



New framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016-2020) adopted

Brussels, 22 September 2015

Yesterday, the European Commission and the European External Action Service adopted a new framework for the EU's activities on gender equality and women's empowerment in EU's external relations.

A new framework for the EU's activities on gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations for the 2016-2020 period was adopted yesterday by the European Commission and the EEAS. Its aim is to support partner countries, especially in developing, enlargement and neighbouring countries, to achieve tangible results towards gender equality which is at the core of European values, as well as the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be formally adopted this week.

EU High Representative/Vice-President **Federica Mogherini** said: *"With this new framework the EU takes forward working for gender equality in all its external actions. Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights. We want to provide our partners with the effective support they need in order to fight violence against women and girls and at the same time to empower them socially and economically, so that women can participate actively in the political, social and cultural life of their countries."*

EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, **Neven Mimica**, said: *"It is my firm conviction that our new approach will not bring only words but concrete actions and results. It will be translated into real improvements in the livelihoods of women and girls in third countries – where progress needs to be accelerated if we are to transform our world and unlock a development that is really sustainable."*

The new framework for action will build on the achievements and lessons learnt brought about by the implementation of the Gender Action Plan in Development 2010-2015. It will be more focussed on tangible results. It will be financed through a variety of EU external action instruments (such as the Development and Cooperation Instrument) and aid modalities (for instance, budget support or assistance to Civil Society Organisations). About €100 million have already been allocated to concrete measures specifically targeted to improve women's and girls' rights, while gender will also be mainstreamed throughout other sectors of development cooperation.

EU Member States will discuss this new framework in the relevant Council bodies, including at the Foreign Affairs Council dedicated to Development in October. The new framework should apply as from 2016.

Background

2015 is a pivotal year for gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. It is the year when a new development framework will be agreed upon at the global level, with gender equality firmly at the centre of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU and its Member States are at the forefront of the protection and fulfilment of girls' and women's rights. The strong EU positioning in the post-2015 development agenda clearly contributed to gender equality being accepted as a central element within the new SDGs.

2015 also celebrates the 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The international community is rallying round to ensure that girls' and women's rights are fulfilled and that empowering action is adequately supported through galvanised efforts.

The new framework is divided into four pillars, for which there are concrete indicators and targets set. These pillars are the following:

- **Fighting violence of any kind against women and girls** - this includes protecting women against violence in situations of conflict and the prevention of trafficking of girls and women, but

also fighting harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting, and empowering women to have control over their sexual and reproductive life.

- **Economic and social empowerment** – by for instance increasing access of women and girls to quality education and training, including on entrepreneurship, facilitating their access to financial services, to decent jobs and to basic services like energy or clean water.
- **Strengthening voice and participation** – Concrete actions could include women's increased participation in policy and decision-making at all levels, enhancing their role as peace-builders, supporting them in changing social and cultural norms through grassroots organisations or media.
- **Shifting institutional culture** – to more effectively deliver on EU commitments, all EU actors are expected to analyse the development priorities in the third countries where they work, as well as the local context for women and girls, and implement those priorities that are most relevant to them; they should also further strengthen their coordination, coherence and leadership.

Accountability is essential to the success of this new approach. Every new EU-funded project will now have to include measurable targets and objectives on gender.

For more information

[Factsheet on the new framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)

[Joint Staff Working Document: "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020".](#)

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