



2017/2012(INI)

23.1.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Development and for the Committee on Women's Rights
and Gender Equality

on the implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document
(SWD(2015)0182) - Gender equality and women's empowerment:
transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-
2020
(2017/2012(INI))

Rapporteur: Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Development and on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as the committees responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into their motion for a resolution:

- having regard to the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence,
- A. whereas all external action by the European Union should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments and guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process;
- B. whereas Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals states that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world; whereas providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care and decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large; whereas the EU and its Member States should make it a priority to guarantee women's right of access to a decent income, to land, to heritage and to natural resources, which are vital for their independence; whereas women's economic empowerment must play a crucial role in the Gender Action Plan (GAP);
- C. whereas 2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and whereas the principle of equality forms the core of the human rights vision of the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, which states that human rights and fundamental freedoms should be available to all human beings 'without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language or religion';
- D. whereas in its resolution of 3 October 2017 on addressing shrinking civil society space in developing countries¹, Parliament stresses the high importance of gender equality and women's empowerment through the EU's external relations;
- E. whereas the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been signed by 195 countries, is legally binding and is an essential instrument to deal with the vulnerability of girls and their need for special protection and care;
- F. whereas gender equality features among the common values on which the European Neighbourhood Policy is based, though clear objectives and specific action points on this matter are lacking; whereas the levels of political participation and representation of women in the EU's neighbouring countries are low;
- G. whereas the involvement of men and boys in improving gender equality is important for enhancing the rights of women and girls;
- H. whereas the ratification and effective implementation by all countries of the Istanbul

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0365.

Convention, including by the EU Member States, must be viewed as a priority for the coming years given its importance in ensuring better implementation of gender equality policies;

1. Takes the view that, from the perspective of human rights, the Gender Action Plan (GAP II) has in its first year been effective in reinforcing EU coordination and coherence, with its overarching objective being to support progress by the EU and its 28 Member States towards attainment of the Agenda 2030 goals and those set out by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action;
2. Notes that the use of cutting-edge policy research and robust evidence are critical ways of building knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment in order to develop policies and strategies that strengthen the capacity of the Union to make gender equality a lived reality; asks the EEAS and the Commission, therefore, to pay special attention to their goal of ensuring that an independent evaluation is carried out of the implementation of the measures set out in Annex 1 of GAP II;
3. Stresses the need to make use of the possibilities presented by the digital age to fully achieve gender equality; notes that in order to empower women in political and economic terms and to close the digital gender gap, access to digital education must be provided from grass-root level; notes that internet access and ICT skills enable women and girls to learn about their own rights and to participate in modern society on an equal footing with men, which in turn boosts the economy and increases overall wellbeing;
4. Notes that women and men are affected differently by fragile situations in terms of human rights violations, access to justice, extreme poverty and discriminatory politics/regimes and that gender roles and relations are important to understanding opportunities for state building and the obstacles thereto; stresses that GAP II should embed gender equality more broadly across the human rights spectrum and across the good governance context and practice;
5. Recalls that the role of the EU delegations increased with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and that they now play a central role in implementing GAP II; notes that they are the first point of contact for coordination of EU efforts with international partners in the country in question, and highlights the requirement that they ensure the implementation of policies, including the mainstreaming, protection and promotion of gender equality; welcomes the appointment of gender focal points (GFPs) in the delegations and calls for the proper allocation of working time, since the tasks linked to the GFPs are additional to their core or other responsibilities; notes that it is indispensable that the delegations and the GFPs develop a robust understanding of the gender context so as to inform country strategy objectives, programmes, projects and dialogue and their implementation; calls on the VP/HR and the EEAS to develop clear operational guidelines on the role of the GFPs in delegations so that they may act as true human rights advisors and carry out their work effectively;
6. Regrets that according to the latest available EEAS statistics, only one fifth of EU delegations are headed by women, and the ratio is currently below the 2014 baseline of women as EU Heads of Missions; regrets, moreover, that only one of the seven EU Special Representatives is a woman; stresses also that women constitute only about

25 % of staff in common security and defence policy (CSDP) civilian missions and that there are no comprehensive statistics available regarding the participation of women in CSDP military missions and operations; calls for the EU to promote increased participation of women in peacekeeping, peace-building processes and EU military and civil crisis management missions; calls on the EEAS and the Council to lead by example and to take immediate corrective measures to increase the participation of women in external missions and to enhance their appointment to senior and high-profile positions within the EU and in particular in EU delegations;

7. Regrets that according to an EEAS report of November 2016, only a few EU CSDP missions provide training on sexual or gender-based harassment, and notes that in 2015 no cases of sexual or gender-based harassment, abuse or violence were reported by CSDP missions; stresses the importance of applying a zero-tolerance policy regarding cases of sexual or gender-based harassment and of supporting institutional structures focused on preventing sexual or gender-based violence; calls on the EEAS and its Member States to support all efforts to combat sexual or gender-based violence in international peace-keeping operations and to ensure that whistle-blowers and victims are effectively protected;
8. Asks all institutions and political actors involved in the development of EU external action to prioritise compliance with the CRC, its protocols and the relevant international treaties in order to guarantee special protection and care for children; stresses the importance of the full ratification of the CRC, in order to make it the first universally ratified UN human rights convention; asks that the empowerment and human rights of girls be promoted, in the knowledge that empowerment requires the active and equal participation of girls in decision-making processes; underlines that these points should be considered essential elements in the implementation of GAP II; asks also for compliance with the CPRD and its protocols in order to safeguard the rights of women and girls with disabilities; points out that migrant girls, particularly if unaccompanied, are vulnerable and need protection in accordance with the rules of international law; expresses concern at the alarming increase – affecting a significant number of girls – in the number of unregistered children born away from their parents' home country;
9. Stresses the importance of reproductive health education among women and girls and recalls that this education fosters women's empowerment, as well as the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases; stresses the importance of continued implementation of the EU's commitment to enhance girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity; stresses that EU human rights and gender equality policy can only be credible if there is coherence between internal and external policies; strongly condemns the reinstatement and expansion of the 'Global Gag Rule' and its impact on women's and girls' global health care and rights; reiterates its call for the EU, together with its Member States, to fill any financing gap in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, using EU development funding; notes the aim of GAP II of empowering women to have control over their sexual and reproductive lives; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to direct their efforts above all towards third countries which continue to outlaw abortion under any circumstances; calls on the Commission once again to actively inform its humanitarian partners that the Commission's policy provides that, in cases where the pregnancy threatens a woman's or a girl's life or causes unbearable suffering, international humanitarian law and/or international human rights law may

justify offering a safe abortion;

10. Stresses that the EU and its Member States must combat all forms of violence against women – be this physical, psychological, social or financial – and adopt as a priority access to education and the combating of all gender stereotypes in respect of boys and girls from the earliest possible age; welcomes the global, multi-year Spotlight Initiative launched by the EU and the United Nations, aimed at ending all forms of violence against women and girls, as it brings focused attention to this issue, placing it at the centre of efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls for its effective implementation;
11. Notes that the empowerment of girls and women is one of the stated goals of EU external action through the Global Strategy for Common Foreign and Security Policy; notes that the role of women in peace negotiations and mediation as taken into consideration in GAP II is not sufficient; highlights the important role of women in promoting dialogue and building trust, building coalitions for peace and bringing different perspectives on what peace and security mean, in particular in conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction; notes that the promotion of women’s rights in crisis or conflict-ridden countries fosters stronger and more resilient communities; welcomes the designation within the EEAS of a Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; encourages the strengthening of EU Member State and international action through the United Nations to more effectively address the impact of conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls; calls on the Commission to support the new global Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network; notes the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the importance of finding the best possible ways for the EU to implement this resolution;
12. Regrets and condemns sexual violence used against women and girls as a weapon of war; calls for all measures to be taken to ensure their protection, including through the provision of safe shelters for them and their children; calls for the EU to ensure the protection of girls and women in conflicts, especially when they are victims of conflict-related sexual violence, female genital mutilation or forced marriage; highlights that rape is used as a weapon of war, and should therefore at all times be condemned and eradicated; considers it essential to ensure that all necessary medical assistance is provided safely to women who are victims of war rape, including by providing them with access to safe abortions, as provided for under international humanitarian law; strongly regrets that, as per the European Parliament’s study on the implementation of GAP II, current programming appears to sideline the gender dimension in situations of crisis or difficult conflicts;
13. Calls for the EU to pay closer attention to the qualitative aspects in its assessments, including improvements in women’s and girls’ self-esteem and confidence, shifts in gender power relations in society in general and indicators to capture the non-countable aspects of social, economic and political change and women’s and girls’ empowerment; stresses the importance of raising awareness in societies at large as well as targeting specific groups and people to create a common understanding of the causes and consequences of gender inequality;

14. Is concerned that the thematic priority as regards political and civil rights, specifically the enjoyment of women and girls of their political and civil rights, has been given limited priority in GAP II implementation, and calls for increased attention to be given to women's rights organisations and women human rights defenders; stresses the importance of enabling women to participate at all levels of political processes and public life and therefore underlines the need to ensure women's fair access to political spheres, as voters, candidates, elected officials and civil service members; calls for training to be provided for women political candidates to help build their capacities; recalls that empowerment cannot be linked to labour market access only, as progress needs to be made in many other fields such as political representation, legal protection and health, and in particular through education;
15. Calls for a dedicated budget line on gender equality to be established in order to address in a more prominent way the level of political participation and representation of women in the EU's neighbouring countries and within the EU; stresses that these programmes should be fully integrated with the targets and programmes of UN Women and should set measurable targets to regularly track progress on gender equality in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, strengthen cooperation and engage more with the governments of partner countries, with a view to achieving better results more rapidly, in the context of bilateral partnership and association agreements;
16. Notes that the Commission, in the Joint Staff Working Document on the 2016-2020 framework, recognised that the EU's financial investment in gender equality has not been systematically measured; calls on the Commission to adopt a clear results-driven approach that sets high standards for reporting, evaluation and accountability mechanisms and to promote evidence-based decision-making in order to use the financial resources more efficiently and effectively; requests a report to determine exactly how much funding has been specifically committed to gender mainstreaming and to identify the most noteworthy goals achieved;
17. Stresses that, for conflict and post-conflict situations, GAP II should focus more on embedding gender equality within the context and practice of broader and more comprehensive human rights and good governance;
18. Draws attention to the Commission's commitment to gender mainstreaming and integrating gender analysis and perspectives across all instruments; calls for this approach to be reflected in all EU tools, in particular in the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
19. Calls for the promotion of policies and measures aimed at girls' education and their resulting empowerment; insists on the strengthening of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that defend the lives of girls and women and advocate their rights and empowerment;
20. Emphasises the need for women's inclusion and representation in economic fields that are important for sustainable development; stresses that business has an important role to play in enhancing women's rights; calls in this context for increased support to be given to local SMEs, especially to female entrepreneurs, via micro-loans, so as to enable them to gain from private-sector-led growth;

21. Recalls that it is the obligation of the EU and its Member States to respect the rights of girls and women as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers when implementing and developing the EU's migration policy; calls, in this context, for the reassessment of the engagement of the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia with the Libyan coast guards in light of the reports of systematic sexual violence against women in the detention centres on Libyan soil.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	23.1.2018
Result of final vote	+: 53 -: 5 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Lars Adaktusson, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Nikos Androulakis, Francisco Assis, Petras Auštrevičius, Amjad Bashir, Bas Belder, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Victor Boştinaru, Elmar Brok, Klaus Buchner, James Carver, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Lorenzo Cesa, Javier Couso Permuy, Arnaud Danjean, Georgios Epitideios, Eugen Freund, Michael Gahler, Iveta Grigule-Pēterse, Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Sabine Lösing, Andrejs Mamikins, Alex Mayer, David McAllister, Tamás Meszerics, Francisco José Millán Mon, Clare Moody, Javier Nart, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Paşcu, Alojz Peterle, Tonino Picula, Jozo Radoš, Sofia Sakorafa, Alyn Smith, Jaromír Štětina, Dubravka Šuica, László Tőkés, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Ivo Vajgl
Substitutes present for the final vote	Brando Benifei, Marek Jurek, Jo Leinen, Miroslav Poche, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Traian Ungureanu, Bodil Valero, Marie-Christine Vergiat
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Barbara Kudrycka, Tiemo Wölken

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

53	+
ALDE	Petras Auštrevičius, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Iveta Grigule-Pēterse, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Javier Nart, Jozo Radoš, Ivo Vajgl
ECR	Amjad Bashir
EFDD	Fabio Massimo Castaldo
GUE/NGL	Javier Couso Permuy, Sabine Lösing, Sofia Sakorafa, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Marie-Christine Vergiat
PPE	Lars Adaktusson, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Elmar Brok, Lorenzo Cesa, Arnaud Danjean, Michael Gahler, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Andrey Kovatchev, Barbara Kudrycka, Eduard Kukan, David McAllister, Francisco José Millán Mon, Alojz Peterle, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jaromír Štětina, Dubravka Šuica, László Tóké, Traian Ungureanu
S&D	Nikos Androulakis, Francisco Assis, Brando Benifei, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Victor Boştinaru, Eugen Freund, Jo Leinen, Andrejs Mamikins, Alex Mayer, Clare Moody, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Paşcu, Tonino Picula, Miroslav Poche, Tiemo Wölken
VERTS/ALE	Klaus Buchner, Tamás Meszerics, Alyn Smith, Bodil Valero

5	-
ECR	Bas Belder, Marek Jurek
EFDD	James Carver
NI	Georgios Epitideios, Janusz Korwin-Mikke

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention