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**JOINT REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL**

**Joint mid-term report on the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III)**

# JOINT MID-TERM REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP III)

## 1. A vision of progress

Three years after the launch of the **EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) for 2021-2025**<sup>1</sup>, the joint mid-term report highlights the key achievements and commitments of this ambitious policy framework in the pursuit of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls worldwide.

### Key achievements

The mid-term independent evaluation<sup>2</sup> and consultations with EU Member States, UN agencies and civil society partners confirm the pivotal role of the GAP III in elevating gender equality as a strategic priority in EU external actions. It has encouraged more comprehensive, determined and transformative approaches.

The GAP III aims at a more integrated approach and meets international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has thus contributed to a more strategic EU vision and increased efforts to include a gender equality perspective in all EU external action in close cooperation with Member States. It has also encouraged political leaders to place the human rights and empowerment of women and girls at the forefront of the political agenda, including in security and human rights dialogues.

The GAP III has served as a crucial platform for dialogue in a challenging global context. At multilateral level, the EU and its Member States have actively driven resolutions and worked with the United Nations to combat violence against women, contribute to the UN Commission on the Status of Women and promote gender perspectives in climate and digital decision-making.

Based on the GAP III, the EU and its Member States have supported partner countries in achieving further gender equality. They have thus contributed to increase protection against gender-based violence and harmful practices, promoted women's and girls' participation in public and political life and improved access to quality education, health and social protection for women and girls.

The GAP III applies a policy-driven, context-specific approach, incorporating gender country profiles, which has resulted in 131 country-level implementation plans (CLIPs). Among its key achievements, the GAP III has significantly improved policy-programming alignment, resulting in increased actions and funding for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. It has played a pivotal role in integrating a gender perspective into the Global Gateway strategy, aimed at ensuring that the benefits of investment are fairly and equally accessible<sup>3</sup>, and in Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs). The integration of the Women, Peace and

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<sup>1</sup> [EU Gender action plan III](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Mid-term evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan III \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Joint Communication Global Gateway](#), p.4

Security (WPS) agenda as a GAP III thematic priority has broadened the approach to gender equality in external action.

These efforts have made EU external actions more gender-responsive, but gender equality and related SDGs face multiple challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, climate change, risks associated with emerging and disruptive technologies and hybrid threats, and a backlash against women's and girls' rights in various parts of the world.

## **The way ahead**

Based on this strong platform, the EU will further intensify its efforts to get the achievement of the SDGs back on track, especially SDG5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', by enhancing gender mainstreaming in its international partnerships, allocating adequate resources, and strengthening gender-transformative approaches. The EU will work in a Team Europe spirit and in partnership with local actors, fostering strategic engagement with women's rights organisations. Strategic cooperation among all EU institutions, Member States, international partners, governments, civil society, and the private sector forms the cornerstone of a renewed EU engagement for gender equality.

In Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) implementation, the EU's efforts regarding gender-mainstreaming and the initial steps taken to introduce gender-responsive leadership (e.g. through training courses and related accountability measures) must be continued and even broadened. This will help address the structural and political gaps in CFSP implementation, including through more regular, strategic and inclusive dialogues with women's rights organisations (WROs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) – including in marginalised communities.

To maximise the EU's leverage as a global promoter of gender equality and women's empowerment in the coming years, and to unlock its full potential through gender-responsive leadership, the EU is recommitting itself to the GAP III as the political and operational roadmap to meet the growing challenges, and to advance peace, security and sustainable development.

Against this background and to facilitate delivery of recently launched initiatives and further enhance internal processes of change, the EU will extend the implementation period until 2027 and thus align the duration of the GAP III with the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework.

## **2. Strengthening the EU's strategic engagement**

### **2.1. Consistency and coordination at country level**

The **GAP III country-level implementation plans** (CLIPs) have been a major vehicle for EU delegations to work towards a Team Europe approach for gender equality, notably by generating more consistency, inclusiveness and effectiveness in policy dialogue, programming and public communication in partner countries.

In 2022, gender equality was on the agenda of **political, security and/or human rights dialogues** in about 100 partner countries. In 33 of these countries, dialogues focused exclusively on gender equality.

Dialogues have contributed to the **implementation of international commitments**, the drafting and implementation of national gender strategies and plans, the **integration of the gender dimension into sectoral laws and policies** and **gender-responsive budgeting**. Examples include the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act in Sierra Leone; the multi-stakeholder coalition for decent work and social protection for women in agriculture in Tunisia; and the gender equality action plan for the justice sector in Vietnam.

Gender equality has also featured prominently in **policy dialogues with candidate countries and potential candidate countries**, with the EU supporting the adoption and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>4</sup>; comprehensive evidence-based laws, aligned with the relevant EU *acquis*; and other international standards.

The CLIPs have been instrumental in **mainstreaming gender equality in programming of EU actions in all regions**, in line with the GAP III and NDICI-Global Europe targets<sup>5</sup>. However, the CLIPs are a first-generation tool and, as noted in the mid-term evaluation, are of varying quality and ambition. Implementation is also facing external challenges, including conflict, increased restrictions on freedom of expression, a backlash against women’s rights in various parts of the world, mixed/low engagement of national authorities and gaps in gender expertise in EU delegations.

To improve their crucial role as “the link between the overall GAP III vision, country gender context, identified priorities and proposed actions”<sup>6</sup>:

*The EU will update the CLIPs within the framework of the mid-term review of multiannual programming to strengthen a Team Europe approach, local partnerships, gender-mainstreaming and gender-targeted programming. Implementation will continue to be accompanied by regular dialogue with Member States, the UN and other relevant donors, government and civil society partners in order to monitor progress, improve gender analysis and data collection.*

## **2.2. Multi-country and regional engagement**

The EU has supported the regional gender equality frameworks, such as the **Istanbul Convention**, the **African Union Gender Strategy 2017-2027** and the **Maputo Plan of Action 2016-2030 for the operationalisation of the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [U.N. Convention on Discrimination against Women \(hrweb.org\)](http://hrweb.org)

<sup>5</sup> The NDICI-Global Europe stipulates that at least 85% of all new actions will be gender responsive. Out of these, a minimum of 5% will have gender equality as principal objective. As per the GAP III, there shall be at least one G2 action per country allocation over 2021- 2025. The GAP III applies the OECD DAC gender equality scoring system. *Significant* (marked 1) means that gender equality is an important objective for undertaking the action. *Principal* (marked 2) means that gender equality is the main objective. For humanitarian aid, the Commission applies its own humanitarian Gender-Age Marker.

<sup>6</sup> [Mid-term evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan III \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

<sup>7</sup> [Home - Istanbul Convention Action against violence against women and domestic violence \(coe.int\)](http://coe.int); [AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment](http://au.int); [Maputo Plan of Action 2016 - 2030 | African Union \(au.int\)](http://au.int)

The EU has also continued to put gender equality, women's empowerment and the implementation of the **WPS agenda at the heart of its regional partnerships**, such as the Council of Europe, the African Union, the League of Arab States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Regional TEIs, Global Gateway flagship projects and other regional initiatives address the **gender-specific dimension of cross-border and global challenges**, complementing country-level interventions, to promote public health capacity, universal and fair access to basic services, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's economic empowerment in the green and digital transitions, gender-responsive migration management, and peace and security <sup>8</sup>.

The joint EU-Council of Europe **Partnership for Good Governance Programme** <sup>9</sup> supports the Eastern Partnership countries in the implementation of domestic reforms to advance equality, non-discrimination and women's access to justice and combat violence against women, in line with European standards.

### **2.3. Stronger EU leadership at multilateral level**

The EU has continued to exercise leadership on the ending of **gender-based violence (GBV)**. Beyond the European Commission's co-leadership of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on GBV, the EU worked in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee in October 2022 for a strong **resolution on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls**, clarifying State responsibilities for eliminating violence against women (including femicide) and rejecting any exemptions based on tradition or religious custom.

The EU has also emphasised gender equality and women's rights in all its activity in the United Nations Security Council and other UN bodies. As part of its multilateral engagement, **the EU has continued to engage actively with the UN system**, including UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

The EU actively contributed to the 66<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), including to ambitious and agreed conclusions on gender equality in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies<sup>10</sup>, and of innovation and technological change in a digital age<sup>11</sup> respectively.

The EU has also engaged with the **G7 and G20** in support of gender equality. For instance, the EU played a pivotal role in the G7's Working Group on Gender Equality in support of gender-mainstreaming in all ministerial tracks and the design of **a new accountability framework**. The first deliverable of this framework, a gender-gap dashboard<sup>12</sup>, was endorsed by the G7

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<sup>8</sup> Examples are the TEIs for [EU and African partners launch flagship initiative \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu), and [inclusive growth and jobs in the Southern Neighbourhood](https://ec.europa.eu/economic-affairs/strategy-centre/strategic-approach/strategic-approach-to-inclusive-growth-and-jobs-in-the-southern-neighbourhood).

<sup>9</sup> [Home - Partnership for Good Governance \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/partnership-for-good-governance).

<sup>10</sup> [CSW66 \(2022\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/press/en/2022/10/20221020-csw66-2022.html)

<sup>11</sup> [CSW67 \(2023\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/press/en/2023/02/20230202-csw67-2023.html)

<sup>12</sup> [G7 establish annual monitoring in the area of gender equality \(g7germany.de\)](https://www.g7-germany.de/en/press-releases/2023/02/20230202-g7-establish-annual-monitoring-in-the-area-of-gender-equality)

leaders in July 2022. The G20 Ministerial Conference on Women’s Empowerment in 2022 brought attention to issues critical to the closing of gender gaps in the post-COVID-19 global economy.

#### **2.4. Implementing a human rights-based, gender-transformative and intersectional approach**

The GAP III commits the EU to implement a **gender-transformative approach** and **intersectionality** as key pathways for long-term change in line with the **Human Rights-Based Approach**<sup>13</sup>.

The mid-term evaluation recognises the efforts made to engage in **long-term collective action to better understand the context-specific root causes of gender discrimination** and **the search for innovative ways to achieve positive changes in social norms**, in partnership with local actors.

For instance, the EU 4 Gender Equality programme<sup>14</sup> and the **EU-UN Spotlight Initiative** to eliminate violence against women and girls **involved men and boys and traditional and religious leaders in the fight against gender-based violence**. Other promising practices have been implemented through **gender-responsive education** systems and by supporting **gender-transformative approaches to food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture**<sup>15</sup>. A **knowledge-sharing space for exchanging good practices on a gender-transformative approach** has been set up in cooperation with Member States.

Several monitoring reports identified a wide range of strategies implementing a gender-transformative approach and **intersectionality**<sup>16</sup>. The mid-term evaluation has highlighted some promising examples, for instance a contribution to the **empowerment and inclusion of Roma women and girls** in Serbia<sup>17</sup>.

The EU is paying increasing attention to the situation of **women with disabilities** in actions promoting gender equality: in 2021-2022, 67% of these actions also benefited women with disabilities.

*The EU will foster approaches to transform unequal gender-power relations and the systemic barriers and the harmful structures that uphold them. It will also work with Member States, civil society and other partners to better understand the structural causes of gender inequality and to find innovative solutions.*

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<sup>13</sup> [swd-2021-human-right-based-approach\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [EU4GE\\_Brief\\_ENG.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> EU-funded Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture (JP GTA), [About the Joint Programme \(fao.org\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Report on contributions to gender equality with a focus on intersectional and gender-transformative approaches from ROM reviews (2019-2022)

<sup>17</sup> Mid-Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III, May 2023, p. 104.

## 2.5. Engaging strategically with women’s rights organisations (WROs) and civil society organisations (CSOs)

The GAP III underlines the pivotal role that WROs and movements play in addressing the structural drivers of gender inequality.

At country level, **84% of EU delegations engaged in civil society dialogues on gender equality** in 2022 within the framework of the EU Civil Society Roadmaps, EU human rights dialogues and the gender-development partners group. Some EU delegations have set up structured dialogue mechanisms on CLIP implementation. In the Philippines, the EU delegation engages regularly with women’s rights organisations through a civil society sounding board<sup>18</sup>.

At central level, the EU conducts **annual dialogue with WROs and CSOs** on GAP III implementation within the framework of the Policy Forum on Development<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity as well as other senior EU officials have regularly

**Box 1: EU funding to women’s rights organisations and movements** was EUR 42.5 million in 2022 (an increase of 155% on 2020). EUR 1.61 billion of funds with gender equality as a significant or primary objective were channelled **through civil society organisations** as implementing partners in 2022 (EUR 1.29 billion in 2021).

**Global programmes for women’s civil society organisations** launched in 2022-23 are the **Advocacy Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT)** in support of WROs combating gender-based violence; the **framework partnership** agreement with global umbrella organisations of WROs; the **Women and Youth for Democracy programme (WYDE)**.

engaged with WROs and CSOs. EU delegations have actively engaged in **joint communication and advocacy activities with WROs** (e.g. the ‘National Women’s Conference’ in Sierra Leone and the annual conference of rural women in Pakistan) and have taken the lead in **supporting WROs and women human rights defenders in situations of crises and repression**. In Afghanistan, the EU delegation provides a **safe space for dialogue** between women civil society representatives and the international community.

The EU and Member States have also increased financial support for WROs. This support includes country-specific and small grants schemes<sup>20</sup> to regional and global

programmes and multi-stakeholder alliances and partnerships. The EU takes part in ‘**The Alliance for Feminist Movements**’, which was launched with the support of Canada, Ireland, France and the Netherlands.

The EU will follow up on civil society partners’ recommendations<sup>21</sup> by continuing to focus on its strategic partnership with WROs and CSOs.

<sup>18</sup> [Concord, June 2023](#)

<sup>19</sup> [PFD - Policy Forum and Development \(pfd dialogue.eu\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> Examples include the EU-funded ‘Civil Society Fund’ in Ethiopia, the grant programme for civil society projects for women’s economic empowerment in South Africa and Irish Aid’s Generation Equality Forum Girls’ Fund.

<sup>21</sup> [Concord, June 2023](#)

*The EU is committed to fostering more regular, strategic and inclusive dialogues with civil society, including with grass-root, girls' rights and girl-led organisations, which are key actors of transformative change. The annual survey on EU delegations' engagement with CSOs will take stock of the progress made as regards consultations to advance gender equality.*

## 2.6. Ensuring gender-mainstreaming across policy areas and instruments

The simultaneous launch of the GAP III Joint Communication and the 2021-27 financial programming cycle has allowed better inclusion of gender-equality objectives in country- and regional-level programming documents. This is reflected in the progress made towards the **target of 85% of new external actions having gender equality as a principal or significant objective by 2025**<sup>22</sup>.

The number of external actions with gender equality as a principal or significant objective increased **from 64.71% in 2019 to 72% in 2022**<sup>23</sup>.

In terms of **funding**, commitments that promote gender equality and women's empowerment as a significant or principal objective increased **from 74.2% in 2021** (EUR 9 325 million out of a total of EUR 12 588 million) **to 77.5% in 2022** (EUR 13 075 million out of a total of EUR 16 880 million).

Efforts have continued to make EU-funded humanitarian aid more gender-sensitive, including by using a gender-age marker. Under the **humanitarian aid budget, 96% of all actions starting in 2021** integrated gender and age considerations 'strongly' or 'to a certain extent'<sup>24</sup>.

Box 2: In 2022, the share of commitments for **regional and country actions promoting gender equality** was 90% for Sub-Saharan Africa (€4.6 billion), 90% for Asia and Pacific (€957 million), 86% for LAC (€293 million), 93% for the Eastern Neighbourhood (€1.5 billion), 88% for the Western Balkans and Türkiye (€1.6 billion) and 87% for the Southern Neighbourhood (€1.5 billion).

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is a focus of the **Global Gateway strategy**, which underlines the need for projects and investments in its main areas (digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research) to be inclusive, particularly in terms of gender equality<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>23</sup> The data for 2022 is preliminary (it was extracted from the EU Statistical Dashboard on 1 April 2023) and takes into account official development aid (ODA) and non-ODA actions from the following regulations: [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe \(NDICI – Global Europe\)](#), Common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (2021–2027).

<sup>24</sup> [Gender-Age Marker Assessment Report 2018 - 2021](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Global Gateway \(europa.eu\)](#)



**Box 3: The Global Gateway flagship modernisation of the N’Djamena-Douala route**, which was implemented by the European Investment Bank and the World Bank and supported by EFSD+, will comply with Chadian legislation that promotes the employment of at least 30% of women and will encourage positions being open to women at all levels. It is also expected to increase micro/small business and trading activity that has traditionally been carried out by women. Gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment (SEAH) are addressed as a priority through risk assessments, contractual obligations for investment and implementing partners, and targeted measures.

The EU ensures that investments mobilised through **the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+)** include a gender perspective. For instance, the Commission is working with international and development finance institutions to increase the impact of innovative finance on promoting gender equality and women’s economic empowerment; to jointly enhance the expertise of financial officers on gender-mainstreaming; and to monitor the implementation of operations<sup>26</sup>. In 2022, **70% of all reported EFSD+ guarantees and blending** operations had gender equality as a significant or main objective.

The EU and its Member States, as Team Europe, are revising **joint guidelines** that set minimum

criteria for **gender-mainstreaming in TEIs** as a shared responsibility at the design, joint-monitoring and reporting stages. The monitoring, reporting and evaluation (MORE) framework for TEIs includes selected GAP III thematic indicators for aggregation across TEIs.

Progress has been made, but the EU is aware that the **gender-marker** system still needs to be fully understood by all staff and partners and will upgrade its **guidance and training** offer. For **humanitarian aid**, an e-learning for staff and partners on the Gender-Age Marker is available. The EU has also continued to communicate about the Gender-Age Marker via virtual training programmes for partners.

In the context of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Missions and Operations, there was notable progress in integrating a gender perspective into all phases of planning, implementation and reporting<sup>27</sup>, increases in dedicated staff and financial resources, and issuing of new and implementation of existing operational guidelines, which contributed to a more systematic integration of a gender perspective in activities.

With the EU’s framework programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe), which is open to the world, the integration of a gender dimension is a mandatory requirement in EU-funded research. Tackling gender-based violence more specifically in the Research and Innovation system is also a key objective<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> See also the guidance on the application of the OECD DAC gender-equality policy marker to the EFSD+. This sets the minimum criteria for gender-mainstreaming in blended operations.

<sup>27</sup> [Report on the Follow-up Baseline Study on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality into the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy](#) (May 2022)

<sup>28</sup> In this context, the EU aims at coordinated action worldwide towards definitions, terminology and a corresponding legal basis: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/ec\\_rtd\\_report\\_gender-equality-inclusiveness-workshop.pdf](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/ec_rtd_report_gender-equality-inclusiveness-workshop.pdf)).

## *Gender equality as a principal objective*

The GAP III calls for the adoption of at least one programme with gender equality as a principal objective in each partner country and region. This is in line with the NDICI-GE targets, which require at least 85% of all new actions to be gender-responsive and a minimum of 5% of these to have gender equality as a principal objective.

By the end of 2022, 25 new actions had been adopted in 21 partner countries, 2 at regional level in Asia and Southern Neighbourhood countries and 2 at global level. Many of these actions are financially large-scale and adopt a gender-transformative and intersectional approach, with **about EUR 300 million in commitments in 2021-22<sup>29</sup> across all GAP III areas of engagement**. More effort is needed, however, as in 2022 only **3.7% of new actions** targeted gender equality as a principal objective.

In 2023-2025, more than 100 **new gender-target actions** are in the pipeline in **over 80 countries in all GAP III thematic areas of engagement**.

*To improve the quality of gender-mainstreaming and to increase gender-targeted actions and funding, the EU will continue to enhance **quality-review processes** (including for the Global Gateway flagship projects and TEIs) to make sure that OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker criteria are being met. Refined **gender analysis** and renewed efforts to **collect sex-disaggregated data** will, in cooperation with partners, allow to better identify policies and actions, and **improve the monitoring and communication of results**.*

### **3. Towards a gender-equal world: focusing on key areas of engagement**

This section presents the initiatives taken by the EU and its Member States, in a Team Europe approach, to achieve the GAP III objectives in its six main thematic areas through multilateral and multi-stakeholder partnerships, political dialogue and financial support<sup>30</sup>.

#### **3.1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence**

The EU has championed global efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence in its roles as co-leader of the **Generation Equality Forum’s Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence**; as initiator and chair of the **Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls**; as active member of the **Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies** and a major partner of the UN.

In 2023, the EU adopted two packages under the **EU Global Human Rights Sanctions regime** against 15

Box 4: EU financial commitments for the **prevention and response to gender-based violence** went from an annual average EUR 91 million in 2024-20 to EUR 60 million in 2021 and EUR 282 million in 2022. In addition, EUR 33.1 million in 2021 and 41.3 million in 2022 have been spent on gender-based violence in humanitarian response.

<sup>29</sup> See the list of G2 actions adopted in 2021-22 : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en)

<sup>30</sup> See examples of good practice on : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en)

individuals and 3 entities in response to their role in committing sexual and gender-based violence crimes<sup>31</sup>.

The **EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls**<sup>32</sup> was showcased at the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit as one of the 12 **high-impact initiatives** contributing to transformative progress and acceleration **towards the SDG**<sup>33</sup>. To build on the results and ensure the sustainability of the programme, the EU has launched the **High-Impact Programme for Violence Elimination by 2030 (HIVE)** (EUR 16.5 million), which notably supports effective country programmes, increased global awareness and knowledge-sharing.

Combating gender-based violence is a priority for the EU in most partner countries, where many targeted interventions have been adopted<sup>34</sup> or are under preparation to promote **legal and policy reforms, changes in social norms and support for survivors**<sup>35</sup>. This will lead to an increase of financial commitments starting in 2023. In countries that are part of the **Enlargement process**, the EU has supported the adoption and implementation of comprehensive evidence-based laws in line with EU *acquis* and international standards.

The EU is also a major funder of the **UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and the Global Programme to End Child Marriage**, which contributed to the decrease of the global prevalence of child marriage from 23% to 19% in the last ten years<sup>36</sup>.

Women and girls make up around half of all refugee, internally displaced or stateless population<sup>37</sup>. The EU seeks to **ensure that migration-management programmes are gender-responsive** (for instance, in Central Asia<sup>38</sup>, Africa<sup>39</sup> and Latin America<sup>40</sup>) through protection and prevention measures to address the risks for women and girls of gender-based violence, human-trafficking and sexual exploitation.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/07/20/human-rights-violations-eu-lists-18-individuals-and-five-entities-responsible-for-gender-based-violence-and-linked-to-the-navalny-and-kara-murza-cases/>

<sup>32</sup> [Spotlight Initiative](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Spotlight Initiative Annual Narrative Progress Report](#)

<sup>34</sup> Box 4 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments for actions allocated to OECD DAC CRS Purpose Code 15180 (“Ending violence against women and girls”) and actions that address gender-based violence among their components. The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>35</sup> Over 100 CLIPs have identified gender-based violence as a priority. Targeted actions are implemented in Bangladesh, Bolivia, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, May 2023

<sup>37</sup> [Women | UNHCR](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Improving Migration Management and Migrant Protection in selected Silk Routes and Central Asian Countries - ICMPD](#)

<sup>39</sup> Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa; Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa funded jointly by the EU and ECOWAS.

<sup>40</sup> The European Support Programme for Refugees, Migrants and Host Communities in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru has provided gender-responsive services to over 20 000 migrants, working with public, CSO and other partners.

The **EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings** (2021-2025) takes a comprehensive approach, from prevention through protection of victims to prosecution and conviction of traffickers, and recognises the **gender dimension of trafficking in human beings**<sup>41</sup>. EU action aims at increasing prosecution of perpetrators including those involved in human trafficking by strengthening a victim-centred approach by the law-enforcement bodies, and at supporting access to psycho-social support services and participation in economic and social life of victims of gender-based violence and victims of trafficking in human beings.

*The EU will further enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and to address the growing risks of online violence. It will do this by harnessing synergies with partners in data collection, analysis and monitoring.*

### 3.2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights; and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences. The EU also remains committed to promoting SRHR in this context and in line with the new European Consensus on Development<sup>42</sup>.

The new **EU Global Health Strategy** highlights the importance of universal access to SRHR, including via health systems strengthening towards universal health coverage, and youth friendly services<sup>43</sup>.

The EU's strong commitment to advancing SRHR is reflected in financial allocations<sup>44</sup> to expand access to life-changing SRHR, addressing for example family planning, maternal mortality, and comprehensive sexuality education<sup>45</sup>. In December 2022, the European Commission, ten EU Member States and African partners launched the **Team Europe Initiative on SRHR in Africa**<sup>46</sup>. Funding from the EU budget notably includes EUR 60 million in new funds for 2023-2027, in addition to EU Member States financial contributions.

**Box 5: EU financial commitments for SRHR**  
increased from an annual average of EUR 52 million in 2014-20 to 56 million in 2021 and 105 million in 2022. Additional EUR 27.6 million and 23.5 million were allocated to SRH services in humanitarian response in respectively 2021 and 2022.

The European Commission has also made an additional contribution of EUR 45 million for 2023-2026 to the **UNFPA Supplies Partnership**, which provides contraceptives and maternal

<sup>41</sup> [EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings](#)

<sup>42</sup> [European Consensus on Development \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>43</sup> [EU Global Health Strategy \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>44</sup> Box 5 presents the the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to four sectors within the scope of SHRH, as defined by the OECD DAC: Reproductive health care, Family planning, STD control including HIV/AIDS, and Personnel development for population and reproductive health. The data for 2022 is preliminary. There are other methodologies for calculating donors' contributions to SRHR. For instance, the 'Donors Delivering for [Donors Delivering for SRHR](#) report (DSW, 2023) indicates that EU institutions disbursements in 2021 amounted to USD 342,6 million for SRHR, USD 687,8 million for Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (RMNCH) and USD 36,3 million for family planning.

<sup>45</sup> [Home - Donors Delivering for SRHR](#)

<sup>46</sup> [EU and African partners launch flagship initiative \(europa.eu\)](#)

health medicines to adolescents and women in need.<sup>47</sup> Since 2022, the EU also supports four **consortia of European and African civil society organisations** that work in 16 African countries to support SRHR of adolescents and persons in vulnerable situations. Furthermore, the EU has made a record contribution **Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria** (EUR 715 million for 2023-2025)<sup>48</sup>.

**In humanitarian crises**, the EU is working to ensure that women and girls have full access to sexual and reproductive health services to foster their horizontal integration into primary and secondary healthcare services.

*The EU will continue to promote universal access to SRHR, including via health systems strengthening towards universal health coverage, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.*

### 3.3. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

#### 3.3.1. Women's social and economic empowerment

The GAP III has increased the extent and focus of EU support for **women's economic empowerment**<sup>49</sup>. EU action has followed three main objectives: promoting an enabling environment by tackling the structural barriers (ranging from harmful gender norms to legal restriction) that prevent women from effectively participating in economy; improving women's financial inclusion; and supporting women's decent employment and entrepreneurship across sectors, especially sectors with high potential such as digital.

For instance, the EU and Germany increased funding for the **Investment Climate Reform (ICR) Facility**, which works with public and private partners in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, to focus on business environment reforms that support women's full participation in the economy. The EU, together with other Team Europe actors, supports **women's access to finance and entrepreneurship** through a wide range of actions embedded in the **Global Gateway strategy**<sup>50</sup>.

Box 6: EU financial commitments for **women's social and economic empowerment** rose from an annual average of EUR 1 932 million in 2014-2020 to EUR 2 182 million in 2021 and EUR 3 859 million in 2022 (representing 89% of total commitments in the relevant sectors and 26% of all commitments contributing to gender equality in 2021-2022).

<sup>47</sup> [Sexual and reproductive health and rights: EU announces additional €45 million for UNFPA Supplies Partnership \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>48</sup> [EU announces historic €715 M for the Global Fund \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>49</sup> Box 6 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to 50 relevant OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes related among other to Social Protection, Employment Creation, Labour Rights, Social Dialogue, Information and Communication Technology, Renewable Energy, Financial Services, Business Services, Agriculture, and Fisheries. Commitments to education and health are presented in boxes 8 and 9. The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>50</sup> Examples of EFSD+ blending and guarantee operations are NASIRA, Inclusify and the EUR 10 million blended-finance programme with Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) 'Women's Financial Inclusion Facility' through the **Women's World Banking** private equity fund.

Through the EU-UN Women's **We Empower Asia** programme<sup>51</sup>, more than 3 000 women entrepreneurs have benefited from capacity-training and more than 1 500 companies have committed themselves to implementing gender-sensitive business practices. The main new sectoral programmes include the flagship **TEI Investing in Young Businesses in Africa**<sup>52</sup>, which **empowers early-stage businesses and young entrepreneurs – especially young women** – through financial and technical support and offers a platform for innovative finance solutions for women entrepreneurs, and the **Women Entrepreneurship for Africa programme**<sup>53</sup>.

Another example is the support provided by the EU and the Netherlands to Egypt's national programme for **women's financial and digital inclusion**. Similarly, a majority of EU Member States promotes gender-responsive private sector development through gender lens investing<sup>54</sup>.

### *Promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment through trade policy*

Since 2011, EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) include a Trade and Sustainable Development chapter covering legally binding commitments on the ILO core conventions, including on non-discrimination, and a commitment to not weaken or reduce the levels of protection to encourage trade.

Building on this, since the FTA with New Zealand concluded in June 2022, EU FTAs contain dedicated articles on trade and gender equality, including commitments to effectively implement relevant UN conventions on women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

In the World Trade Organization, the EU is a strong proponent of gender equality, including as an active member of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, where the EU has led the work on the application of a gender lens to WTO agreements. Under the EU's Generalised System of Preferences, the EU monitors beneficiary countries' compliance with the principles of core international conventions on promoting women's rights and gender equality. **All EU ex ante and ex post evaluations of trade agreements contain a gender analysis.**

Women's economic empowerment is also at the heart of many **Aid for Trade**<sup>55</sup> programmes, which generate entrepreneurial and job opportunities for women and provide skills training<sup>56</sup>.

### *Social protection and the care economy*

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<sup>51</sup> [Our Programme | UN Women – Asia-Pacific](#)

<sup>52</sup> [Invest in Young Businesses in Africa \(IYBA\) | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>53</sup> Implemented by the GIZ and the Tony Elumelu Foundation, the programme supports 2500 women entrepreneurs with access to seed and second stage finance and entrepreneurship training.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, France does this through [PROPARCO](#) and Spain through the Fund for the Promotion of Development ([FONPRODE](#)).

<sup>55</sup> [Aid for Trade: EU remains among the major global providers with €23 billion \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>56</sup> In Nicaragua, for instance, the EU, Spain and UNIDO have joined forces to back the green recovery of the cocoa value chain, targeting women and youth : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en). See also the [2022 EU Aid for Trade Progress report](#).

The EU has promoted **gender-responsive and disability-inclusive social protection and care policies** through sector interventions<sup>57</sup>, **public finance management (PFM) reform and gender-responsive budgeting** in partnership with the ILO, UNICEF, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF) and national partners<sup>58</sup>.

Overall, the EU and Member States support **gender-responsive budgeting** in at least **50% of partner countries**<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, the EU, France, Luxembourg and Slovakia have supported the development of the public expenditure and financial accountability (PEFA) gender module<sup>60</sup>, a key tool for gender-responsive budgeting.

Box 7: 23% of actions implemented in 2021-2022 in support of **PFM reforms** included a **gender-responsive budgeting** component. This is above the 20% target set by the GAP III.

*The EU will continue to address the systemic barriers and harmful structures that hinder women's social and economic empowerment and will enhance gender lens investment in cooperation with other donors. The EU will promote care-related policies and services and decent care work as part of comprehensive gender-transformative social protection systems.*

### 3.3.2. Promoting gender equality in education

The EU has increased its efforts to assist partner countries in building **gender-responsive education systems and eliminating persistent gender gaps in enrolment, retention and learning**<sup>61</sup>. It has set up major education-sector support programmes in over 60 partner countries, which focus on **planning and resourcing of girls' education**; teachers training including gender responsive pedagogy, tackling school related gender-based violence and **comprehensive sexuality education, and investments in safe and healthy learning environments**; including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities<sup>62</sup>. The EU is one of the five champions of the global **Transforming Education Summit** and also a major donor to

Box 8: EU financial commitments promoting **gender equality in and through education** increased from an annual average of EUR 660 million in 2014-2020 to EUR 972 million in 2021 and EUR 1 287 million in 2022 (representing 91% of total commitments in education in 2021-22 and about 10% of all commitments contributing to gender equality).

<sup>57</sup> An example, supporting the **development and implementation of gender-responsive care policies** has been one of the main priorities for EU cooperation with the Latin American region in the framework of [EUROSociAL+](#). Building on the results achieved, the new [TEI Inclusive and Equal Societies](#) will start operations in 2024.

Another example is the **gender-responsive social protection programme** in Malawi (EUR 61.5 million), which is co-funded by Ireland: [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en).

<sup>58</sup> For example, within the framework of the EU-funded [Improving Synergies Between Social Protection and Public Finance Management Programme](#).

<sup>59</sup> In Türkiye, the EU has supported the integration of the gender perspective into all stages of national and local policy-making and budgeting processes, in partnership with government authorities and CSOs.

<sup>60</sup> [Supplementary Framework for Assessing Gender Responsive Public Financial Management | Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability \(PEFA\)](#)

<sup>61</sup> Box 8 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to the OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes related to Education (codes starting with 11). The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>62</sup> For examples of education project see : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en) and the [Gender for Development Uganda](#) programme.

the **Global Partnership for Education** which mobilises financing and partnerships to improve gender equality in education in partner countries.

The EU strives to foster participatory approaches in education-sector planning, policy dialogue and monitoring, in particular helping **civil society, girls' and youth organisations to change discriminatory gender norms that hold girls back** from access to high-quality education<sup>63</sup>.

Through **Global Gateway**, the EU is promoting girls' and women's equal **uptake of Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) qualifications and access to vocational education and training**, in order to create equal employment opportunities through TEIs for fair and inclusive green and digital transitions<sup>64</sup> and through the EU 4 Gender Equality programme for Eastern Partnership countries<sup>65</sup>. The flagship initiative **Youth Mobility for Africa**<sup>66</sup>, which is part of the **EU-Africa Global Gateway Investment package**, aims to promote **gender equality in higher education and cross-border mobility and exchanges**. In the **Western Balkan countries**, the EU supports the setting-up of 'Youth Guarantee'<sup>67</sup> schemes for improved transitions from school to work, paying attention to the most disadvantaged youth, including young women. The EU is considering activating similar schemes in the Eastern Partnership region and North Africa.

### *Education in emergencies*

Over 224 million crisis-affected children and youth are in urgent need of educational support to guarantee them access to safe and quality learning.

In 2023, the EU and Member States, in a Team Europe approach, pledged to invest an additional EUR 313 million in **Education Cannot Wait**, the UN global fund that supports girls' and boys' equal access to education and learning in 31 crisis-affected countries. In 2015-2022, the EU's humanitarian aid for education in emergencies enabled over 20 million children to stay in or return to education. Since 2021, the EU prioritises education in emergencies projects that target at least 50% girls. Furthermore, the EU bridges humanitarian and development nexus to respond to the impact of crisis and conflict on the most vulnerable students such as girls and young women<sup>68</sup>.

*The EU will maintain **funding for education** in emergencies at 10% of the humanitarian aid budget and increase to at least 10% of its overall international partnerships the funding to*

<sup>63</sup> [Call for Proposals: Supporting Civil Society's role in education: Reference: EuropeAid/177557/DD/ACT/ | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](#);

<sup>64</sup> For instance, through initiatives such as the [Opportunity-driven skills and VET in Africa \(OP-VET\) | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#); [Nepal - Green Recovery | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#);

<sup>65</sup> [EU 4 Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence | UN Women – Europe and Central Asia](#); Another example is the 'Women in Tech' project : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en)

<sup>66</sup> [Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>67</sup> [The reinforced Youth Guarantee - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>68</sup> [BriCE – Building Resilience: education opportunities in fragile and crises affected environments](#) reached almost 235,000 children and youth (47% girls) across seven countries in Africa and improved learning outcomes, retention and transition of girls into formal school.



*inclusive, equitable and quality education. focusing on promising gender-transformative practice and experiences.*

### 3.3.3. Promoting universal access to health

In 2022, the European Commission adopted the new **EU Global Health Strategy**<sup>69</sup> that positions global health as an essential pillar of EU external policy and an investment priority of Global Gateway. The strategy prioritises tackling the root causes of ill health, paying particular attention to the needs and rights of women, children and young people, including universal access to SRHR (see above)<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, women's access to health care and psychosocial support are an integral part of relief and recovery measures and a priority area for the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus**.

Box 9: EU financial commitments with **gender equality and women's empowerment as policy objective in the health sector**, including basic health care, infrastructure and nutrition, increased from an annual average of EUR 454 million in 2014-2020 to EUR 2 088 million in 2021 and EUR 612 million in 2022 (representing 91% of total commitments in the sector and about 12% of all commitments contributing to gender equality). In addition, the EU provided more than EUR 401.7 million in 2021 and EUR 300 million in 2022 for **humanitarian health programmes** (incl. for SRH programmes).

### 3.4. Advancing equal participation and leadership

The GAP III emphasises that the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all their diversity in public and political life is not only a fundamental right but also a prerequisite for accelerating gender equality across all sectors.

The EU and its Member States are engaging in political and policy dialogue at country level and in multilateral fora to **promote an enabling and safe environment for women's and girls' political and civic engagement**, and to **foster women's political representation and decision-making power** at all levels.

The EU has encouraged **women's participation in elections** through capacity-building<sup>71</sup> and gender parity in election observation<sup>72</sup>, and supported

Box 10: EU financial commitments with **gender equality and women's empowerment as a policy objective in democratic governance** went from an annual average of EUR 1 492 million in 2014-20 to EUR 1 239 million in 2021 and EUR 2 085 million in 2022 (representing 88% of commitments in the sector and about 14.5% of all commitments contributing to gender equality in 2021-22).

<sup>69</sup> [EU Global Health Strategy \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-122022-1000x600px.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Box 9 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes related to Health (codes starting with 12), including Covid control. Commitments allocated to SRHR are in box 5. The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, support for stability and peace has focused on promoting women's participation in elections through political dialogue and capacity-building in Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Somaliland and Yemen.

<sup>72</sup> Support is channelled through domestic observers' platforms, such as CEJP in Burundi, NEW in Sierra Leone, YIAGA in Nigeria, Decidamos in Paraguay, Integridade in Mozambique, SAFIDY in Madagascar and ZESN in Zimbabwe. 50% of the EU's long-term observers and 61% of its short-term observers are women.

women-legislator capacity in order to advance inclusive and gender-responsive laws and policies<sup>73</sup>, including in climate policy-making<sup>74</sup> and in the context of accession negotiations<sup>75</sup>.

Box 11: The global **WYDE - Women and Youth for Democracy programme** (EUR 40 million) will support **women and youth-led initiatives**, ranging from civic engagement and democratic activism to political representation in addressing the legal, societal and economic barriers to equal participation (including online gender-based violence).

In line with the **Youth Action Plan in EU external action**<sup>76</sup>, gender equality and diversity are given specific attention in EU engagement with young people. This includes capacity-building and funding for **girl-led initiatives to tackle the legal, societal and economic barriers to equal participation** and encouraging the participation of young women in national and multilateral fora. The EU is also partnering with networks of local authorities that support women and youth-elected representatives<sup>77</sup>.

The EU is equally concerned with combating **gender stereotypes in media content** and the proliferation of **online harassment, hate speech, and gendered disinformation** online, which all hold women and girls back from actively engaging in public and political life<sup>78</sup>. Moreover, the EU has enhanced protection mechanisms for **women human rights defenders**. Over half of the 23 000 beneficiaries in 2019-2022 were women<sup>79</sup>.

*The EU will foster political initiatives and actions to strengthen and protect democracy and civic space in support of women's and girls' human rights, and their meaningful and full participation in all aspects of public and political life.*

### 3.5. Integrating the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda

In a rapidly changing geopolitical and security context, the EU has continued to keep WPS high on the political agenda, including by the adoption of Council Conclusions on WPS in November 2022<sup>80</sup> and by including it in the key strategic frameworks for security and defence

<sup>73</sup> Within the framework of the InterPares programme, for instance, peer-to-peer exchanges between EU Member States and the parliaments of Bhutan, Chile and Malaysia have helped to strengthen gender-sensitive scrutiny in oversight and law-making.

<sup>74</sup> [Parliamentary Action on Renewable Energy \(PARE\): Raising awareness and mobilising political will on climate and renewable energy in Africa \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>75</sup> Box 10 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to 14 relevant OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes under the Government and Civil Society sector.

<sup>76</sup> [Youth Action Plan in EU external action](#)

<sup>77</sup> Five multiannual framework partnership agreements were signed between 2021 and 2023, respectively with Platforma, CLGF, UCLG, UCLGA and AIMF.

<sup>78</sup> The programmes that promote gender-inclusive public-interest journalism are the [Core Support for Independent Media in the Southern Neighbourhood - EU Neighbours](#) and the EU4 Independent Media [Eastern Europe: Supporting Independent Media in Eastern Partnership Countries | DT Global \(dt-global.com\)](#).

<sup>79</sup> [ProtectDefenders.eu](#)

<sup>80</sup> [Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security](#) (November 2022)

(notably the Strategic Compass<sup>81</sup>, the Civilian CSDP Compact<sup>82</sup> and the EU policy on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration<sup>83</sup>). These new frameworks enable the EU to adapt its WPS work and apply a gender perspective to new horizontal security-related challenges, such as climate change, terrorism<sup>84</sup>, hybrid threats (including cyberattacks and disinformation) and digitalisation<sup>85</sup>.

The implementation of the WPS agenda has been persistently addressed at the multilateral level (including by the EU's ambassador for gender and diversity at the United Nations Security Council) and in regional and international partnerships (including the EU-UN partnership for peace operations and EU-NATO cooperation).

Furthermore, the majority (73%) of the EU delegations and around half of the EU's Member States have included WPS priorities in their bilateral and regional dialogues.

The EU Member States on WPS have most often focused on developing and implementing national WPS action plans or on supporting partner countries in this regard – most notably by strengthening CSOs, preventing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or supporting women's participation and leadership in peace processes.

Among many efforts to strengthen women's participation in political processes, mediation and dialogue<sup>86</sup>, the EU has supported the establishment of the **Afghan Women Leaders Forum (AWLF)**<sup>87</sup>, which currently consists of over 100 Afghan women leaders residing both inside and outside Afghanistan.

Through their operational activities, CSDP Missions and Operations support enhancing women's participation. Also internally, the EU pushed for gender parity<sup>88</sup>.

As pointed out by the GAP III independent evaluation as well as other studies on the impact of the GAP III<sup>89</sup>, there is scope to further leverage EU's influence on WPS by more consistently

Box 12: EU financial commitments promoting the **Women, Peace and Security agenda**, including Civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, went from an annual average of EUR 379 million in 2014-20 to EUR 309 million in 2021 and EUR 499 million in 2022 (representing 42% of total commitments in this area in 2021-2022).

<sup>81</sup> [A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence](#) (March 2022)

<sup>82</sup> [Civilian CSDP Compact](#) (May 2023)

<sup>83</sup> [EU policy on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration](#) (December 2021)

<sup>84</sup> [Promoting the Role of Women in Security and Counterterrorism - Guidelines for the Criminal Justice Response to Terrorism](#) (August 2023)

<sup>85</sup> Box 12 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments allocated to six OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes within the scope of conflict, peace, and security (codes starting with 152). The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>86</sup> E.g. [Supporting Syrian Women's Engagement in the Syrian Political Process](#), [Syrian Women's Advisory Board](#), [Supporting Arab Women at the Table \(SAWT\): Women as Political Actors - Arab Reform Initiative](#).

<sup>87</sup> [Launch of the Afghan Women Leaders Forum](#) (March 2022)

<sup>88</sup> [Strategy and Action Plan to Enhance Women's Participation in Civilian CSDP Missions 2021-2024](#) (December 2021) sets a target of 40% women's participation.

<sup>89</sup> [ecdpm Briefing Note](#) (March 2023), [ecdpm Briefing Note](#) (April 2023), [Kvinna till Kvinna Policy Brief](#) (June 2023), [CONCORD Report](#) (June 2023).

integrating it into political dialogue and programming, and by further capitalising on different capacity-building tools such as training<sup>90</sup> and operational guidance.

**Preventing and combating sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence**, remains an EU priority, with victim-centred approaches supporting better accountability and the integration of survivors<sup>91</sup>. The CSDP missions' and operations' actions to address SGBV (including CRSV) are continuing – not least in Ukraine<sup>92</sup>.

*The EU will improve the implementation of the WPS commitments, including through the WPS taskforce, with a view to more consistently integrating these commitments into political dialogue and programming.*

### **3.6. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities of the green and digital transition**

The GAP III introduced a new and innovative focus on the promotion of gender equality in the formulation of green transition and digital transformation policies and operations.

#### **3.6.1. Promoting a fair and inclusive green transition**

The EU and its Member States promote **women's equal participation and leadership in international climate negotiations and governance**<sup>93</sup> and in **policy-making**.

The EU is also a major contributor to global multi-donor initiatives<sup>94</sup> and new investments mobilised under **Global Gateway** through EFSD+, which support partner governments to mobilise public and private climate-financing, and to encourage **gender-responsive climate-mitigation and climate-adaptation plans** that involve women, youth and local and marginalised communities<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> 8% of the EU delegations have reported that they provide regular mandatory staff training on WPS.

<sup>91</sup> For example, the EU has since 2021 contributed to the **Global Survivors Fund**. This fund has provided reparations and other forms of redress (including medical interventions, psychological and/or psychiatric support and economic compensation) to 2 267 survivors of CRSV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Iraq and Türkiye.

<sup>92</sup> [EUAM Ukraine's amended mandate to also provide support in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes](#) (April 2022), [EULEX Kosovo](#)

<sup>93</sup> For instance, through the implementation of the enhanced Lima work programme on gender within the framework of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

<sup>94</sup> Gender is a focus of the [NDC Support Programme \(undp.org\)](#), which is funded by the EU, Germany and Spain.

<sup>95</sup> Box 13 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments that are also marked “main” or “significant” with one of the four OECD DAC Rio markers and those allocated to the OECD DAC CRS Purpose Codes within the scope of General Environment Protection (codes starting with 410). As per agreed methodology, 40% of the committed amount has been considered of commitments scoring “significant” for one of the Rio markers. The data for 2022 is preliminary.

Major **TEIs** are providing technical assistance and contributing to funding for gender-responsive and inclusive development in partner countries, including through support for **women’s entrepreneurship and employment in the green, blue and circular economies**<sup>96</sup>.

Women and youth are also driving the shift towards **improved climate-resilient food systems**. EU-funded programmes have successfully involved women in **ecosystem restoration** and focused on structural barriers that limit women's access to productive resources, services and markets in agriculture and fisheries and aquaculture<sup>97</sup>. The EU and Member States have played a crucial role in developing and negotiating the **CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition**<sup>98</sup> and support women’s participation in bilateral timber-trade agreements, tackling illegal logging and improving forest governance<sup>99</sup>.

Box 13: EU financial commitments with **gender equality and women’s empowerment as a policy objective in climate adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity and environment protection** increased from an annual average of EUR 1 733 million in 2014 - 20 to EUR 1 755 million in 2021 and EUR 3 400 million in 2022 (representing respectively 68% and 83% of commitments in these sectors).

*Renewed efforts are needed to **build conducive environments for women’s and girls’ meaningful participation and leadership in climate decision-making and economic sectors relevant to the green transition**. The EU will continue to engage with international financial institutions, governments and civil society, women’s organisations and local communities to ensure that **climate finance is gender-responsive and targets the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised**.*

### 3.6.2. Seizing opportunities for women empowerment through digitalisation

The EU has supported investments to **bridge the gender digital divide**, and to promote global human rights-based standards for **digital rights and online safety**<sup>100</sup> and more **inclusive innovation systems and digital economies**.

<sup>96</sup> Examples are the [Green TEI in Partnership with ASEAN/South-East Asia | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#); [Green transition - EUROCLIMA Latin America and the Caribbean | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#); [Malawi - Green Growth | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>97</sup> For instance the EU-funded [Regreening Africa](#) programme has contributed to changing perceptions of women’s land ownership and supported their leadership in savings groups. The FISH4ACP programme, which is co-funded by the EU and Germany, supports small-scale actors and particularly women in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

<sup>98</sup> [CFS: Gender \(fao.org\)](#)

<sup>99</sup> This support takes place through voluntary partnership agreements. See also [FAO-EU FLEGT Programme | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#).

<sup>100</sup> This is based on the [European Declaration on Digital rights and Principles](#), the [Digital Services Act package | Shaping Europe’s digital future \(europa.eu\)](#) and the [2022 Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation | Shaping Europe’s digital future \(europa.eu\)](#).

Through **Global Gateway**, **TEIs**, and the **Digital for Development (D4D) Hub**, the EU and its Member States are helping partner countries implement a **gender-responsive digital transformation**<sup>101</sup> (for instance, by improving female digital literacy, creating high-quality job opportunities and developing inclusive and citizen-centred digital public services<sup>102</sup>). For instance, the recently launched **Digital Democracy Initiative** (EUR 51 million), which is co-funded by the EU and Denmark, includes a focus on **threats and opportunities to women’s online democratic participation**.

Box 14: EU financial commitments with **gender equality and women’s empowerment as a policy objective in digitalisation** amounted to EUR 1 422 million in 2021 and EUR 3 200 million in 2022 (representing respectively 53% and 88% of commitments to digitalisation).

As a frontrunner in the regulatory efforts to ensure safe and human-centric Artificial Intelligence, the EU is in the final stage of negotiations on the AI Act that aims to ensure that certain AI applications used in the EU respect fundamental rights, including the right not to be discriminated based on gender and other protected grounds.

*The EU will continue and step up its support to partner countries in designing and implementing evidence-based national **digital strategies that close gender gaps** by promoting women’s leadership in policy-making, governance, innovation systems and the digital economy. As an active supporter of a number of relevant global initiatives for trustworthy AI, including the **UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**<sup>103</sup>, the EU will work to increase protection against new risks and gender biases, for improved transparency and accountability and a human rights-based approach and gender perspective in the design of emerging technologies.*

#### 4. Leading by example

The EU has worked to improve **gender parity in management**, **gender-responsive leadership (GRL)** and the **involvement of all staff** in working for gender equality.

<sup>101</sup> Box 14 presents the sum of G1 and G2 commitments that are also marked as “main” or “significant objective” with the [European Commission internal digitalisation marker](#). As per agreed methodology, 40% of the committed amount has been considered when the commitment scores 1 (significant) for digitalisation. The data for 2022 is preliminary.

<sup>102</sup> [Digital for Development \(D4D\) for Digital Economy and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#); [Mozambique - E-Youth | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](#); See also the “Women’s Empowerment and Financial and Economic Inclusion in Rural Egypt: COVID-19 Response” project : [https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender\\_en](https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/groups/public-gender_en)

<sup>103</sup> [Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence | UNESCO](#)

Box 15: By the end of October 2023, 47% of senior managers in the Commission, 31% in the EEAS, 37% in EU delegations and 28% in civilian CSDP missions were women. For middle management, the figures were 47.9% for Commission and 41% for the EEAS respectively.

On average, across the reporting EU Member States<sup>104</sup>, women make up 39% of senior and middle management in foreign ministries, embassies and development agencies. Finland (54%), Sweden (52%) and Ireland (50%) have achieved gender parity in managerial positions.

In 2022, Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have continued to promote **GRL** training for managers in cooperation with the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy. GRL aspects were discussed

at the annual EU Ambassadors' conference and the Cooperation days for heads of cooperation. In 2022, DG ECHO provided a mandatory gender-equality training course that was attended by 75% of its middle management and 57% of its senior management. Further GRL training modules, including an e-learning module, are becoming permanent features of management training courses.

In 2021-2022, numerous training sessions on the GAP III and gender-mainstreaming were attended by 626 staff members at headquarters (HQ) and all the EU delegations and by 49% of managers in the EU delegations.

Another positive trend is the **increase in the number of gender-focal persons (GFPs), as well as the improvement in terms of the formalisation of their roles**. 99% of EU delegations have a GFP (87% of services at headquarters). The proportion of GFPs with a job description that refers to their work on gender equality has risen to 44% in the EU delegations and to 79% at headquarters. The **humanitarian gender-age-focal points** ensure a continued focus on prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence. The **CSDP missions and operations** stand out because they mostly have 'single-hatted' gender advisers and focal-point structures, in addition to having a standardised job description. The military CSDP aspect has substantially improved since 2018<sup>105</sup>.

In addition, the EEAS has launched its first agenda for diversity and inclusion to ensure greater mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion in EU external actions. The Commission's updated diversity and inclusion action plan 2023-24<sup>106</sup> sets out the key actions for diversity and inclusion as part of the implementation of its Human Resources Strategy.

*The Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will take **affirmative measures to improve gender parity**, with a focus on management in EU delegations.*

*To meet the growing demand for gender-equality expertise, which was also noted by the mid-term evaluation, the EU will continue to **foster gender-responsive leadership and in-house gender expertise** (particularly through training and exchange of best practices) and will strive*

<sup>104</sup> Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

<sup>105</sup> Council of Europe, Human Rights and Gender Mainstreaming in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) - First Progress Report, 8920/18, 16 May 2018, 6.

<sup>106</sup> [fact-sheet-diversity-inclusion-in-workplace-action-plan-2023-2024\\_en\\_0.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

*to ensure that the ambitious WPS and gender-equality agenda receives adequate resources and attention.*

## **5. Conclusions**

Building on the progress already made across key policy areas, the EU is renewing its commitment to the principles and objectives of the GAP III, through political and policy dialogue, increasing actions and funding for gender equality and reinforcing internal procedures and capacities.

The synchronisation of policy with the multiannual financial framework has proven to be effective and should be continued by extending the duration of the **GAP III until 2027 to align it with the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework.**

A strategic and renewed EU commitment to gender equality will continue to require **close cooperation with the European Parliament, the Council, Member States, international institutions, partner countries, civil society and the private sector.**

Such cooperation can make a real difference and increase the voice and agency of the many women and girls, whose courage and determination place them at the forefront of the struggle for democracy and a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable future for all.