

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

# MIND THE GAP: HOW IS THE EU REALLY DOING WHEN IT COMES TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

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## OVERVIEW

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Woman to Woman) and the Kosovo Women's Network have recently released the publication 'MIND THE GAP: Independent Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan in Western Balkan Countries'. Following a brief presentation of this publication, there was an interactive discussion regarding the findings, recommendations, and the broader usefulness of using the EU Gender Action Plan II as an advocacy tool in furthering gender equality.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Where are we? What is our reality? What challenges are we facing today?  
What similarities and/or differences do we see across contexts?
- What are we doing?

In 2015, the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) adopted a Staff Working Document (SWD) titled 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016–2020'. Commonly referred to as the second Gender Action Plan or 'GAP II', the document aims to further gender equality in all European Union (EU) external activities and relations.

### **GAP II contains four strategic priorities:**

- 1) Institutional cultural shift as a 'precondition to achieve gender equality'
- 2) Physical and psychological integrity
- 3) Economic and social rights
- 4) Voice and participation

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and their partner Women's rights civil society organisations (WCSOs) in the Western Balkan countries have conducted an independent evaluation of GAP II in the region. The evaluation has sought to examine the extent to which GAP II has been implemented in each country, identifying best practices, challenges and opportunities for furthering its implementation in 2018–2020.

**MIND THE GAP** – An independent evaluation of the implementation of the EU gender action plan II in Western Balkan countries (<http://thekvinnatillkvinnafoundation.org/publication/2018/02/07/mind-the-gap-an-independent-evaluation-of-the-implementation-of-the-eu-gender-action-plan-ii-in-western-balkan-countries/>)

## KEY FINDINGS

**OBJECTIVE 1** – Increase coherence and coordination among EU institutions (EUDs) and with member states (MMS)

- EU institutions rarely raised gender equality issues with governments in political dialogues.
- Tended not to consider gender a 'priority', or part of the 'fundamentals first' agenda.
- Lacked knowledge/capacity for gender mainstreaming.

**OBJECTIVE 2** – Dedicated leadership on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment established in EU institutions and MSS

- The percentage of women heads of EUDs has increased, but women remain underrepresented.
- EUDs have not appointed gender champions.
- The extent to which managers have addressed gender equality seems to have depended more on individual will than on institutionalised practice.
- GAP II indicators have been selected in most Western Balkan countries, though this process involved insufficient consultation with WCSOs.

**OBJECTIVE 3** – Sufficient resources allocated by EU institutions and MSS to deliver on EU gender policy commitments

- GAP II objectives and indicators selected, but insufficient consultation with WCSOs.
- Funding for improving results for girls and women not evaluated during 2017 Midterm Review.
- Currently, poor data management systems for monitoring funding to women, girls, gender equality and WCSOs.
- Insufficient human resources allocated by EU to implement GAP II.
- Job descriptions have not been updated to require gender equality tasks as responsibilities for all.
- Minimal time for GFPs.
- Limited but insufficient training on gender mainstreaming in IPA programming.

**OBJECTIVE 4** – Robust gender evidence used to inform all EU external spending, programming and policy making

- Gender analyses were conducted but few programmes have used sector-specific gender analyses.
- EUDs have taken some positive measures to better mainstream gender in IPA programming.
- Fundamental challenge: beneficiary countries draft Action Documents (ADs) and should take ownership over them.

- EUD officials often hesitated to interfere with existing government strategies and planned actions, including encouraging governments to address gender inequalities within documents. The fact that governments, not EUDs, 'own' these documents and base them on existing government strategies presents a fundamental challenge for ensuring gender equality is mainstreamed in ADs.
- EUDs have not consulted sufficiently or systematically with National Gender Equality Mechanisms (NGEMs), CSOs and WCSOs to inform IPA programmes.

**OBJECTIVE 5** – Results for women and girls measured and resources allocated to systematically track progress

- EU Results Framework (EURF) not aligned with GAP II, and several GAP II indicators are problematic because they do not require sex-disaggregated data.
- Challenges with OECD Gender Marker as an indicator: it may provide misleading information related to actual resources allocated for women and girls.

**OBJECTIVE 6** – Partnership fostered between EU and stakeholders to build national capacity for gender equality

- EUDs have taken few initiatives to foster partnerships with stakeholders to build national capacities for gender equality.
- Little to no additional funding allocated for research on gender equality; furthering capacities of NGEMs; and/or improved media reporting on gender equality.
- Coordination mechanisms on gender equality exist but are weak and often ad-hoc.

**OBJECTIVE 18** – Women's organisations and other CSOs and human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights freely able to work and protected by law

- The current indicators are poor measures of support to WCSOs. One indicator focuses on individual women Human Rights Defenders but does not consider support to WCSOs.
- Insufficient financial support for WCSOs, particularly human resources, hinders WCSOs ability to participate in EU Accession processes, including in consultations and advocacy work related to gender equality as foreseen in GAP II.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Where do we go from here? What are the ways forward? What can we bring forward from this discussion and translate into action?

### FOR EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICES

- Need to meet regularly with women CSOs to gather information on gender equality. Meetings should be in public during regular working hours.

### FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Ensure that Heads of Delegations and officials in political sections know their responsibilities under GAP II, including that gender equality should be part of the fundamentals first agenda and regularly raised in policy and political dialogues.

- Ensure all EUD staff at all levels complete obligatory training on gender equality, including practical skills on gender mainstreaming.

#### **FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

- Allocate adequate, dedicated human resources for implementing GAP II, including gender experts in Brussels and EUDs (Objective 3).
- Update job descriptions at all levels to include gender equality responsibilities (Objective 3).
- Ensure gender is mainstreamed in all templates related to programming and evaluations (Objective 4).

#### **FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

- Ensure that revisions to EU Results Framework involve GAP II indicators for regular reporting (Objective 5).
- Require data management and regular reporting on dedicated funding for women and girls within OPSYS (Objective 3).

#### **EU DELEGATIONS**

- Raise issues related to gender equality in political dialogues (Objective 1).
- Heads of Missions should regularly discuss gender equality and emphasise that EUD staff should also encourage beneficiary governments (Objective 2).
- Pressure beneficiary governments to further gender equality as a fundamental right and EU principle and priority (Objective 4).
- Ensure that countries have undertaken sufficient consultations with NGEMs and WCSOs in drafting new strategies, laws and ADs (Objective 4).
- Allocate more resources to research and statistics related to gender equality (Objective 6).
- Earmark funds to support WCSOs related to GAP II implementation and EU Accession processes (Objective 18).

#### **Discussion on the recommendations:**

The three most important pillars are:

- 1) Combating violence against women,
- 2) Engaging and mobilising women to feel secure and empowered, and
- 3) Provide the condition for social and political participation of women and girls.

It was discussed that the cultural shift is a collateral positive element, but the three elements are more substantial.

Perception of the political leaders is important because it gives the political tone of the conversation on women's rights. Political leaders need to be personally committed and invested.

#### **Recommendations by panellists:**

Every country needs to be tackled individually. Inclusion of women needs to be tackled qualitatively not quantitatively. Qualitative and meaningful presence of women in political participation.

Biggest challenge to convince political leadership to take gender equality seriously: Changing mentality of deeply embedded conservative beliefs in political leaders themselves. Leadership that is convinced of the cause is substantial. Community, political and religious leadership needs to be convinced. Including men and boys in the mobilisation for gender equality.

Hierarchy of groups (LGBT, Roma, etc.) applied in the EU Commission have had women marginalised. Policies of EU Gender Equality and those of developing countries did not apply to Western Balkan countries. No framework to measure how these countries are performing in implementation of gender equality policies. Institutional shift is one of the most important achievements.

The most important achievement is building a strong independent women's movement.

Three aspects that help women organisations to enhance their work and be empowered

**Recommendation by Panellist 1:**

1. Recognise the work that women's organisations are doing
2. Participation
3. Funding: Strength in the women's movement is the coalition between different actors, both small and big, rural and non-rural

**Recommendation by Panellist 2:**

1. Healthy ecosystem of funding, diverse and alternative system of funding – direct funding for women's groups not with pre-prescribed funding from EU
2. Funding the expertise and consultation received by women activists
3. Advisory services by local women's groups to EU – they should be compensated for their valuable contributions

Distribution of financial aid is the problem, and not fundraising – the money is there!

Difficult for women's organisations to be invited at the table and EU is not making them part of the discussions with governments – is it deliberate or courtesy?

Women's organisations do not receive funding. ■

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