

Press release – Fostering gender equality in the EU’s foreign and security policy



The text, adopted by 477 votes in favour, 112 against and 94 abstentions on Friday, calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission, the EU agencies and member states to systematically integrate gender mainstreaming into the EU’s foreign and security policy. MEPs also insist that the multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) experienced by marginalised individuals and groups be taken into account.

They welcome the Commission’s proposal to present a new Gender Action Plan on gender equality and empowerment in external relations (GAP III 2021-2025) in 2020 and state that 85% of official development assistance (ODA) should go to programmes that include gender equality as a significant or main objective.

Protecting women’s rights and promoting women’s participation

The report stresses that women play a pivotal role in bringing peace to conflict-ridden countries. Women’s equitable participation in EU foreign policy negotiations, and peace and security processes is linked to greater economic prosperity and advancement of global security, democracy and sustainable peace, MEPs say. Therefore, they call on the EEAS and member states to ensure women’s full participation in the various stages of the conflict cycle, in the context of EU conflict prevention and mediation activities.

Parliament also calls on the Commission and the EEAS to systematically support sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as access to family planning, contraception and safe and legal abortion services. To address poverty among women, fight exploitation, and promote a more inclusive

labour market, MEPs also urge member states and EU institutions to increase financing, e.g. providing microcredits.

A gender focus in EU institutions and delegations

In order to facilitate gender mainstreaming in foreign and security policy, but also in all other EU policy areas, MEPs ask for a new Council configuration to be set up, bringing together EU Ministers and Secretaries of State responsible for gender equality.

They regret that women only account for 31.3% of middle-management positions and 26% of senior management positions at the EEAS, compared to 40% at the Commission, and call on the current EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell to take the necessary steps to remedy this situation.

Quote

Rapporteur [Ernest Urtasun](#) (Greens/EFA, ES) said: “Parliament adopted the first ever report calling for gender equality in the EU’s foreign and security policy. While several countries around the world have already adopted a foreign policy with a strong focus on gender equality, the EU still does not have one. This is why we call on the EU and its leaders to promote a gender transformative vision of foreign policy that protects and promotes women’s human rights. At the same time, we call on the EU to give women a voice and a seat in foreign and security policy by ensuring their representation and involvement in political leadership and decision-making at all levels. The EU should lead by example on gender equality and start by applying these principles within its own institutions. There’s still a long way to go and we hope the recommendations and call to action addressed to the EU and its Member States will be heard and enforced.”

Background

Women remain largely underrepresented and undervalued in politics and decision-making processes in the EU and worldwide, notably in the areas of foreign policy and international security. Within the EU, six women hold the post of Defence Minister and only three out of 27 Foreign Ministers are women.

[GAP II](#) set the target of mainstreaming gender actions across 85% of all new initiatives by 2020 but in 2018, only between 55% and 68% of the new programmes incorporated gender.