awareness raising (e.g., *Colombia*); unfortunately, evidence on effects is limited.

## Discriminatory social norms

EU support lacks a strategic long-term approach to successfully tackle discriminatory social norms

**EU support to discriminatory social norms doesn't depict a strategic view required by such a long-term process. On the contrary, actions are mostly scattered and project-based, frequently targeted at addressing VAWG.**

Following a steep increase in the financing of actions targeted at challenging discriminatory social norms and stereotypes in 2017, fewer actions were reported for 2018 indicating that EU efforts supporting the area of discriminatory social norms have decreased.

Actions explicitly addressing discriminatory social norms have been mostly targeted at victims of VAWG and, to a lesser extent, related to the HIV/AIDS context. The '*Pacific Partnership to End VAWG*', for instance, is a rare regional programme which has comprehensively promoted a transformative approach as aims at transforming the social norms that allow violence against women. Overall, the track record on successes in supporting this area that emerges from the case studies, remains rather bleak so far, albeit with a number of interventions still being at their early stages.

EU support to discriminatory social norms appears to be scattered and project-based only, with little connection to a larger strategic approach needed by such a long-term process as changing social norms and stereotypes.

Despite their relevance, the EU has often neglected LGBTI issues

**Despite their relevance in numerous contexts, the EU, like other donors, has been very timid in addressing gender issues of sexuality.** While some support to Human Rights in the *Western Balkans* and a few local projects in countries such as *Colombia* and *Brazil* covered LGBTI issues, overall, little EU support has been identified in this area beyond the micro-level.

## EQ7-9 - Sustainability

**Sustainability issues were systematically discussed, often in an extensive way, in project design documentation; however, attention to sustainability usually vanished during implementation.** EU templates – e.g., templates for grant proposals under thematic instruments - require that various dimensions of sustainability (e.g., financial, institutional, policy level) are discussed during project design. These sections are usually well developed although there is sometimes a tendency towards “proving” the sustainability of the action rather than “discussing” risks that may threaten its sustainability. Some action documents of gender-targeted interventions funded under geographic instruments (e.g., EU’s SGBV programme in Zambia) reveal a good integration of sustainability issues – including in terms of building on lessons from other interventions – in project design. While sustainability is explicitly discussed in action documents, it is often overlooked during implementation as evidenced by the absence of references to these issues in reporting activities (e.g., progress reports of interventions, EAMRs, etc.).

**There are many examples of EU-funded activities – and of effects of EU-funded activities – that lasted after the end of EU support; however, taken together, EU GEWE-related interventions at partner country level often presents a mixed picture in terms of sustainability.** In the countries reviewed, ROM and evaluation reports highlight many activities (e.g., advocacy efforts by some local NGOs) and effects (e.g., capacities of local stakeholders strengthened) which have lasted after project closure.

However, they also reveal numerous examples of actions (e.g., awareness-raising activities, services for survivors of domestic violence) which stopped – or are likely to stop – after the end of the EU support. A common issue has been the lack of funding and, more specifically, the difficulties faced by the implementing partner to find resources from the national or local authorities to continue the action supported after the end of the project. Difficulties to sustain activities at the local level and issues of scaling up have resulted in limited effects achieved by many grants provided to CSOs. The limited scope of some institutional capacity-building activities at central government level has also resulted in poor sustainability of the effects achieved because, among other factors, of issues of turnover of staff. Overall, taken together, EU GEWE-related interventions at partner country level have often presented a mixed picture in terms of sustainability.

Factors of sustainability

Building on the evidence gathered in the case studies, **three key factors of sustainability** are further discussed below.

1) The issue of costs

As highlighted above in [EQ7](#), GEWE-related actions undertaken to address challenges in public service delivery remain inherently dependent on **external financing**. The interventions that have generated – or were likely to generate – the most sustainable results have been the ones which, instead of developing potentially more effective (in the short term) separate / stand-alone approaches, have incorporated new elements into existing processes. A case in point is the one-stop centre model which may appear to be

effective in increasing access to support services for SGBV survivors, but which posed serious challenges in terms of sustainability in many partner countries. To counter this challenge, the EU-funded SGBV programme in *Zambia* has tried to ensure that services for SGBV survivors are integrated in the “normal” daily work and tasks of the different service providers.

In the *Pacific region*, as highlighted above in [EQ7](#), the EU supported regional programme on VAWG has supported the development of a curriculum on women’s human rights and VAWG that has been incorporated into the standard training for teachers. In *Chad*, one of the EU’s partners in the Justice support programme has trained local people to develop a network of paralegals in the region where it operated<sup>47</sup> instead of deploying professionals with no connection to the local communities.

## 2) The issue of political will

Like in other sectors, **political will** in partner countries is an important factor of sustainability for GEWE-related actions. This calls for important advocacy efforts to be deployed by the EU at that level to ensure that gains in the GEWE area are preserved over time. This evaluation found examples where the EU instead of shying away from a difficult political context for actions in the area GEWE has maintained efforts over the years until concrete opportunities to contribute to changes at policy level could be seized. This was the case in *Colombia*, where the EU has contributed to the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture’s Rural Women’s Directorate, which was maintained despite a change in government in recent years.

## 3) The importance of partnerships

Building of **core partnerships** with the main institutions that are delivering services in the area of GEWE also appears as a key to ensuring sustainability of GEWE actions. For example, in *Brazil*, a municipal-level project on VAWG worked to ensure the project’s sustainability and local ownership by partnering with the Brazilian Confederation of Municipalities, which continued working on the core activities initiated by the project after it ended. In *Jamaica*, the EU took a different approach to sustainability and helped create the group of male advocates for women’s rights noted earlier which has also continued this work following the end of project funding.

## A comprehensive approach and ensuring medium/long term engagement yield better and more sustainable results

**Overall, the interventions that generated – or are likely to generate – more sustainable results used an integrated approach which combined support at normative level with related capacity building of partners involved in implementation and long-term support to changes in attitude and norms.** Changes in national policies and legal frameworks can take long to effect since they require: i) the establishment of a conducive institutional environment for their effective implementation; and ii) positive responses by the final beneficiaries of these new policies. However, the impact of interventions focussing on this level generally is more sustainable than interventions that focus solely on training personnel or establishing ad hoc response mechanisms at the local level. This is since, unless there is a major shift in leadership which has a highly different ideology, the policies and legal frameworks remain in place for the long term.

Where the training inputs paid off in terms of sustainability is when sufficient numbers of key personnel were trained to effect a change in the institutional culture of the different organisations working on GEWE. This is particularly important in the justice and policing sectors which often reflect a more generalised culture of impunity for VAWG in many countries. In *Georgia*, the EU, jointly with UN Women and other development partners active in the governance area in recent years, has invested in comprehensive training activities covering staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the police, prosecutor’s office, social service agency, courts and local authorities on VAWG, with positive results.

<sup>47</sup> In addition to providing legal aid services, the paralegals engaged with stakeholders at the local level to contribute to awareness raising on VAWG.

# 5. OVERALL ASSESSMENT



## Commitments implementation remains low

This evaluation has found that, despite some significant improvements, implementation of EU commitments in gender equality has remained slow. A recurrent observation in the analysis is the absence of clear messages from the EU's top leadership and senior management relative to gender equality being recognised as a major policy priority. There is also evidence of persistent pockets of resistance towards a shift in institutional culture of EU services involved in EU external action. There is little evidence of systematic efforts to strengthen capacity internally to assure implementation of GEWE commitments at any level although there are several examples where individual senior managers have successfully taken related actions.

## An area competing with other policy priorities

Some EUDs and EU MS agencies at the country level, and some staff at HQ, have appreciated the growing evidence of the costs (incl. the economic costs) of neglecting GEWE as a policy priority<sup>48</sup> and have taken this into account in policy dialogue and effectively used it to leverage efforts of local and international partners in this area. However, the way GEWE has been approached at the field and HQ level during the period under review has often relegated it to an optional area of intervention that competes with other policy priorities pursued by the EU; this applies to both the long-standing ones such as infrastructure development and food security to more recent ones like digitalisation for development, climate change and mobilising the private sector. This situation, which is observed in all regions, derives from a lack of understanding of, and capacity to mainstream GEWE in all institutions and interventions. Despite being recognised in policy documents as a fundamental value for the EU and a fundamental force for sustainable development and equitable economic growth, and despite the achievements made under GAP I and GAP II, gender equality issues are often marginalised. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the position of the GFPs in EU institutions which remains weak and under-resourced in terms of the time they can allocate to this role, their level of gender expertise and generally junior status within the organisation.

## Lack of clear strategic directions and weak gender mainstreaming in EU external action

The strategic direction taken by the international development community since the Beijing Conference has been a combination of interventions specifically targeted to addressing gender inequalities, with efforts to mainstream gender into other sectors. This evaluation analysed how successful that combination was in EU external action. It concludes that, given the lack of clear strategic directions from the top management and an unclear understanding of the strategic nature of gender mainstreaming associated to a lack of expertise, the integration of GEWE into EU external action has often remained a box-ticking or an add-on exercise. GEWE is a complex and multi-dimensional area; to see meaningful progress, there is a need to fully embrace and address this complexity. Effective mainstreaming in sector programmes would require a detailed understanding of the dynamics of the sector to be able to understand how power structures and norms that prevail at various levels affect the outcomes of the supported policy measures. This understanding is sometimes available from gender analyses compiled at the country level. While some progress has been made in carrying out such analysis at the country and sector levels, the approach is not yet fully integrated into programming processes and the quality of the analysis varies greatly across sectors and countries. No region really stands out in this regard.

## Needs for strengthened EU capacity

Changing an institutional culture takes time. The slow implementation of the EU commitments in GEWE during the period under review should not hide the many positive changes and initiatives promoted by individuals or small groups of individuals within EU services and at EU MS level in recent years. Although needs remain high in this area across the Commission, some EU services (incl. EEAS) have stepped up their efforts to strengthen EU's capacity on GEWE. Clear improvements in accountability within EU institutions have also had a positive effect on the work of EU staff. One element which appears to be missing in recent years is a coherent approach to training and capacity building within EU services. The mobilisation of expertise is still largely externalised and there appears to be no mechanism for the EU to learn from the capacity building efforts supported by its own funding.

<sup>48</sup> See World Bank (2020): How Large Is the Gender Dividend? Measuring Selected Impacts and Costs of Gender Inequality.

## Some positive effects in areas such as VAWG and political participation

Regarding actual interventions implemented, the EU has provided substantial support in the area of VAWG, with some notable achievements at the normative level and in high coherence with EU's and EU MS commitment in the framework of CEDAW. It has also been a strong advocate for equal representation and participation of women and men in policy and political processes in the countries where it is cooperating.

## Increased global partnerships

The evaluation shows that the EU has managed to establish strong partnerships with UN Women and ILO to support some of the most important strategic areas at country and regional level. This has allowed building on the well-established collaboration between UN agencies (esp. UN Women) and National Women's Machinerys which are closely related to partner countries' commitments to key international conventions and declarations (e.g., CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, MDGs/SDGs, UNSCRs). The EU has also strengthened its collaboration with the Rome-Based Agencies in recent years to enhance its action in the areas of food security, nutrition, agriculture and rural development. However, investment in these partnerships are too recent to see any significant effect at country level.

## Sub-optimal complementarity with main actors at the country level

Moreover, complementarity between the main actors active at the country level has been sub-optimal during the period under review. In some countries, the EU provides support to civil society almost exclusively and is not closely following what other donors do in terms of strengthening national institutions. This leads to a lack of synergy between actions aimed at strengthening normative aspects at national level and measures toward improving service-delivery and community response at the local/grass-root level. EU staff working in EUDs are not sufficiently aware of the partnerships established at the regional and global levels. Linkages between

gender-targeted support and other EU-funded actions carried out at the national/local level have been limited .

## Insufficient gender analysis and monitoring tools to inform both programming and implementation

GAP II was developed to adopt a comprehensive and transformative approach. A first important step to address gender inequalities is to make the crux of the problem very clear and demonstrate, with credible data, the negative effects these inequalities have on achieving sustainable development. The EU has failed to implement adequate monitoring to measure progress, which has hampered learning and the documentation of the impact of not addressing these inequalities on interventions' results and transformative change. The EU and its partners have invested insufficiently in strengthening national statistical capacities in the area of GEWE and have not supported research to examine the quantitative and qualitative effects of the actions implemented. The increased attention given to gender-responsive budgeting and integration of GEWE into budget support in recent years are signs of new opportunities to invest more in supporting partner countries to monitor and measure the effects of policy measures in the area of GEWE.

## Lack of coherent strategic vision at the country and regional level

One important lesson of this evaluation is that the EU lacks a clear and coherent vision of what to do, and how, with regard to GEWE at country level This results in interventions often being too scattered, opportunistic, and ad hoc to achieve synergies or consolidated results. A major challenge which lies ahead for the EU is to translate the approach spelled out in GAP II into a strategic vision at the country/regional level that is consistently supported by the senior- and middle management in HQ and EUDs and is understood by all EU staff. Some EUD staff, mostly GFPs and sometimes their direct superiors, have a good understanding of the possible strategic directions that the EU could follow given the prevailing political economy in the partner country. However, such visions are rarely shared collectively at the EUD level. Moreover, too often the advocacy and visibility efforts for GEWE carried out by HoDs do not involve and do not directly support

the efforts of GFPs and others through international cooperation, i.e., there is a separation of and lack of synergy between political and development efforts.

### **Persisting important internal and external obstacles to be expected**

EU efforts in the GEWE area will continue facing important obstacles in the coming years, but there will also be new opportunities. Internal obstacles are systemic; they relate not only to what the EU wishes to do but also to how it wishes to do it, i.e., the organisation's approach to programming, choice of modalities and channels. The obstacles also relate to external factors. Because of lack of political will and weak capacity, implementation of GEWE policies remains weak in many partner countries. It is also uneven; many countries have been quicker to tackle issues of VAWG than women's political voice and economic empowerment, and there has been a failure at all levels to stress the linkages between these issues. The spatial element should not be forgotten, that is to say the disconnect between GEWE attitudes in cosmopolitan capitals and in the rest of the country. In some countries, there is the risk of backsliding on decades of progress as ascendant nationalism and populism generate nostalgia for "traditional values" which reinforce gender inequality for women and girls

# 6. CONCLUSIONS





# Cluster 1: Policy level

## Conclusion 1

**The high policy ambition of the EU in the area of GEWE has translated into increased attention to GEWE in most dimensions of EU external action, but no quantum leap has been observed during the period under review.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQs 1 to 3**.

As a result of continuous efforts by EU staff and strong impetus at the political level in critical moments of the period under review, GEWE has taken an increasingly visible place in the EU policy and institutional framework. This is reflected in stronger references to GEWE in some of the EU sector policies and guidelines as well as in some EU procedures. In line with the evolution at EU level, several EU MS have strengthened their strategic framework on GEWE and deepened their engagement in the context of the WPS agenda. Despite persisting challenges in gender mainstreaming (see [Conclusion 7](#)), there is clear evidence of an increased attention to GEWE in new EU interventions launched in recent years.

EU (including EU MS) efforts in the area of GEWE have been of important strategic relevance in terms of responding both to the increasing awareness within the international community of the need to address gender inequality to achieve equitable sustainable development, and to a political imperative for the EU to act in this area and remain consistent with its historical commitment to gender equality as an EU fundamental value.

During the period under review, there has been some continuity with the support provided in the past decades and, in many countries, new interventions have benefited from the long experience accumulated over the years. EU staff have also managed to seize new opportunities offered by changes in the political context in several countries (e.g. Chad, Colombia) and the renewed momentum around GEWE at global level has created a conducive environment to launch ambitious multi-country initiatives such as the Spotlight initiative to eliminate all forms of VAWG and the WE Empower programme.

However, despite some notable positive developments, overall implementation of EU commitments in gender equality has remained slow. The long-awaited and requested significant shift in institutional culture has not taken place

during the period under review. Progress in the different dimensions of this shift has been uneven across EU institutions and EU MS.

Despite an increased attention to GEWE in recent years, GEWE is still frequently seen as an issue of secondary importance. Moreover, given persisting challenges in terms of gender mainstreaming, the level of funding clearly targeted to address gender inequalities and their negative effects on equitable sustainable development, and the quality of the actions undertaken remains inadequate to ensure a substantial improvement in EU external action in this area.

## Conclusion 2

**From 2015 on, GAP II has served as a useful tool for providing overarching strategic directions and for showing EU's commitments in the area of GEWE; however, tailoring this 'open architecture' to specific contexts and translating it into a coherent strategic framework at country level has turned out to be challenging.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQ 1**.

Although the content of GAP II is not widely known even within EUDs, many stakeholders involved in EU external action are aware of the policy commitments outlined in this strategic document. For some actors at the European level (EC, EEAS, EUDs, and, to a lesser extent, EU MS and other organisations such as European NGOs), GAP II has served as a useful tool to frame the EU external action in the area of GEWE into a coherent framework.

Compared to GAP I, GAP II reveals a gradual improvement in defining EU overall strategic directions in the area of GEWE. It has rightly integrated concepts such as transformative change, which reflects an increasing understanding of the multi-faceted nature of GEWE as informed by contextual realities.

The GAP II framework has been built around three thematic pillars. While the three-pillar structure presents a simple and useful framework, there are substantive overlaps between the thematic areas presented and important interlinkages between the various pillars and their respective thematic sub-areas. The interlinkages within the GAP II framework have often been overlooked by EU staff when using the strategic framework to select thematic priorities at country level. Moreover, these thematic priorities have too often been

selected based on what the EU was already doing in the country rather than in a forward-looking manner based on a clear identification of needs and opportunities through a gender analysis, a tool which was intended to launch the 'gender mainstreaming' process.

The evaluation has also identified a few areas that have been insufficiently taken into account in the design of the framework: i) GAP II lacks a clear definition of gender mainstreaming; ii) intersectionality has been increasingly recognised in the academic literature and by the international community as an important aspect to address in GEWE interventions, but the concept has only been partially integrated in the framework outlined by GAP II; iii) climate change and resilience to related challenges, including women's role as key actors in ensuring sustainable management of natural resources/biodiversity, have not been fully incorporated in the framework. In addition to climate change and green growth, there will also be a need to further align any follow-up strategic framework on GEWE to the other policy priorities established by the recently appointed Commission such as connectivity and digitalisation for development.

Moreover, as discussed under Conclusion 6, translating the GAP II framework into a coherent strategic framework at country level has turned out to be challenging.

## Cluster 2: Institutional level

### Conclusion 3

**Despite unambiguous political messages at the highest level of the EU, the EU GEWE agenda has been pushed more by a few highly committed staff than by strong senior management engagement.**

This conclusion is based mainly on [EQ 2](#).

There have been unambiguous political messages on the importance of GEWE at the highest level of the EU and some top EU officials have been key to launching some ambitious multi-country initiatives in this area in recent years. At the global level, the EU and EU MS have managed to achieve strong visibility on GEWE, and, in most instances, they have managed to speak with one

voice in international fora. In several countries, the EU has assumed a strong role in donor coordination in the area of GEWE. There are signs of increasing awareness of GEWE issues by EU senior management and the EU and some EU MS have decided to take some strong corrective actions to address important imbalances in terms of (women and men) equal representation in managerial positions within institutions involved EU external action. Overall, EU leadership has increased in the area of GEWE during the period under review.

However, political statements about the importance of GEWE have not yet been fully reflected in internal procedures such as job descriptions. Integration of GEWE into internal management reporting mechanism (EAMRs) has increased, but the information produced has been only partially used for learning and accountability purposes. Other forms of reporting such as GAP II annual reporting are suffering from various weaknesses ([see conclusion 10](#)) that limit accountability.

In addition, the increase in leadership observed within EU institutions in recent years has been uneven and the implementation of the EU's policy commitments in the area of GEWE has relied too heavily on the engagement of a few middle level managers and the GFPs. Most middle and senior managers still do not fully own the strategic framework outlined in GAP II, partly due to a limited understanding of the underlying concepts. There is also a perception by staff in the lower part of the EU institutions that the middle and senior management do not see GEWE as a strong priority. The perception of weak leadership is reinforced by issues related to resource constraints which are not specific to EU's engagement in the area GEWE, but which result in a situation where committed staff do not have sufficient means to meaningfully engage in this area. GEWE is competing with other policy priorities which more easily capture the attention of EU staff involved in key decision-making processes. GFPs, who played a key role in EU's increased engagement in GEWE during the period under review, have rarely been involved in these decision-making processes.

## Conclusion 4

**While genuine efforts have been made to strengthen gender expertise within the EU, overall gender capacity has remained too weak to ensure an effective implementation of the relevant EU's policy commitments in this area.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQs 2 and 3**. Overall, there is an important mismatch between the EU policy ambition in the area of GEWE and the resources mobilised to implement it.

With the strengthening of its partnerships with international organisations (see [Conclusion 8](#)), the possibilities for the EU to tap into the expertise available at the level of its more technical partners has increased, and there is evidence that the EU adequately seized these opportunities. However, the availability of a minimum level of internal expertise is necessary to meaningfully engage in GEWE and this evaluation found that, despite positive evolutions during the period under review, this expertise has been lacking.

The integration of gender specialists within EU institutions has increased. The secondment of EU national experts has contributed to that. But, overall, the number of gender specialists has remained limited compared to the needs.

The network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) at HQ and EUD levels has significantly expanded during the period under review, which has helped somewhat to mainstream GEWE within the institutions. However, GFP posts are still often occupied by junior staff members who are usually working part-time on GEWE although positive incremental changes have been identified on these aspects in some EUDs and HQ units.

Even the most committed and trained GFP cannot ensure gender mainstreaming across all interventions he/she is supposed to follow alone. While GEWE training (incl. online training) is available, it is rarely mandatory, and few EU staff, beyond the GFPs, have benefited from it. Overall, coherent and systematic approaches to gender training and capacity-building across all types of staff are largely absent. At EU MS level, some countries have dedicated specific resources to training and raising awareness among their officials, however, results and take up levels in the different EU MS under review have been uneven so far.

Support provided by HQ or external expertise mobilised directly by EUDs and EU MS country offices have been useful, but insufficient to meaningfully address weaknesses in gender mainstreaming. Quality review mechanisms come too late in the process to compensate for the lack of integration of a gender perspective in the first steps of the design process. Due to uneven awareness of GEWE issues among EUD staff, there has also been weak 'demand' for related technical support.

Whilst the number of gender analyses has increased at country and sector levels, the baseline they provide is not always evident in the design of new interventions, nor is it used as a basis for monitoring and evaluation. EU and EU MS staff still lack access to sound evidence on GEWE at the country level to ensure gender mainstreaming, but, above all, need a much better understanding of GEWE in order to use this data effectively.

Moreover, suitable mechanisms to ensure learning from the efforts supported by its own funding (of, for instance, CSOs, UN agencies, etc) are neither fully developed nor institutionalised. Weaknesses in GAP II reporting have seriously hampered learning through this tool. At the HQ and country level, exchange of information within the GFP network has overall been good, but joint learning only happened occasionally. At the HQ level as well as in many countries, most of the learning remains at the level of GFPs and insufficient mechanisms exist to ensure the transfer of experience when changes of staff occur. Institutional memory was maintained only in EUDs where middle/senior managers and GFPs were both strongly engaged in GEWE related work.

## Conclusion 5

**Despite some challenges, there has been good communication within EU services and among European actors; overall, there has been strong EU added value in EU external action in the area of GEWE.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQs 2 and 4**. There has been regular communication on various aspects related to GEWE between EU services

and between EU and EU MS. This has led to overall coherent positions taken by European actors at the country and global level. EU MS have been closely associated with and, sometimes even significantly influenced, EU policy development on GEWE, including the development of the WPS agenda.

In several countries, the EU has been a driving force on donor coordination, especially regarding coordination between European actors. EU MS engagement in country-level coordination activities on GEWE has often been hampered by the limited capacity in embassies/local agencies. Progress towards joint programming on GEWE has been slow in many countries because of challenges inherent to joint programming processes such as the existence of different programming cycles between the EU and EU MS. However, there have been genuine efforts to increase the integration of GEWE in EU joint programming, but these efforts suffer from similar obstacles as the ones observed in the efforts to integrate a gender perspective in sector interventions and, more generally.

In most countries, the EU added value to the European external actions through its presence in a broad range of sectors, its coordination efforts, the leverage it exercised as a leading actor in political and policy dialogues, its close partnership with CSOs and in many – but not all – cases simply due to its position as the largest European donor in terms of funding volume.

Beyond joint contributions to GAP reporting and a small number of joint efforts in the context of the production of gender analyses at country level, joint European GEWE-related initiatives in the area of monitoring, evaluation and research at the HQ, regional and country level have remained too limited.

## Cluster 3: Programming and implementation

### Conclusion 6

**At the country level, EU external action in the area of GEWE often did not reflect a strong strategic vision based on clear priorities and a sound analysis of e.g., the most pressing needs, the most effective entry points, the most appropriate sequencing.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQs 1 and 3**. While GEWE has been increasingly integrated in EU engagement in policy dialogue at country level, it rarely reflected a comprehensive strategic approach. In some instances, actions at political level (e.g., by HoD) and EU-funded interventions have not been linked. The demand driven nature of geographic instruments (including IPA) partially explains the limited integration of GEWE issues identified in policy discussions into EU support.

GAP II has provided a useful overarching framework; however, a vision of what to do, and how, with regard to GEWE at the country level has been lacking in many EUDs. This resulted in policy dialogue and interventions often being too scattered, opportunistic, and *ad hoc* to achieve synergies or consolidated results. In particular, the EU has struggled to find the right balance between support at the normative and institutional level (through both top-down and bottom-up approaches), more grass-root support to compensate for weaknesses in public service delivery and contribute to changes in gender relations and attitudes at the local level and other forms of support (e.g., advocacy, socio-economic empowerment) to combat inequalities and discriminatory social norms.

The development of a strategic vision at country level has been hampered by three main obstacles: i) insufficient engagement of all middle/senior managers in EUDs in strategic discussions on EU support to GEWE at country level, which, as highlighted in Conclusions 3 and 4, can be linked to insufficient leadership, accountability and expertise within the EU more broadly; ii) insufficient use of gender analyses (whether produced by the EU or other organisations) in EU programming as well as monitoring and evaluation at country level; iii) weak interest / political will and capacity of partner country institutions.

On the positive side, some staff within a few EUDs and EU MS country-level agencies have shown a good (shared) understanding of the possible strategic directions that the EU could follow given the political economy of partner country institutions and the prevailing needs in the country. In these cases, the GEWE agenda could be advanced although not formalised in a written 'strategy'. There has also been increased awareness of the potential offered by budget support to leverage policy dialogue on GEWE.

## Conclusion 7

**Gender mainstreaming has remained weak with three general aspects largely explaining the limited improvement in this area: i) the lack of EU strategic vision on GEWE at country level; ii) the lack of understanding of the concept of 'gender mainstreaming', in particular its strategic nature; iii) the mismatch between the EU policy ambitions in GEWE and the resources aligned to achieve them. However, significant gender-targeted funding in bilateral cooperation has had strong positive effects on gender mainstreaming.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQ 3** and, to a lesser extent, **EQ6**.

The integration of GEWE into EU external action has often remained a box-ticking or an add-on exercise. This was particularly true at the start of the period under review, but largely remain the case through the whole period. GAP II clearly recognised that the integration of a gender perspective in EU external action is not possible without strong leadership. As highlighted above (see [Conclusion 3](#)), leadership on GEWE has been uneven. But, as also highlighted in GAP II, leadership alone is not sufficient; a minimum level of expertise needs to be available within the institution to ensure a clear integration of a gender perspective in all aspects of EU external action.

In particular, effective mainstreaming in sector programmes requires a detailed understanding of the dynamics of the sector to be able to understand how power structures and norms that prevail at various levels affect the outcomes of the supported policy measures. This understanding is sometimes available from gender analyses compiled at the country level. While some progress has been made in carrying out such analysis at the country and sector levels, gender analyses are not yet fully integrated into programming processes and plans to update existing ones are often missing.

Toolboxes/toolkits were developed by the EU and other donors in the past, but they were not often used during the period under review. EU staff are still lacking a basic understanding of the concept of 'gender mainstreaming' and needs in terms of internal capacity-building remain high (see also [Conclusion 4](#)).

Staff in EUDs and EU MS local agencies operate in a context characterised by strong resource

constraints. Lack of time has hampered staff readiness to embrace the complexity of GEWE and to access available resources. To overcome this, several EUDs have resorted to the mobilisation of ad hoc gender expertise as part of the team of consultants in charge of formulating new interventions. Although not ideal because it only compensates for the lack of expertise during one part of the project cycle, EUDs have usually managed to exploit this approach well with positive effects at various levels.

As illustrated by the weak integration of a gender perspective in EU blending operations, gender mainstreaming has also been partially hampered by weak capacity and willingness on EU's national and international partners side to fully embrace gender mainstreaming approaches, although some of them have shown increasing awareness of GEWE issues in recent years.

Formalised quality review mechanisms have improved during the period under review. GFPs at HQ, but also additional external expertise mobilised by DEVCO or directly by EUDs, have been increasingly associated with this process. This has contributed somewhat to improving the design of new interventions from a gender perspective. However, these inputs came often too late to compensate for the lack of integration of a gender perspective in the first steps of the design process. In addition, these inputs were sometimes not sufficiently taking the realities of the local context into account.

A key lesson of this evaluation is that gender mainstreaming efforts need to happen very early in the decision-making process related to new EU support. In the current set-up, this would require that GFPs are more involved in this decision-making process related to the programming and the identification of new interventions, which often only involved the medium/senior level management, to which GFPs rarely belong.

Finally, wherever the EU has provided significant gender-targeted funding in its bilateral cooperation, this has had strong positive effects on gender mainstreaming, including in the integration of GEWE into policy dialogue related to other sectors of cooperation. EU's engagement in gender-targeted support has given EUD staff (not only GFPs) unique insights into the opportunities and obstacles to gender mainstreaming in partner countries' sector policies, which could be used to enhance the integration of a gender perspective in the design

of EU sector interventions. More generally, the provision of gender-targeted funding was often correlated with increased gender capacity at EUD level. Unfortunately, so far, these opportunities have only been used in too few cases.

## Conclusion 8

**The EU has substantially strengthened its partnerships with international organisations (esp. UN agencies and the Council of Europe) during the period under review; this has enhanced EU external action in the area of GEWE at various levels; however, coordination with these organisations at country level, especially to strengthen the role played by national women machineries in national policy processes, has remained insufficient.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQ 5, EQ 6** as well as **EQs 7 to 9**.

The EU has managed to establish strong linkages with UN agencies at the global level during the period under review and, in some regions, with other international organisations such as the Council of Europe. It has strengthened its collaboration with the Rome-Based Agencies in recent years to enhance its action in the areas of food security, nutrition, agriculture and rural development. The EU has also closely worked with UN Women and ILO to support some important strategic areas of GEWE at country and regional level. However, investment in these partnerships are too recent to see any significant effect at country level. Moreover, collaboration with UN agencies has often focussed on funding of specific initiatives; coordination between the EU and UN agencies at country level has been uneven.

In some cases, the closer collaboration has allowed building on the well-established linkages between UN agencies (esp. UN Women) and National Women's Machineries which are related to partner countries' commitments to key international conventions and declarations (e.g., CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, MDGs/SDGs, UNSCRs). But, only in a few instances, has this translated into joint efforts at country level to support the National Women's Machinery.

Some EU MS have provided support at that level and there are signs that the EU has also put increased attention to this in recent years in some countries. However, so far, EU's engagement with National Women's Machineries has been too often dependent on political conjunctures and

opportunities for providing financial and technical support to gender relevant institutions.

## Conclusion 9

**While the EU's substantial support to CSOs active in GEWE has led to many positive experiences, the EU has yet to find an approach to ensure a more strategic and more comprehensive partnership on GEWE with these actors at country level, including a stronger involvement of grass-root organisations in EU external action.**

This conclusion is based mainly on **EQ 5, EQ 6** as well as **EQs 7 to 9**.

CSOs implement and shape the direction of a substantial share of the EU's interventions in the area of GEWE. The EU has actively supported CSOs as actors in project implementation in the area of GEWE, with some emphasis on women's organisations, in most countries reviewed. This has been highly relevant given the role CSOs play in the area of GEWE.

CSOs, including women's organisations, perceive the EU as an enabling actor in terms of funding capacity and influence on national gender equality agenda. However, strong partnerships with CSOs in the area of GEWE mainly surfaced in cases where the EU had developed a specific strategy to support CSOs and involved them in GEWE-related policy processes. Cross-sectoral dialogue on gender equality in areas such as trade and economic policy has been limited so far.

In addition, the EU did not benefit or learn from activities and experience they funded through CSOs although some exceptions exist (e.g., "capitalisation workshops" with CSOs active in GEWE organised by a few EUDs). Reports and surveys generated through cooperation with CSOs were usually not analysed to feed into future support.

The EU has also struggled to respond adequately to the specific needs of grass-roots organisations. Both the financial situation of grass-roots organisations active in the area of GEWE and their managerial and operational capacities limit their ability to meet the requirements of EU funding at grant application and implementation/reporting levels. Results of alternative approaches (e.g., cascade funding) to traditional types of calls for proposals have been mixed so far, partly due to the difficulties of finding an intermediary organisation sufficiently flexible and well-equipped to respond to local realities and a failure

and a failure to agree on a clear definition of roles. This is an issue not specific to GEWE, but it is of concern given the key role grass-roots organisations play in outreach activities in the area of GEWE.

## Conclusion 10

**There has been a lack of monitoring and evaluation at both local and national levels, which has significantly hampered accountability and learning.**

This conclusion is based on [EQ 6 and 9](#).

At project level, results frameworks are often too timid with respect to the integration of a GEWE dimension (especially for non-targeted interventions) and, sometimes, too ambitious (for targeted interventions). Moreover, assessments and planning of the means necessary to monitor progress are often inadequate or absent in the project documentation.

Measuring change is challenging and there is little to no understanding of what transformative change related to GEWE is among EU staff, let alone a sense of how to measure it ([see also Conclusion 4](#)). This results in the measurement challenges already inherent in GEWE such as how do you measure changes in social norms and transformative change being poorly addressed in M&E activities in EU-funded interventions.

In general, EU M&E mechanisms still address GEWE superficially despite recent positive efforts such as the development by DEVCO, NEAR and FPI of guidelines on the integration of GEWE in evaluation and the mainstreaming of GEWE issues in the recently updated ROM monitoring questions. The integration of GEWE in Terms of References for M&E projects is not mandatory nor systematic, and the resources allocated to implement meaningful M&E activities related to GEWE are too often limited.

At national level, there have been insufficient investments by the EU and its partners in M&E and national statistical capacities in the area of GEWE. It remains difficult to obtain the key sex disaggregated data needed in many sectors to plan effectively and determine where the most pressing gender inequalities exist and where positive (or negative) change has taken place. The increased attention given by the EU to support National Women Machineries and gender-responsive budgeting and the increased integration of GEWE into budget support are signs of new opportunities to invest more in supporting partner countries to monitor and

measure the effects of policy measures in the area of GEWE.

At global level, EU reporting on GEWE in the context of GAP II has also suffered from various weaknesses which hampered accountability and learning. In particular, the reporting process has been perceived as too heavy by various stakeholders (including several EU MS) and there has been an over-emphasis on quantitative indicators at the expense of results-oriented qualitative ones, reducing effectiveness for strategic use in identifying promising practises and lessons learnt.

Overall, there has been insufficient attention given to ensure a combination of: i) qualitative measurement of what has worked and what has not at the local and national level, and ii) regular collection and use of sex disaggregated (quantitative) data in all sectors, including for monitoring trends at the aggregated level (see also conclusion 11).

## Conclusion 11

**Despite the broad relevance of the EU external action in the area of GEWE, visible results at the macro-level have been limited; achieving them has been hampered by weaknesses in the design of EU support to GEWE, but also by adverse contextual factors as well as challenges that are beyond the capacity of one single actor like the EU to address.**

This conclusion is based on [EQ 7 and 9](#).

The evaluation has faced various challenges in identifying significant change at macro level to which the EU has contributed. This is partly related to the lack of monitoring and evaluation at both local and national levels, which leads to a lack of information on what has worked and what has not, and what are the changes at the macro level (see Conclusion 10).

Despite these challenges, the evaluation could identify positive achievements in all thematic areas where the EU has provided substantial support. In particular the evidence gathered points to notable contributions to the strengthening of normative frameworks on GEWE, including through the EU actions promoting the WPS agenda and the specific interventions focussing on VAWG. The EU has also enhanced CSO actions in the area of VAWG in many countries. This has been achieved by, for instance, contributing to some extent to improvement in services they provide to victims of VAWG, strengthening their capacity to advocate

for positive change at the government level and to implement specific community level activities to help women and girls realise their rights related to VAWG. At a broader level, positive evolution can also be observed in education, a policy area where the EU has provided substantial support over the past decades.

However, the evidence gathered also points to: i) a very slow pace of change in many of the thematic areas reviewed, and significant risks of backsliding in some of them; ii) various weaknesses in the support provided by the EU and its partners (implementing organisations and other development partners active at country level) to contribute to faster and more substantial changes in the area of GEWE.

Gaps in gender equality remain huge including in social sectors where attention to GEWE has traditionally been higher. Services to victims of VAWG have not improved significantly in most of the countries reviewed and, where improvements can be observed, sustainability is often an issue. There remains a lack of political will at both the country level and to some extent also within the EU itself. The current economic climate and fallout from the COVID-19 crisis combined with the negative evolutions in the political context observed in several partner countries have resulted in a shrinking space for civil society and a backlash against women's rights and pose serious threats to gender equality efforts. In the current context, there are clear risks of backsliding on progress on GEWE as it may take an even further backseat to other funding priorities in the wake of the economic cost of the pandemic and as inherent gender inequalities in most countries are exacerbated by this crisis.

The effectiveness of EU support to GEWE has been hampered by a lack of strategic and integrated approach (see [Conclusion 6](#)). The complexity of effective gender mainstreaming has not been fully embraced by EU support (see also [Conclusion 7](#)). The EU has been slow to change how it approaches the process of removing barriers to gender inequality – both internally within its own staffing and with regard to supporting truly transformative programming from a GEWE perspective at partner country level (see [Conclusions 4 and 6](#)). There has also been a lack of scaling up efforts based on successful experiences, particularly in the work done with

CSOs. Their work is significant (see [Conclusion 9](#)), but often operates at a fairly small scale. Effectiveness is also reduced by the fact that interventions are too often ad hoc and scattered (see [Conclusion 6](#)) and a lack of sustained efforts to achieve consolidated results over time. As with normative change, actions designed to shift institutional culture or contribute to changes in attitude and norms in national institutions are key to ensure lasting impact, but they didn't receive sufficient attention by the EU and its partners during the period under review.

While, in some cases, higher effectiveness could be achieved by following a more strategic approach, the evaluation team recognises the fact that challenges are so significant that it is beyond the capacity of one single actor like the EU to do more than provide strategic inputs and support in a few key areas. This calls for more coordinated approaches as well as long-term and consistent efforts embedded in a coherent framework that is regularly adapted to changes in context and new opportunities.



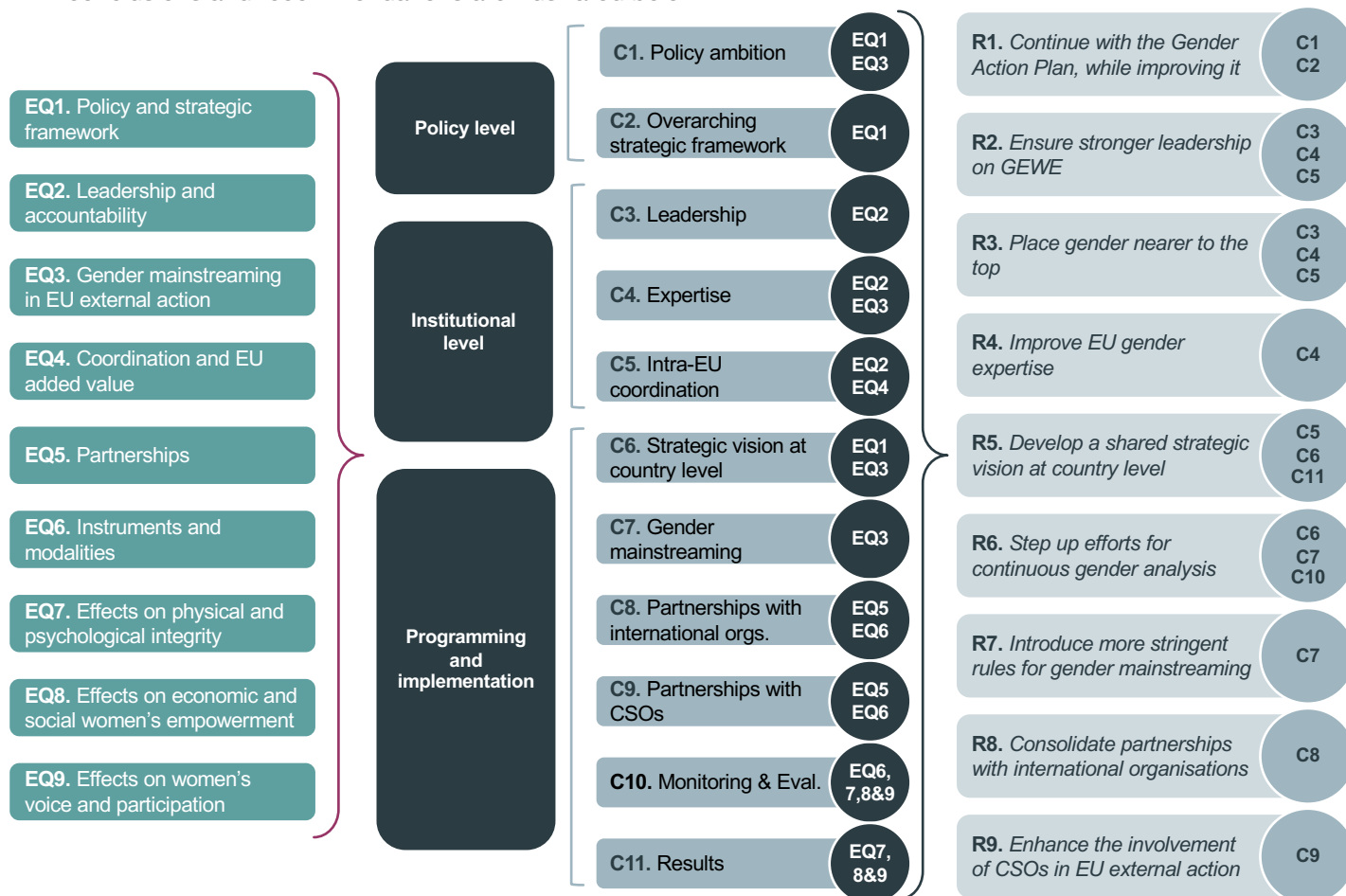
# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS



# Overview of the recommendations

## How to strengthen EU support

The following 9 key recommendations emerge from the conclusions. The linkages between EQs (findings), conclusions and recommendations are illustrated below.



## Prioritising recommendations

The table provides an overview of the level of priority in terms of importance of the recommendations and the urgency (agenda) of their realisation. Addressing these priorities requires actions by different actors. Therefore, each recommendation includes suggestions for operational steps to put it into practice and proposes implementation responsibilities.

Recommendation	Importance*	Urgency*
R1. Continue with the Gender Action Plan, while improving it	4	4
R2. Ensure stronger leadership on GEWE	4	4
R3. Place gender nearer to the top in the EU institutional environment	4	3
R4. Improve EU gender expertise, especially at the country level	4	4
R5. Develop a shared strategic vision at the country level	4	3
R6. Step up efforts for continuous gender analysis and application	3	3
R7. Introduce stringent rules for the application and monitoring of gender mainstreaming	2	3
R8. Consolidate partnerships with international organisations	2	2
R9. Enhance the involvement of CSOs in EU external action	3	2

\* 1 = low, 4 = high

# Overview of the recommendations

## Taking into account resource constraints and linkages between the recommendations

The implementation of the recommendations will need to take into account the prevailing resource-constrained environment within the EU, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Several of the recommendations below focus on changes in the way some tasks are being implemented by EU staff. These recommendations could be relatively easily implemented by integrating the actions suggested in the standard tasks that fall under the responsibility of EU services in the current institutional set-up.

However, this evaluation, like the 2003 and 2015 ones, also highlights the need to address more vigorously some weaknesses in a few critical areas in order to see a real change in the EU's engagement in GEWE and to ensure the effectiveness of the investment made in this area. There is a persistent mismatch between the ambition stated in policy documents and the resources mobilised by the EU so far to achieve it. Implementing some of the recommendations

(e.g., R4) will thus require that decision-makers to first clarify and make more visible the importance the EU wants given to GEWE in its external action (see [Recommendation 1](#)).

## GEWE can play a catalytic role in fostering policy coherence

As apparent in the 2016 EU Global Strategy, the EU has increasingly recognised in its policy documents the integrated nature of its external actions; hence, the growing concern for policy coherence. GEWE, which cuts across all policy areas, is a prime example of the need for integrated action and policy coherence. Provided that the EU reinforces its political commitment to GEWE and backs this up with adequate resources to strengthen its internal capacity to mainstream gender in the form of increased dedicated gender personnel and systematic training for EU staff on ways to achieve genuinely transformative change in GEWE, the evaluation underlines that future efforts to improve EU's action in the area of GEWE can play a catalytic role for improving all EU external actions.

## Cluster 1: Policy level

### Recommendation 1

The EU and EU MS should develop a successor strategy capitalising on the experience gained under GAP II (and before), while adapting it to the recent evolutions in the EU policy framework and the international context.

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusions 1 and 2**.

#### Main implementation responsibility:

EU MS, EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI),  
EEAS HQ

#### Main associated actors:

DG JUST, CSOs (esp. European CSOs)

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

GAP II has proved to be a useful tool in multiple ways. It has enhanced the visibility of EU external action in the area of GEWE and provided a broad and coherent framework for the EU and EU MS while rightly putting emphasis on changes in the EU's institutional culture and gender transformative approaches.



**In the future:** a successor strategy should be developed building on the positive elements of GAP II highlighted in this evaluation.

## WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

### Political weight

1. Raise the profile of the successor strategy by adopting it as a Communication.
2. Strengthen the linkages between the strategy and EU internal policies and ensure coherence with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.
3. Invest in dissemination activities of the successor strategy involving EU MS and all European actors (incl. EU institutions and CSOs).
4. Seek/create better recognition from UN agencies and other key international stakeholders (at both country and global level) as to how the successor strategy relates to the(ir) overall effort e.g., in follow-up and support to international commitments. Seek the active participation of these stakeholders in consultations and events promoting the successor strategy. See also Recommendation 8.

### Linkages with broader frameworks

5. Strengthen references to international frameworks (international covenants in the areas of GEWE and other international frameworks related to equality and non-discrimination) in the successor strategy (including to coordination and reporting mechanisms established under these frameworks).

### Clarity on certain key concepts

6. Discuss the concept of gender mainstreaming in the successor strategy more effectively, building on existing toolkits and guidance documents (including EIGE's glossary and tools). Unpack 'gender mainstreaming' to better explain its underlying strategic dimensions. Introduce a distinction between: i) the integration of a gender perspective in sector interventions (beneficiary level), ii) the integration of a gender perspective at EU institutional level (procedures and human resources); and iii) the integration of a gender perspective at the EU policy, strategic and multi-annual programming level.
7. Reinforce the references to intersectionality; clearly define the concept in the new framework and design an approach to gradually integrate key intersectional factors in indicators that will be measured under the new strategy.

### Interlinkages within the framework and alignment to the EU external action portfolio

8. Clarify and explain better the interlinkages that exist between the elements of the framework (e.g. between objectives related to VAWG and the ones related to economic empowerment and discriminatory social norms / gender stereotypes).
9. Further specify the thematic objectives (e.g., GAP II obj. 15) to better reflect the sector divisions in the EU portfolio (with the view of creating a clearer framework for gender mainstreaming in sector interventions).
10. Highlight the interconnection between climate change and gender inequality more effectively and clearly and underline the opportunities to tackle these issues together, incl. through reinforcing the role of women and girls as change agents in this area.

## Recommendation 2

Step up efforts to ensure strong leadership of EU's top management at HQ and country level.

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusion 3**, and, to a lesser extent, **Conclusion 4 and 5**.

### Main implementation responsibility:

EC (Commissioners' and Directors' level), EEAS HQ


### Main associated actors:

Middle / senior management in EUDs and at HQ, EC's Secretariat-General, EC services in charge of human resource management


### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated


Progress on GEWE has been closely tied to EU leadership. Although, overall, increase in leadership has been uneven, the evaluation has identified many examples of senior managers – including at EU and EU MS ambassador level in partner countries – promoting GEWE through various non-spending activities (ad hoc events, site visits, etc.). These activities were key to show EU's strong commitment to GEWE and raise awareness on GEWE.

 **In the future:** Senior staff engagement in non-spending activities promoting GEWE at country level should continue, but these efforts should be better connected to the main areas of cooperation. Moreover, the EU should full harness the potential offered by EU joint programming to jointly champion GEWE at country level (see also Recommendation 5).

The EU has set itself an ambitious agenda on GEWE. It will not achieve it if it does not lead by example, starting with working towards equal representation of men and women in decision-making positions. This provides distinct benefits, including generating motivational effects and bringing credibility to the messages of the organisation. This is important both internally – vis-à-vis EU staff who are asked to implement the ambitious EU agenda on GEWE – and externally – vis-à-vis national stakeholders in partner countries and implementing partners who are sometimes invited to achieve an organisational culture shift on GEWE themselves. In recent years, there have been increasing efforts to ensure equal representation of men and women in decision-making positions at EU level, with notable positive effects, especially at HQ level.

 **In the future:** Efforts towards equal representation have faced many obstacles. The EU should continue them, while explaining the rationale behind them in an open and clear way.

Leadership and accountability go hand in hand. Changes in the EAMR has pushed middle to senior managers in EUDs that sometimes showed little enthusiasm for GEWE to think about EU strategic directions in this area and to follow more closely what was already been done by the EU.

 **In the future:** The EU should strengthen the gains achieved through the integration of gender issues in the EAMR-system by: i) more systematically reviewing the quality of the information provided and learning from it; ii) fine-tuning the existing template to better link GEWE to other issues reported on in the EAMRs.

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

#### Attention to GEWE in meetings involving middle level / senior managers

1. Staff in managerial positions (esp. Directors, Heads of Unit, Heads of Cooperation, Heads of Delegation) should ensure more regular attention to GEWE in managerial discussions, incl. meetings at HQ and country level related to programming.
2. Better seize the opportunities offered by EU joint programming to jointly champion GEWE at country level.

### Accountability on GEWE objectives in performance evaluation procedures

3. Include GEWE in management position's job descriptions/ responsibilities.
4. Include performance indicators related to GEWE for relevant staff (incl. middle and senior managers) across units.

### Participation of middle and senior managers in GEWE training

5. Ensure more systematic training of middle level and senior managers on GEWE-related issues.
6. Develop a tailored training package that reflects their particular role within the institution

## Cluster 2: Institutional level

### Recommendation 3

The EU should ensure that, at HQ and country level, decision-making processes (incl. on programming) systematically involve staff or structures with a clear mandate related to GEWE (e.g. GFPs)

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusion 3**, and, to a lesser extent, **Conclusion 4 and Conclusion 5**.

#### Main implementation responsibility:

EC (Commissioners' and Directors' level), EEAS HQ

#### Main associated actors:

Middle / senior management in EUDs and at HQ, EC services in charge of human resource management

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

In the few cases where gender experts/GFPs have been placed in an influential position in the hierarchy (e.g., positions close to the Head of Cooperation in EUDs, special adviser positions at EEAS, the Gender Coordinator position in DG NEAR's Centre of Thematic Expertise on Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights), the decision has contributed to visible institutional changes within the EU and positive effects on gender mainstreaming.



**In the future:** As further detailed below, this should be more systematically the case.

### EUD: Involvement of GFPs in strategic discussions, capacity of GFPs to influence gender mainstreaming

1. Place the GFP in a function that crosses all sectors and is close to the Head of Cooperation (HoC).
2. As one person in the GFP role is insufficient to do all the work needed, however committed and capable, a task force on GEWE headed by the Head of Delegation (HoD) or HoC should also be established involving all sector team leaders, the political section, and, where relevant, communication and M&E officers; this task force should meet on a regular basis and support a clear strategy on how to mainstream gender in EU interventions.
3. Promote more actively gender diversity among GFPs.

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

## HQ: involvement of GFPs in strategic discussions, capacity of GFPs to influence gender mainstreaming

4. Ensure that decision-making bodies at HQ level are directly connected to and mobilise more regularly gender expertise in their work.
5. Promote / make more visible the availability of gender expertise in a specific directorate or in other directorates of the same DG.

### Recommendation 4

The EU should improve gender expertise at all levels, but special efforts should be made at the EUD level, including allocation of resources for systematic mobilisation of project-based gender experts.

#### Main implementation responsibility:

EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI),  
EEAS (including EUDs)

#### Main associated actors:

Other European actors (EU MS, EIGE) and  
implementing partners

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusion 4**.

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

The evaluation has highlighted the need for increased access to gender expertise at both HQ and country level. There has already been some increase in staff with gender expertise (including EU MS seconded national experts) at HQ level and their presence has proved useful. A few EUDs and EU MS local agencies have also taken relevant actions in this regard.

**In the future:** Given the important needs in this area, EU staff's access to gender expertise should be further increased, including, but not only, through increasing the number of in-house gender specialists (see also the concrete suggestions to increase access to gender expertise at country/regional level listed below).

The involvement of gender experts in the review of action documents can be very useful if it is timely and takes into account local realities. However, this review process cannot be seen as a solution to resolve fundamental gender mainstreaming issues.

**In the future:** The review of action documents by gender experts should be continued. However, the EU should ensure that gender experts mobilised are "close to the reality" and allowed to provide inputs in a timely manner. Moreover, to avoid that they are perceived as simple "fixers" of gender mainstreaming, their role should be clarified focusing on their enhancer, learning and accountability functions (see further details below).

### General gender equality awareness

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

1. Increase communication on discrimination issues internally (more frequent communication campaigns/messages within EU services at HQ and EUDs levels and within EUDs).
2. Increase the frequency of GEWE training in general; while the integration of GEWE in sector trainings has increased, these efforts should be made more systematic in all sectors.
3. Establish a requirement for systematic training on GEWE for staff being deployed in EUDs. Such training should include gender mainstreaming and how to implement the new GAP; the training should also refer to other key concepts underpinning EU external action (e.g., human-rights based approach), but should remain focussed on GEWE.

## Understanding of basic concepts

4. In relation to Recommendation 1, review the way gender mainstreaming is explained and find ways and means to better communicate on this to non-gender expert staff.
5. Develop more accessible toolkits for staff to ensure gender mainstreaming in new interventions building on the multiple existing toolkits and utilising good practices available from the field.

## Access to gender expertise

6. Promote exchanges on GEWE between EUDs at regional/sub-regional level (e.g. compilation of gender analyses, compilation of information on good practices, etc.), whenever pertinent anchoring these exchanges/ internal networking activities to regional “hubs”.
7. Promote the use of the Technical Cooperation Facility / Global allocations to mobilise gender expertise for training, gender analyses, evaluation on gender mainstreaming, etc.,
8. Promote the mobilisation of external gender expertise by the EUD in the context of formulation missions; plans in this regard should happen early in the project cycle.

## Involvement of GFPs/gender experts in QRM processes and clarity on their role

9. (Enhancer function) Gender experts mobilised (whether at HQ, regional or country level) to review action document should focus on enhancing the design of new interventions (e.g. through suggestions related to clarifying the use of concepts and terminology, strengthening the references to GEWE in the key parts of the action document such as the logframe) and not resolving fundamental gender mainstreaming issues.
10. (Learning function) Introduce a mechanism (e.g. through the production of a bi-annual lesson learned report) to ensure that the involvement of gender experts in QRM processes contributes to: i) learning from the cases of weak integration of a gender perspective in project design; and ii) the identification of context-specific solutions to enhance gender mainstreaming.
11. (Accountability function) The assessment of the quality of gender mainstreaming produced by the gender experts should be used more systematically as a firm condition to move to the next steps of the formulation/approval process.

## Institutional memory ('loss' of gender-specific knowledge due to staff turnover)

12. Strengthen internal monitoring tools<sup>49</sup> and handover processes related to gender.

# Cluster 3: Programming and implementation

## Recommendation 5

Develop a strategic vision of what to do, and how, with regard to GEWE at country level which supports policy dialogue and is shared among all main European actors.

### Main implementation responsibility:

EUDs with support from EEAS HQ and EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI)

### Main associated actors:

Middle / senior management in EUDs and at HQ, EC services in charge of human resource management

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusions 5, 6 and 11**.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., dashboards accessible to EUD staff that would present G1 and G2 interventions in the country and in the region/sub-region, short annual internal report produced by GFPs on main lessons learned related to gender mainstreaming in their EUD/HQ unit, file to record contacts with external and internal stakeholders on GEWE issues to be updated on a monthly basis, structured folders on GEWE – including recent gender analyses, monitoring and evaluations reports covering GEWE, etc. - in the internal share-filing systems of EUDs.



## LESSONS LEARNED

### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

As highlighted in this evaluation, in the few instances where such approaches have been adopted by the EU, the development of a holistic approach to addressing GEWE issues appeared as an important factor of success.

**In the future:** The EU should seek to develop, with its partners, comprehensive and coherent approaches to support GEWE building existing national strategic frameworks and the initiatives already in place in the partner country. The programmes recently developed under the EU-funded (UN implemented) Spotlight Initiative integrate such an approach in their design. The EU should monitor the next phases of the programmes to ensure that this comprehensive approach is adequately applied during implementation. Linkages with other EU and EU MS interventions which could strengthen the holistic approach pursued under the Spotlight Initiatives should also be clearly established.

Case studies and interviews carried out at global level underlined the importance of prioritising EU support around a few strategic issues. The challenges are often so daunting that it is beyond the capacity of a single actor like the EU to do more than provide strategic inputs and support in a few key areas.

**In the future:** The EU and EU MS should continue with the selection of a few priority objectives among the ones spelled out in the GAP while linking this selection process better to results of gender analysis, national strategic frameworks already in place and priorities followed by other national and international stakeholders in the country.

### Clarity of the EU strategic approach to GEWE at country level

## WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

1. Define EU GEWE country priorities through a participatory approach at EUD/EU MS country office level, building on international frameworks, GAP overarching framework and gender analyses.
2. Ensure that, in line with recommendation 1, EU external actions systematically support a combination of strategies that target both normative change at the legal and policy level as well as work to shift societal underlying attitudes that reinforce discriminations, emphasising the importance of increasing the agency of women and girls.
3. Identify and unpack country GAP priorities and structure them in a time-bound action plan, with clear targets. Integrate these priorities more systematically and explicitly in results frameworks developed at both programming and intervention level.
4. Integrate the EU strategic approach to GEWE (including the underpinning gender analysis) EU joint programming processes from the beginning where such processes are under way at country level. The integration of GEWE should not be limited to a text on cross-cutting issues in joint programming documents (but also in joint results frameworks).
5. Ensure clear linkages between the development of a shared strategic vision on GEWE and other EU strategic processes at country level such as CSO Roadmaps.
6. Introduce a component on communication (and link it to EUD communication strategies) to better leverage EU support to GEWE provided in gender-targeted and other interventions. Communication products should contain specific elements that showcase GEWE achievements in the country to promote what national stakeholders can achieve and show how the country/population is benefiting from this type of action.

## Ownership of the strategic approach by all EU actors, especially EC/EEAS, EU MS, EU IFIs (see also Recommendation 3)

7. Build on the recent opportunities offered by the recent Team Europe Approach to promote joint or complementary initiatives on GEWE and ensure that all European actors collectively invest in the fulfilment of gender objectives at country level
8. Ensure that a clear distribution of responsibilities exist among European actors on who is leading which part of the shared strategy.
9. Enhance dissemination and awareness of the EU strategic directions on GEWE at country level within EUD/EU MS country offices (whenever relevant, as part of a broader communication strategy – see point 5 above).
10. Involve all EUD sections (including the political section where relevant) more effectively in GAP reporting.
11. Simplify the GAP reporting process, including through focussing the monitoring of quantitative indicators on the most useful dimensions for learning and accountability. Ensure better identification of good practices and more feedback loops (with the focus on EU MS and the “field/country” level) so as to ensure greater learning among European actors.

## Opportunities to engage with national authorities in partner countries on GEWE

12. Given the strong demand-driven dimension of some aspects of EU programming and the weak interest in GEWE issues in several partner countries, the EU should put more efforts in promoting GEWE in its interactions with government counterparts at the national level, including through more systematic integration of GEWE in policy dialogue at sector level and concrete offers of funding gender-targeted actions; these efforts should be linked to increased investment in gender analysis (see Recommendation 6).
13. The EU should also work to identify more systematically potential senior gender champions to get more traction with other government officials. The EU and its partners should also demonstrate that integrating GEWE is also about men and boys and not just women and girls, and develop strategic business cases about how integrating GEWE into government policies and programming will benefit national institutions directly and the populations they serve (see also above recommendation on communication).

## Recommendation 6

Step up efforts for continuous analysis of gender equality issues, involving national institutions.

### Main implementation responsibility:

EUD, EU MS country offices

### Main associated actors:

EU and EU MS HQ

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusions 6, 7 and 10**.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

The importance of gender analysis for gender mainstreaming is recognised in GAP II and has been again demonstrated in this evaluation. The EU has increasingly invested in gender analysis during the period under review. The fact that it was a requirement under GAP II has played a key role in this trend.



**In the future:** Given the importance of gender analysis, the EU should sustain these efforts by updating some of the analyses made at the start of GAP II, carrying out gender analyses where none exist or the quality of the outputs has been questionable; also, the analysis in sectors of cooperation which are not well covered needs to be deepened. The use of these analyses to inform action design also needs to continue and be more systematic.

**Quality of gender analysis, including availability of sex-disaggregated data at national and sector level**

1. Build on existing analyses, including the ones produced by other donors and make clear references to them.
2. Invest more in national statistical capacities to generate sex disaggregated data in diverse sectors (so governments and their national and international partners can track gender differences in policy/programme implementation as needed as well as identify and monitor for significant gender equality challenges); adapt the ambition of strengthening the national statistical capacities on GEWE to the institutional environment and context of each partner country.
3. Plan sufficient resources to carry out gender analysis and start compiling data in advance of action planning and resource decisions.
4. Establish mechanisms at the country level (incl. determining a frequency for updates, identify the sources and type of additional inputs to be collected in upcoming update) to gradually strengthen the initial analysis produced and its application in the planning of actions.
5. Monitor from HQ the number and quality of gender analyses available (including evolution over time), distinguishing between the various types of analyses carried out (e.g., short gender analysis focussing on providing inputs to EU programming, general gender analysis at country level, in-depth sector analysis); foster the sharing of good practices on gender analysis.

**Ownership by EUD/EU MS staff**

6. Medium/senior management involved in programming should ensure the use of gender analysis in the design of new interventions and held accountable for doing so.
7. Sector team leaders in EUDs and relevant EU MS staff should also ensure that all relevant EU staff participate in data collection for the production of gender analysis and in dissemination activities and held accountable for doing so.
8. ToRs for M&E managed by EUDs/EU MS local agencies should include clear references to existing gender analyses and the need to monitor for and evaluate action impacts on relevant gender equality issues.
9. Gender analysis should inform EU joint programming exercises and Team Europe initiatives where such processes are under way.

**Ownership by national stakeholders**

10. Follow participatory processes (including by involving relevant line ministries) when producing gender integrated sector analyses and promote the establishment of national GEWE databases where results of analyses, surveys, etc. are continuously registered.

## Recommendation 7

Implement more stringent measures to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in new interventions and monitor gender mainstreaming in implementation.

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusions 7 and 10**.

### Main implementation responsibility:

EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI) and EEAS HQ


### Main associated actors:

Other actors (incl. EU MS) involved in negotiations regarding the next MFF and EU programming


### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated


The evaluation has highlighted the importance for mainstreaming gender in new interventions of acting early.

 **In the future:** Future efforts should prioritise measures that will allow early actions, not ‘corrective measures’ (see also Recommendation 4).

An obstacle to gender mainstreaming has been the tendency of EU staff to see it as a burdensome addition, at the margin to their daily work.

 **In the future:** As highlighted in recommendation 4, future efforts should first focus on raising general awareness on GEWE within the EU and EU MS. Care should also be taken to avoid duplicating efforts with other ‘mainstreaming’ actions. In recent years, the increasing combination of activities focussing on the EU’s rights-based approach with the ones focusing on GEWE has contributed to increasing synergies between internal EU processes. Further synergies should be sought in the context of EU joint programming and the support to CSOs at country level.

While the target of 85% of new interventions being marked as G1 led to an increase in the quantity of interventions marked as G1, it did not ensure the proper integration of a gender perspective in all these interventions. Nonetheless, it created a momentum that contributed to an overall increase in gender mainstreaming in EU external action.

 **In the future:** We recommend that the EU maintain a similar target in the successor to GAP II. We do not recommend increasing it to a higher level, as the risk that it would simply contribute to strengthening the tendency towards box-ticking is high. Moreover, we recommend applying this target (or a lower target, but still close to this level) to the level of funding (overall financial volume of EU external actions) rather than the number of new interventions in order to better reflect the degree of integration of a gender perspective in the various areas of EU external action.

### Gender-targeted funding (G2) and earmarked funding for GEWE within gender-sensitive interventions (G1)

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

1. Ensure that gender-targeted (G2) funding represents a significant share of the NDICI and IPA envelopes for the new programming cycle (an indicative level could be at least 4%).
2. This indicative target should be clearly communicated to partner countries and national stakeholders early in the programming process.
3. Integrate more systematically earmarked funding for GEWE within gender-sensitive (G1) interventions to enhance gender mainstreaming and monitoring and learning on GEWE during implementation; accompanying measures of ‘gender-sensitive’ budget support operations should more systematically include earmarked funding to enhance gender mainstreaming in the targeted policy areas and strengthen monitoring and learning on GEWE.

## Linkages between EU and non EU GEWE related interventions

4. Increase efforts to disseminate (within the EUD/EUMS country offices) information on what other international organisations do in the area of GEWE in the country/region.
5. Increase sharing information on GEWE (incl. on EU's strategic decisions related to GEWE) between the EU and organisations regularly involved in the implementation of large parts of EU external actions (e.g., IFIs involved in blending operations).

## Use of gender markers

6. At the HQ level, regularly carry out a study to review the quality of the application of gender markers on a representative sample<sup>50</sup>: i) develop an objective formula to extrapolate based on these results how much EU support has genuinely integrated a gender perspective (quantitative analysis); and ii) reflect the most common mistakes when applying the gender markers (qualitative analysis). This study should also highlight good practices and common mistakes related to the gender mainstreaming (with a focus on G1 interventions).
7. Compile the response on the use of the G0 marker provided in EAMRs and discuss it in the annual Heads of Cooperation meetings.

## Standards for gender mainstreaming in new interventions

8. Improve integration of GEWE in new action documents (e.g., explicit identification of GEWE and women's human rights issues in problem analysis, explicit inclusion in action objectives and logframes, explicit references to national frameworks/policies, explicit references to gender analyses and existing sources of gender data)
9. Ensure that the QRM process reviews compliance with these standards and that the comments provided by staff in charge of GEWE are duly taken on-board.

## Monitor gender mainstreaming (accountability and learning)

10. At the country level, monitor the annual volume of contracted amounts marked as G1 and G2, compare it to the overall EU target and report on the annual value and a three-year moving average.<sup>51</sup>
11. Map gender related budget support indicators at country (EUD responsibility) and aggregated/global level (HQ responsibility); update and analyse this mapping annually as part of the GAP reporting.
12. Map gender related indicators/objectives in blending operations at country (EUD responsibility) and global level (HQ responsibility); update this mapping annually as part of the GAP reporting.
13. Regarding the monitoring of results, the EU should actively support country-level systems to monitor trends on GEWE-related outcome indicators (see Recommendation 6). If such systems are not functional in the areas where the EU is active, the EU should ensure the establishment of temporary mechanisms to ensure the monitoring of results of its actions. In all cases, the monitoring of quantitative indicators should be complemented by regular qualitative analyses on what has worked and what has not at the local and national level, as well as in institutional terms. These quantitative and qualitative monitoring mechanisms should go beyond the scope of an individual action and ideally cutting across the portfolio of the EU in a specific country.

<sup>50</sup> A sample of interventions randomly selected and "representative" of the EU portfolio using at least the following three criteria/dimensions: i) geographical spread (regions); ii) thematic spread (DAC sector code); iii) mix of modality (budget support, blending, etc.)

<sup>51</sup> The use of a moving average is necessary to take into account the particularities of EU programming processes (with highly fluctuating contracted amounts at country level) and better account for medium-term evolutions.

## Recommendation 8

Consolidate partnerships with international organisations, especially at country level

**Main implementation responsibility:**

EUDs

**Main associated actors:**

EU MS local offices, EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI) and EEAS

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusion 8**.

### LESSONS LEARNED

**What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated**

The current multi-country initiatives with international organisations such as UN agencies have provided clear benefits at various levels. In particular, it contributed to the adoption of comprehensive approaches to address specific GEWE issues and the creation of momentum around GEWE at regional level, and allowed the EU to tap into the gender expertise available within these organisations.

**In the future:** The EU should continue fostering multi-country initiatives with UN agencies and other organisations such as the Council of Europe while ensuring concrete opportunities to clearly link these initiatives to other EU interventions implemented in the region and to make these interventions contribute to EU monitoring and learning efforts in the area of GEWE at country, regional and global level.

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

#### Partnerships at the country level

1. Increase coordination with UN agencies (not only UN Women) on GEWE issues at the country level, including through increased joint efforts to support National Women Machineries and other joint actions such as advocacy activities, gender analyses, joint surveys/production of gender data, joint consultations with CSOs, etc.
2. Foster joint training.
3. Proactively disseminate GEWE-related information (e.g. gender analyses supported by the EU, overview of EU-funded gender-sensitive interventions) among IFIs involved in EU-funded blending operations.

#### Awareness of EU staff of existing joint initiatives

4. Improve dissemination (esp. at EUD/EUMS country office level) of information about partnerships established by the EU with international organisations at the regional and global levels.

#### Linkages with international processes led by UN agencies

5. Increase EU's involvement with processes around international human rights instruments and international action platforms and processes, and improve dissemination of the information about this engagement at the partner country level.

## Recommendation 9

Enhance the involvement of CSOs, including women's organisations, in EU external action support in the area of GEWE, including through better integrating them in initiatives on GEWE at country level and more adapted support to grass-root organisations.

### Main implementation responsibility:

EUDs, EC (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, FPI),  
EEAS HQ

### Main associated actors:


EU MS

This recommendation is linked to **Conclusion 9**.

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### What works and should continue, be expanded or replicated

The EU has provided substantial support to CSOs. Given the role CSOs play in outreach activities and in policy reform in the area of GEWE as well as their role in EU accountability mechanisms, this investment has been useful at multiple levels. Efforts to involve CSOs in EU external action in the area of GEWE yielded best results where they were involved in programming and policy processes along the lines of CSO Roadmaps.

 **In the future:** The EU should continue channelling substantial funding through CSOs while taking into account the need to embed their action in broader coherent strategic frameworks on GEWE. The EU and EU MS should also continue ensuring the involvement of CSOs, including national NGOs/think tanks active in the area of GEWE and social partners, in regular consultations during programming, in line with existing frameworks for dialogue with CSOs at country level (including CSO roadmaps or similar where relevant).

### WHAT SHOULD BE IMPROVED?

How should this be done?

#### Involvement of national CSOs (esp. women organisations) in monitoring of EU support, especially large sector interventions

1. Ensure M&E processes related to EU support integrate systematic consultations with CSOs active in the area of GEWE, in a way that reflects their diversity; this applies to both M&E at intervention level and broader consultations on EU cooperation strategies at national and regional level (including in the context of CSO Roadmaps).
2. Include representatives from women organisations in the steering committee of majority of large EU-funded gender-sensitive sector interventions.

#### Financial cycle and procedures for the support to CSOs (country-level interventions)

3. Review EU procedures related to grant mechanisms to allow for longer project cycles to help support long term changes in social norms related to GEWE, etc.
4. Increase funding aimed at providing (directly or indirectly) structural support to women's organisations.
5. Better anticipate the negative impact of delays in the launch of large country-level CSO programmes on the duration of the actual support provided to CSOs.
6. Implement more systematically mechanisms to overcome potential language barriers for some CSOs, grassroots organisations and women's networks.

### **Joint efforts with other (non-EU) organisations to support CSOs' involvement**

7. Step up efforts to include relevant UN agencies (including UN Women and, where relevant, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNDP, etc.) in strategic thinking on how to better involve CSOs in national policy processes supported by the EU (with the view to create synergies with other development partners, enhance the effectiveness of CSOs in policy processes and support CSOs in the most critical areas).

### **Learning from and between CSOs (country level)**

8. Ensure learning mechanisms such as regular “capitalisation workshops” with national CSOs active in the area of GEWE to promote learning that can feed into EU programming, and foster communication with and within this group of stakeholders ensuring the heterogeneity of this group of stakeholders.

### **Learning at global level**

9. Ensure that new ways of engaging with CSOs in the area of GEWE are discussed in detail with CSOs in a dedicated dialogue process.
10. Ensure that exchanges and learning activities on the EU's partnership with CSO in the area of GEWE (e.g. discussions organised within global frameworks for dialogue such as the Policy Forum for Development) reflect the diversity of EU external actions in this area.



