



EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION
THEMATIC EVALUATION

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GENDER ACTION PLAN III

Final Report

Volume I – Main Report

April 2023

**EVIDENCE
MATTERS**

International
Partnerships

Prepared by:



Lead company
Merzhauser Str. 183
D-79100 Freiburg

Consortium composed by

Particip, Ecorys, ECDPM, Mancala Consultores

Leader of the Consortium: Particip GmbH

Contact Person: tamara.ulla@particip.de

FWC EVA 2020

EuropeAid/140122/DH/SER/MULTI

Specific Contract EVA-2020-9762 (N°300031359)

Authors

Landis MacKellar (Team Leader)

Dana Peebles

Charlotte Vaillant

Camille Massey

Tamara Ulla

Contact information:

European Commission
Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)
Directorate D - Sustainable Development Policy and Coordination
Unit D.4 - Performance, Results and Evaluation; Knowledge Management and Collaborative Methods
Email: INTPA-EVALUATIONS@ec.europa.eu
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

EU International Partnerships:
https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/our-impact/monitoring-and-evaluation_en

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission, as part of the evaluations of the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (NEAR), and the Service for Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI). However, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

PDF	ISBN 978-92-68-02758-5	ISSN 2529-3338	doi:10.2841/625024	MN-09-23-193-EN-N
-----	------------------------	----------------	--------------------	-------------------

Manuscript completed in April 2023

The European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

© European Union, 2023



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightsholders.

Cover; Photo by Eva Blue on Unsplash

Executive summary; designed using assets from Freepik.com

Mid-Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III Final report

The report consists of three volumes:

VOLUME I – MAIN REPORT

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Key methodological elements
4. Overview of the EU external action in the area of GEWE¹
5. Main findings
6. Conclusions
7. Recommendations

VOLUME II – CASE STUDY NOTES

1. Introduction
2. Country case study: Palestine²
3. Country case study: Colombia
4. Country case study: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
5. Country case study: Serbia
6. Country case study: Tanzania
7. Country case study: The Philippines
8. Thematic case study: Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs)
9. Thematic case study: Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)
10. Thematic case study: Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS)
11. EU Member State Good Practice case study: Sweden

VOLUME III – ANNEXES

1. Annex 1: Terms of Reference
2. Annex 2: Evidence Matrix
3. Annex 3: Overall GEWE External Policy Framework
4. Annex 4: Complementary information on the methodology
5. Annex 5: Mapping of EU support on GEWE under GAP III
6. Annex 6: E-survey Report
7. Annex 7: Bibliography

¹ Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

² Throughout the report, this designation shall not be construed as an EU recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the EU Member States on this issue

Table of contents: Volume I – Main report

Executive summary	vii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation.....	1
1.2 Evaluation scope	1
2 Key methodological elements	2
2.1 Overall methodological approach.....	2
2.2 Selected case studies	3
2.3 Data collection and analysis	4
2.4 Key challenges and limitations.....	6
3 Overview of the EU external action in the area of GEWE	6
3.1 Overarching GEWE Policy Framework	6
3.2 Mapping of EU spending activities	10
4 Main findings	11
4.1 Evaluation Question 1 - Policy and strategic framework.....	11
4.2 Evaluation Question 2 - Design and implementation of CLIPs	20
4.3 Evaluation Question 3 - Priority area: Women’s Economic Empowerment..	28
4.4 Evaluation Question 4 - Priority area: Women, Peace and Security	37
5 Conclusions	46
5.1 Policy and strategic level	46
5.2 Implementation	49
5.3 Results	50
6 Recommendations	52
6.1 Policy and strategic level	52
6.2 Implementation	55
6.3 Results	57

List of tables

Table 1	EQs’ coverage of the DAC and EC-specific evaluation criteria	3
Table 2	Percentages of gender-marked EU actions and funding for the period 2019-2022, by programming period (MFF) under which they were funded	14
Table 3	Overview of the conclusions	46

List of figures

Figure 1	Evaluation process	2
Figure 2	Selected case studies.....	3
Figure 3	Purpose of the Interim Phase	4
Figure 4	Overview of persons consulted during the evaluation	5
Figure 5	Linkages between EQs, conclusions and recommendations.....	52

List of boxes

Box 1	Gender mainstreaming and the EU's three-pronged approach to GEWE	9
Box 2	Good practice – Clear messaging from the top	13
Box 3	Good practice – Internal training and resources.....	17
Box 4	Good practice – Rotating EU MS Gender Champion	19
Box 5	Good practice – Comprehensive sector analysis	22
Box 6	Good practice – CLIP as a genuine joint programming document	23
Box 7	Good practice – CLIP development building on Gender Focal Points Group	27
Box 8	Good practice – Investment Climate Reform Facility	32
Box 9	Good practice – WEE as a transversal issue	35
Box 10	Good practice – Targeted Private Sector Development Interventions	36
Box 11	Good practice – A comprehensive integration of WPS.....	43
Box 12	Good practice – Women's Advisory Boards.....	45

List of acronyms

AA	Association Agreement
AAP	Annual Action Programme
AD	Action Document
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BS	Budget Support
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFSP	EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plans
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRIS	Common External Relations Information System
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	UN Commission on the Status of Women
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DG	Directorate-General
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG TRADE	Directorate-General for Trade
DP	Development Partner
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAG	External Action Guarantee
EAMR	External Assistance Management Report
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECD	European Consensus on Development
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFI	European Financing Institution
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EGD	European Green Deal
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EU MS	EU Member States
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUR	Euro
EUTF	EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
FGD	Focus group discussion
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments Service of the European Commission
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GAD	Gender and Development

GAP	Gender Action Plan
GC	Gender Champion
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCP	Gender Country Profile
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GM	Gender Marker
GPGC	Global Public Goods and Challenges
HDC	Head of Delegation
HoC	Head of Cooperation
HQ	Headquarters
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IFI	International Financing Institution
IfS	Instrument for Stability
IO	International Organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISG	Inter-service steering group
JC	Judgment Criteria
KIIs	Key informant interviews
LA	Local Authorities
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFF	Multiannual financial framework
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
NAP	National Action Plan
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Aid
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PSD	Private Sector Development
PI	Partnership Instrument
QA	Quality assurance
RIP	Regional Indicative Programme
ROM	Results-oriented monitoring
RSP	Regional Strategy Papers
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreements
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Secretariat General of the European Commission
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SWD	Staff Working Document
TA	Technical assistance
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

THB	Trafficking in human beings
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
WB	World Bank
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WFP	World Food Programme
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU GENDER ACTION PLAN III

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION: to provide an independent evidence-based assessment of the contribution of EU external action support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), including achieved results in line with the objectives of the GAP III.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: all partner countries beneficiaries of EU external action.

TEMPORAL SCOPE: period immediately following the launch of GAP III (January 2021) and all of 2022.

THEMATIC SCOPE: the evaluation focusses on the implementation of GAP III with particular attention to women's economic empowerment (WEE) and Women Peace and Security (WPS).

CONTEXT

Both human rights and gender equality are recognised as fundamental values and principles of the EU, and are enshrined in the EU's treaties and legislation, including those of EU Member States. During the last decades, the EU has been a global front-runner in promoting gender equality as a key political objective of its external action and common foreign and security policy. Key policy documents include, the EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (2016), the European Consensus on Development (2017) and the 2018 first-ever Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). In 2020, the EC presented the EU

Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, and in November of that year GAP III was launched in a Joint Communication with specific objectives and indicators articulated in an accompanying Staff Working Document. The aim of GAP III is to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, by setting objectives and action in six key thematic policy areas: i) gender-based violence; ii) sexual and reproductive health and rights; iii) economic and social rights and empowerment; iv) equal participation and leadership; v) women, peace and security agenda; and vi) green transition and the digital transformation.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation followed a theory-based approach that relied on mixed methods. The design chosen revolved around multiple case studies, with data collection activities being carried out during an interim phase (including desk and field activities). To guide data collection and analysis, the team prepared a detailed evaluation matrix, structured around four evaluation questions (EQs): EQ 1 focused on the policy and strategic framework; EQ 2 focused on the design and implementation of Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs); EQs 3 and 4 focused on selected GAP III key thematic areas: WEE, and WPS.

The combination of tools and methods used for data collection and analysis varied according to the different EQs, but multiple sources were systematically used to triangulate the information collected. These activities included an extensive documentary review, a mapping of EU external action, remote and face-to-face interviews, focus groups and an online survey.

10 CASE STUDIES

Comprising six country case studies, three thematic case studies, and one EU Member State (MS) good practice case study.



6 FIELD VISITS

Held in case study countries: Colombia, DR Congo, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Serbia, Tanzania, the Philippines.



+2.000 DOCUMENTS

Consulted on a range of GEWE and GAP III-related issues, incl. Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs), and GAP III guidance.



1 E-SURVEY, +150 RESPONSES

Targeted at Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Heads of Cooperation at EU Delegations, and GFPs in various EU Headquarters services



4 REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Were organised in 4 regions, each gathering 3-4 GFPs from selected EU Delegations.



+375 INTERLOCUTORS

Were consulted, among EU and EU MS, governments, United-Nations' agencies, and civil society representatives.



CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings presented in the answers to the evaluation questions, six conclusions were reached, grouped in three clusters.

POLICY AND STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS

C1. Strategic importance of GEWE

Building on a positive trend observed during GAP II implementation, GAP III has helped to continue significantly increasing the strategic importance of GEWE in EU external action.

C2. Broader approach to gender equality in external action

GAP III has contributed to follow a broader, deeper approach to gender equality in external action.

C3. A strengthened platform for dialogue in a difficult global context

GAP III was introduced in a context of backlash on GEWE but has (along with CLIPs) provided a strengthened platform for political and policy dialogue.

C4. Persisting internal constraints

As the EU's commitments to GEWE have grown, available financial resources have grown proportionally, but not, so far, the human resources to manage these resources for maximum effectiveness.

IMPLEMENTATION

C5. The role of CLIPs as a first-generation tool

The quality of the CLIPs varies widely, in part because it is a first-generation tool introduced during the transition between two EU Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFFs).

C6. The role of Gender Country Profiles

The quality of CLIPs depends fundamentally on the quality and ownership of the gender analysis (i.e., the Gender Country Profile) that informs them.

C7. CLIP drafting process

The process of drafting the CLIP did not always guarantee its crucial role as the link between the overall GAP III vision, country gender context, identified priorities, and proposed actions.

RESULTS

C8. Women's Economic Empowerment

GAP III has provided greater specificity on what the EU means by WEE, including the important concepts of intersectionality and transformative change. Despite new opportunities for action in areas such as digital transformation and green economy, there is still more continuity than change in terms of what is being supported by EU external action.

C9. Women, Peace and Security

Through the different GAPs, the EU has made increasing commitments to WPS, culminating in its identification in GAP III as a thematic priority requiring a transformative approach. However, the WPS agenda has been lagging behind the broader GEWE mainstreaming agenda.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions reached, ten recommendations were identified, grouped in three clusters.

TRANSVERSAL AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS		
	Recommendation	What should be done?
R1	<p>Matching the EU's GAP III ambition and financial resources with dedicated human resources</p> <p><i>The EU, supporting gender equality mainly through gender mainstreamed interventions, should put in place the human resources at all levels to ensure gender mainstreaming requirements and the OECD-DAC gender marker system are fully understood by all staff.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create full-time positions dedicated to GEWE in key branches, and one per sub-region. • Add clear GFP functions to the job descriptions. • Develop terms of reference for different types of GFP functions.
R2	<p>Managing GAP III change for GEWE with the workforce</p> <p><i>The EU should further train, coach, advise, and motivate its staff to implement GAP III, relying on gender-responsive leadership.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/offer training/coaching for managers, new GFPs and thematic/geographic EU staff on the fundamentals of GEWE, incl. sector-specific. • Systematically entrench GEWE in results-based management and performance monitoring processes.
R3	<p>Clarifying the WPS agenda</p> <p><i>The EU should more clearly define and harmonise the WPS agenda, so it is uniformly understood and embraced across services.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify “who does what” in the EU system and ensure coherence of EU-wide vision on WPS under GAP III. • Progressively increase the in-house WPS-specific expertise.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS		
	Recommendation	What should be done?
R4	<p>Scaling up the analytical backup for GEWE programming</p> <p><i>The EU should strengthen gender analysis at the beginning of each key programming stage (i.e., multi-annual programming, annual programming, and design of specific interventions).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop GAP III guidance notes on all thematic priority areas. • Amend terms of reference (ToRs) and guidelines of Gender Country Profiles and develop ToRs for sector specific gender analysis. • Strengthen involvement of CSOs and EU MS in joint GEWE analysis.
R5	<p>Streamlining and aligning GAP III and the programming process for concrete change on GEWE</p> <p><i>The EU should more strongly align the MFF and GAP III cycles. The EU should also clarify the role of Gender Country Profiles (GCPs) and CLIPs as country-level operational documents strongly linked to Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs), supporting EU programming, acting as a bridge between MIPs and Annual Action Programmes/action documents stewarded by the GFPs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the opportunity of the Mid Term Report of GAP III and Mid-term review of NDICI-Global Europe and other external financing instruments to update CLIPs. • Align GAP III duration with the current MFF (i.e. until 2027) and adopt GAP III successor in 2027, so that new GAP objectives can be incorporated in the next MFF guidance and related instruments. • Complete Gender Country Profiles updates by end of third quarter 2027 to inform both the MIPs and CLIPs design. CLIPs could, in the future, form an annex to the MIPs. • Reinforce the GFP's role as steward of the GCP - CLIP process under management leadership. • Reinforce the GEWE quality assurance of action documents

R6

Clearer positions and messaging

The EU should clarify that, while it wishes partnership and will always seek common ground for cooperation, it will call out and respond to partner country policies incompatible with international law on GEWE and with GEWE values.

- Communicate concomitantly on partner country Government's international commitments and concrete grass-root benefits of GEWE.
- Reflect on GEWE red lines, which would trigger active public diplomacy.
- Identify coalition partners on each GAP III thematic priority area selected in CLIP
- Encourage EU Delegations to formulate key messages in the CLIPs' sections on dialogue and communication.

RESULTS RECOMMENDATIONS

	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>What should be done?</i>
R7	<p>Strengthening the monitoring of GAP III results</p> <p><i>The EU should improve the monitoring of GEWE actions, their utility and their adequacy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematize the monitoring of GEWE financial allocations. • Increase attention to GEWE in the review of blending and other loans and guarantees, as well as Macro-Financial Assistance. • Reconsider introducing specific DAC coding for specific GEWE thematic areas • Ensure that GEWE coding and meta-data in OPSYS enables reliable data extractions • Invest resources to consolidate data on the use of G1/G2 markers in Action Documents.
R8	<p>Strengthening the approach to WEE</p> <p><i>The EU should adopt a more transformative change approach to WEE, including developing a unified and coherent approach to mainstreaming and monitoring.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide widespread training on existing WEE guidance that includes clear definition of what transformative change related to WEE is for the EU, clear theory of change, and good practices that EU Delegations could implement. • Clarify what is required to mainstream and monitor WEE within blending and financial instruments. • Make the EU's support for care economy work more visible. • Conduct a WEE portfolio review to identify where the EU's support is contributing to related transformative change.



1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

Purpose and objectives The main objectives of this assignment are to: i) provide an **independent evidence-based assessment** of the contribution of EU external action support in the policy area of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE), including **achieved results** in line with the objectives of the GAP III, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and other relevant overall policy frameworks for gender equality such as the Agenda 2030, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and ii) based on the above, identify **lessons learnt** and **recommendations** to inform the EU programming process in order to improve the implementation of future EU external action. In particular, this evaluation aims to:

- measure the level of **effectiveness** of mainstreaming GEWE into the 2021-2027 bilateral, multi-country/regional, and thematic programming (including Multi-annual Indicative Programme -MIPs- and, for the Enlargement Region, Strategic Responses);
- assess the **added value** of GAP III requirements for the EU and EU Member States (EU MS) to develop GAP III Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs);
- assess the progress in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on WPS including in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) / Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) context;
- assess **results achieved** on Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE), which is part of GAP III’s third pillar on key thematic areas of engagement;
- identify **lessons learnt** and **good practices** that can help improve the effective implementation of GAP III at global, regional and country level;
- provide **recommendations** to ensure a coherent EU approach on supporting WEE, as well as the effectiveness of the EU actions.

The evaluation focusses on the implementation of GAP III, paying special attention to specific objectives fixed in **part 1 of the 2020 Staff Working Document (SWD)** which accompanied it. It provides an assessment of progress results achieved so far in the GAP III Communication and **part 2 of the 2020 SWD**, with particular attention to **women’s economic empowerment**.

1.2 Evaluation scope

Temporal and substantive scope The **temporal scope** of the evaluation covers the **period** January 2021 (immediately following the launch of GAP III) to December 2022. The **substantive scope** covers all EU external actions covered by the GAP III framework, including spending and non-spending activities related to NDICI-Global Europe, IPA III and CFSP programming under the scope of GAP III. It also includes interventions designed and funded under previous EU external financing instruments so long as their objectives and expected results contribute to GAP III implementation and that they are still under implementation in the time frame mentioned above (01/2021-12/2022) for at least three months.

Geographic scope

The **geographic scope** of the evaluation covers the following regions/sub-regions: the Enlargement, the Neighbourhood South and East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East, South and South-East Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean regions.

2 Key methodological elements

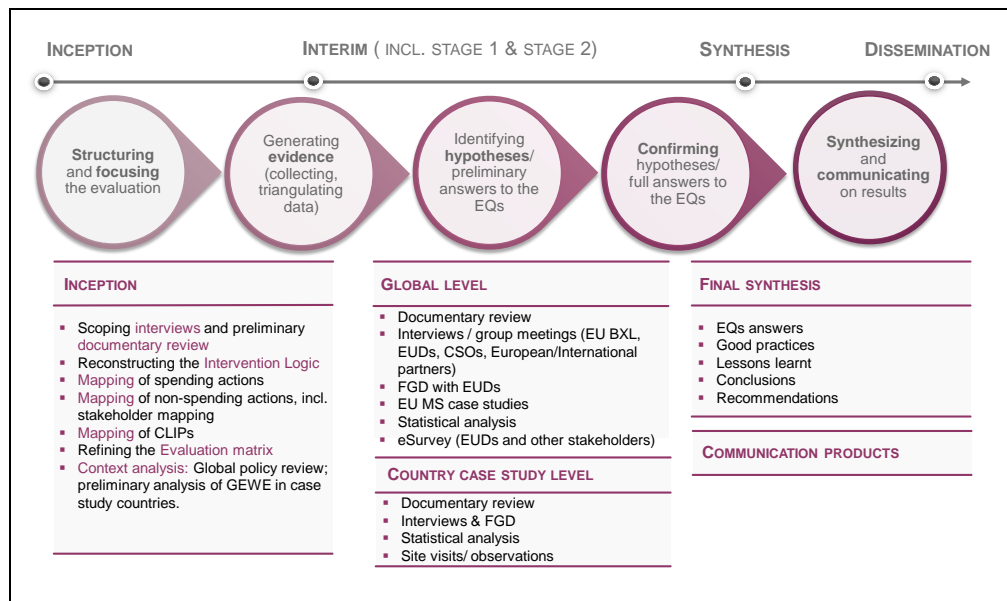
2.1 Overall methodological approach

Evaluation framework

The **methodological framework** was designed to develop an understanding of what works and what does not and under which conditions, so that lessons can be drawn and applied to future support efforts. The study is conducted in three main phases as presented in Figure 1. Data collection and analysis is guided by the EQs and related JCs and indicators (see

Table 1). Data collection activities are carried out mainly during the Interim Phase (including Stage 1 – Desk- and Stage 2 – Field-Phase). The combination of data collection methods and techniques varies according to the JCs, but multiple sources are used systematically to triangulate the information collected. Where possible, the evaluation team has combined the use of qualitative and quantitative data and relied both on primary and secondary data sources while considering resource and time constraints.

Figure 1 Evaluation process



Source: Particip.

A theory-based evaluation

Being a **theory-based evaluation**, this assignment tests the realisation of a Theory of Change (ToC) and the validity of its underlying assumptions. The reconstructed ToC presented in the Inception Report provides a **simplified framework** for the Evaluation. Based on this ToC, draft Evaluation Questions (EQs) presented in the ToR and the preliminary work carried out in the inception phase, four EQs have been formulated to capture the complexity of EU support to GEWE in the beneficiary countries and partners. The evaluation process adopted a systematic approach that used various building blocks to gradually construct an answer to the EQs.

Table 1 EQs' coverage of the DAC and EC-specific evaluation criteria

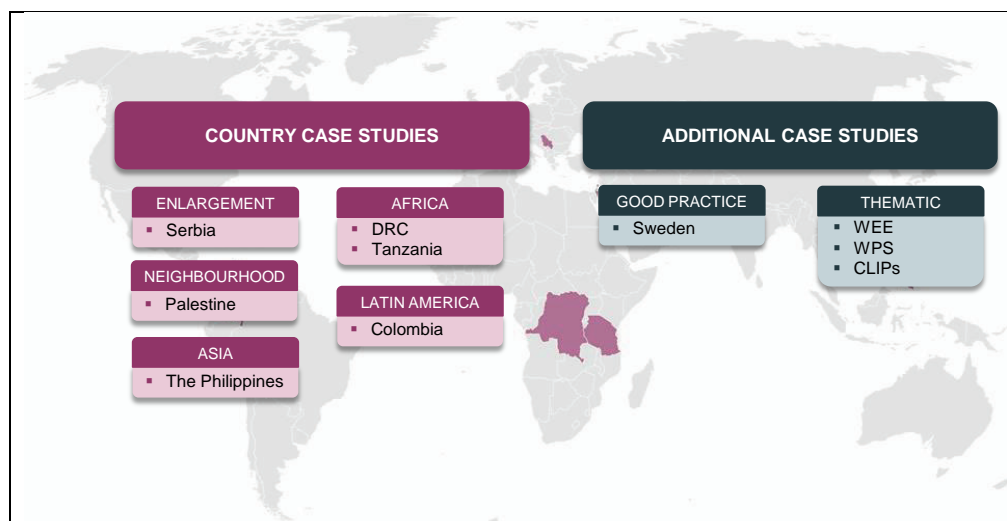
EQ \ Evaluation criteria	Relevance	Coherence	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Impact	Sustainability	EU value added
EQ1 - Policy and strategic framework	●●●	●●●	●●				●●
EQ2 - Design and implementation of CLIPs		●●●		●●			
EQ3 - Priority area 'Women's Economic Empowerment'			●	●●●	●●●	●●	
EQ4 - Priority area 'Women, Peace and Security'			●	●●●	●●●	●●	

●●● Largely covered ●● Covered ● Also covered

2.2 Selected case studies

Selection of case studies

In close consultation with the Interservice Steering Group, the evaluation team selected **10 case studies** (6 country case studies, three thematic case studies and one EU MS good practice case study) – see Figure 2. The evaluation team has adopted a **sampling strategy** aimed at selecting cases which represent the range of EU support to GEWE and the GAP III implementation, looking to ensure a sample that reflects thematic and geographic diversity (at both the regional and the country level). With the aim of collecting additional insights into the implementation of GAP III so far, the evaluation team proposed to additionally carry out three thematic case studies: i) Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE); ii) Women, Peace, and Security (WPS); and iii) Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs).

Figure 2 Selected case studies³

³ Throughout the report, the designation "Palestine" shall not be construed as an EU recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the EU Member States on this issue

Source: *Particip.*

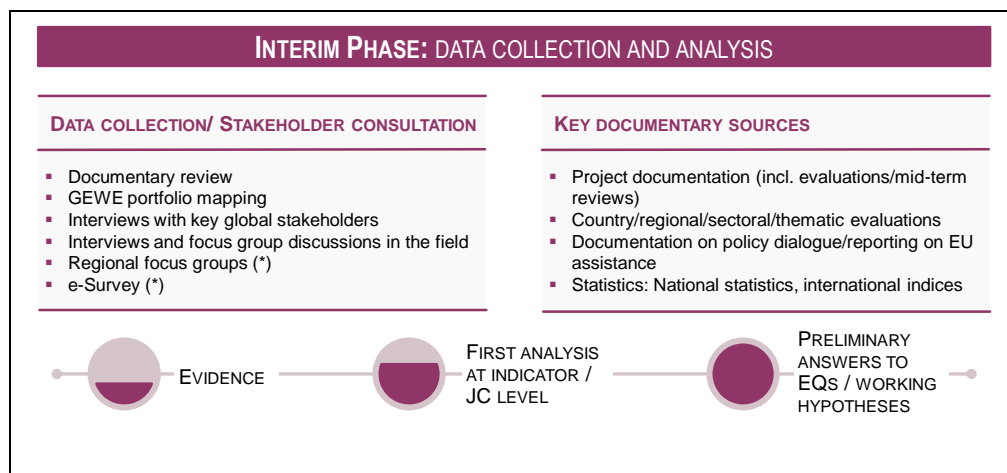
2.3 Data collection and analysis

Data collection methods and sources

During the **Interim Phase**, the evaluation team identified working hypotheses and developed preliminary answers to the EQs, which were subject to checks and testing during the field missions. Evidence came from multiple sources: data from CRIS⁴, primary and secondary documentation, email queries, phone/online and extensive face-to-face interviews. During this period the evaluation team also conducted four regional focus group discussions and developed and launched an e-survey.

The combination of **data collection methods** varied according to the different JCs, but multiple sources were used systematically to triangulate the information collected. Where possible, the evaluation team combined the use of qualitative and quantitative data and relied both on primary and secondary data sources. During all phases, the evaluation team verified that the set of methods and techniques was sufficiently broad to ensure a high level of data reliability and validity of findings and identified gaps to be filled and hypothesis to be tested in the following phase. The approach is summarised in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Purpose of the Interim Phase



Source: *Particip.*

People contacted during the evaluation

In total, **more than 375 people** were contacted in the course of the evaluation and through the different data collection methods/tools, with some individuals having been contacted in more than one opportunity or more than one method. As for **in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD)**, more than **245 people** were consulted through these methods during inception and interim phases (remotely with people in Brussels, face-to-face during the in-country visits and through four online regional focus groups with EUD Gender Focal Points -GFPs-). Overall, key informants at global/HQ level included staff from DG INTPA, DG NEAR, DG ECHO, DG EMPL, DG TRADE, EEAS, FPI, EU MS and civil society organisations (CSOs). People contacted in each of the 6 countries visited included EUD staff, EU MS embassies, DG

⁴ Common External Relations Information System (CRIS) is the information system put in place by the Commission to support the management of external actions.

ECHO staff, government agencies, UN agencies, and civil society representatives⁵, including women's networks. In addition to the field mission activities, the team has made an additional effort during the synthesis stage to incorporate the views of additional stakeholders that for reasons of availability and timing of the missions had not been previously engaged, including networks of CSOs.

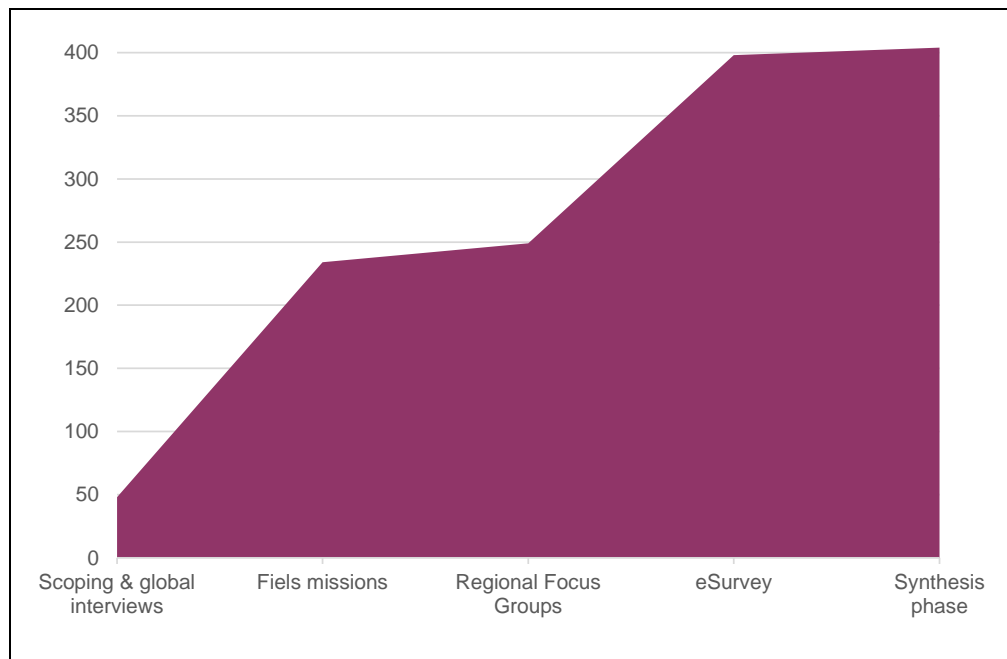
e-survey

As mentioned above, as part of the data collection process, a global e-survey was designed targeting i) Gender Focal Points and Heads of Cooperation at EUDs, going beyond the case study countries, and ii) Gender Experts and Focal Points of various units (incl. DG INTPA, DG NEAR, and other DGs) at the EC as well as in EEAS in Brussels. The e-survey was launched in late November and reminders / follow-ups with potential respondents were implemented to ensure sufficient responses. In total, 434 persons were contacted to reply to the **e-survey** and **150 responses** were received.

Regional Focus Group Discussions

In order to ensure a wide consultative process, during the second half of November 2022, the evaluation team held **four remote focus group discussions** organised in macro geographic regions i) Africa, ii) Latin America and the Caribbean, iii) Asia and Pacific, iv) Enlargement and Neighbourhood bringing together EUD Gender Focal Points (GFP) from selected countries. Each of the Regional Focus Groups gathered approximately 3-4 EUD GFPs from selected countries and was facilitated by the evaluation team's Gender Regional Advisors. A total of **15 GFPs were consulted** during this exercise, which had an approximate duration of 2 hours each.

Figure 4 Overview of persons consulted during the evaluation



Source: Particip.

⁵ At least 65 representatives of local, regional and international CSOs were consulted via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

2.4 Key challenges and limitations

Challenges and limitations of the evaluation Some delays in the initial phase of implementation of this evaluation presented the need to bring forward and overlap certain activities in order to adhere to the initial deadlines set for this assignment. Thus, while much of the desk work took place at the beginning of the Interim Phase, between September and October, it was followed very quickly by field missions, many of which started at the end of October to accommodate the availability of the EUDs concerned.

In this respect, the evaluation team had to make choices about which data collection elements to prioritise and adjust to the availability of various actors in a limited time frame.

The evaluation team faced some delays in gathering relevant documentation from the various EUDs and it was necessary to extend the duration of the desk activities to allow gathering a sufficient number of documents for the analysis. These difficulties did not constitute a major obstacle to the overall identification of emerging findings and hypotheses presented in this report.

In general, the evaluation team does not consider that this evaluation has faced so far major or unusual challenges that would not be encountered in any EU global thematic evaluation.

3 Overview of the EU external action in the area of GEWE

3.1 Overarching GEWE Policy Framework

EU internal policy framework Both human rights and gender equality are recognised as fundamental values and principles of the EU, and are enshrined in the EU's treaties and legislation, including those of EU Member States (EU MS). Equality between women and men is enshrined in Articles 21 and 23 of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** of the European Union⁶, and in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the **Treaty on European Union** (TEU, the Maastricht Treaty⁷).

EU external action policy framework EU development cooperation is guided by the **TFEU Article 208**, which states that the primary objective of its development cooperation policy is the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty. This policy is to be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of EU's external actions.

A number of relevant external action policies also have specific commitments for the promotion of gender equality, and GEWE has also been central to EU relations with third countries. During the last decades, the EU has been a global front-runner in promoting gender equality as a key political objective of its **external action and common foreign and security policy**, aimed at accelerating progress towards global goals, including the SDG at the core of

⁶ Lisbon Treaty Article 21 states that the EU's external action shall be guided by the principle of human rights and fundamental freedoms amongst others.

⁷ EU (2012): Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union. Accessible at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012M%2FTXT2FTXT>

the 2030 Agenda⁸. The 2005 Consensus on development and its successor (2017) both placed gender equality at the core of **sustainable development**.

In 2016, the EU adopted the **EU Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy**,⁹ calling for stronger advocacy, prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), and enhanced participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In the **2017 European Consensus on Development (ECD)**,¹⁰ gender equality is seen as central to achieving the SDGs and is a cross-cutting theme throughout. In 2018, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted the first-ever Conclusions on **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)** and welcomed, in annex, the EU Strategic Approach to WPS, aiming to reaffirm the holistic implementation of the WPS agenda and recognising GEWE as a prerequisite for dealing with the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.¹¹ In 2019 and 2020, the EU adopted large policy packages, including the **European Green Deal**¹² and **2030 Digital Compass**¹³ to support green and digital transformations while promoting 'just and inclusive transition'.

Key features of GAP III

In 2020, the EC presented the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**,¹⁴ outlining a set of key actions and targets including ending gender-based violence and stereotypes, ensuring equal participation and opportunities in the labour market (including equal pay) and achieving gender balance in EU decision-making and politics. **GAP III** itself was promulgated in a Joint Communication in November of that year, with specific objectives and indicators articulated in an accompanying Staff Working Document – hereafter referred to as the '2020 SWD'. Most EU Member States (EU MS) have endorsed the Action Plan in Council Presidency Conclusions in December 2020. Building on GAP II, the 2020 Evaluation and extensive stakeholder consultations, and aligned with the EU gender equality strategy (2020-2025) the new GAP provides a policy framework for the EU to boost its level of engagement around **five new goals**, refer to as 'pillars': i) making EU engagement on GEWE more effective as a cross-cutting priority of external

⁸ In its contribution to the discussions leading up to the Agenda 2030, the EU advocated for inclusion of a stand-alone GEWE goal (SDG 5) as well as SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. More broadly, the EU helped to recognize that strides towards poverty eradication (SDG 1) can only be achieved with the end of gender-based discrimination and ensuring that women and girls have equal economic and social opportunities in life with men and boys.

⁹ http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf EU (2016): Shared Vision, Common Action -: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy. Accessible at: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

¹⁰ Official Journal of the European Union C 46, p. 1, 24.2.2006 EU (2006): Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy. 'The European Consensus'. Official Journal of the European Union C 46, p. 1, 24.2.2006.

¹¹ In 2019, the EU adopted the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security as a guidance plan to implement the Strategic Approach (see <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11031-2019-INIT/en/pdf>)

¹² EU (2019): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The European Green Deal. Accessible at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588580774040&uri=CELEX%3A52019DC06403A52019DC0640>

¹³ EU (2021): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade. Accessible at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC01183A52021DC0118>

¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

action; ii) elaborating a shared strategic vision with EU Member States (EU MS) and partners at all levels, with all EU actors adopting a common approach and prioritizing selected strategic issues at country levels; iii) focusing on key areas of engagement; iv) adopting an EU leadership role by example; and v) putting in place a quantitative, qualitative, and inclusive monitoring system to increase public accountability, ensure transparency and access to information.

The aim of GAP III is to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, by setting objectives and action in **six key thematic policy areas**: i) ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; ii) promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; iii) strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women; iv) advancing equal participation and leadership; v) implementing the women, peace and security agenda, vi) addressing challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation.

GAP III provides a **framework of core principles for addressing root causes of gender inequality** and countering stereotypes and biases. EU action should i) take a gender-transformative approach,¹⁵ ii) address intersectionality of gender with other forms of discrimination,¹⁶ and iii) be human-rights based, acknowledge the principles of non-discrimination and countering inequalities. Key to this evaluation is the recognition of gender equality as a **human right** and the fact that the EU is committed to a rights-based approach in its external cooperation, as outlined in the 2012 Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy.¹⁷

Of particular importance, GAP III commits the EU to the **85% gender mainstreaming target** for all its external actions but does not include the additional target that at least 5% of those actions should have gender equality and women's and girls' rights and empowerment as a principal objective, as it was subsequently adopted in NDICI-Global Europe (Section 2.1.4.2). However, the Staff working document encompasses a specific action about G2 intervention (See action 1.2) with a clear target on the need to design at least one G2 intervention both at country and regional level.

To support partner countries in achieving GEWE objectives the EU pursues a **three-pronged approach**, combining gender mainstreaming, targeted actions and policy and political dialogue, including human rights dialogue. As stated in the GAP III document, gender mainstreaming, by reaching all

¹⁵ A gender transformative approach aims to change gender power relations in a context sensitive way by addressing rigid norms and promoting positive change in the societal attitudes and paradigms that produce discrimination and inequalities.

¹⁶ Intersectionality refers to the interaction of gender with other forms of discrimination by reinforcing vulnerability and disadvantage. Effectively addressing GEWE requires a good understanding of how various forms of discrimination and living conditions affect the implementation of GEWE measures. An intersectional approach therefore goes beyond focusing on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged to include an assessment of how all these factors interact.

¹⁷ Relevant human rights conventions date back at least to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), although the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the key international gender treaty. The adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993 is regarded as a watershed moment for women's rights. Enshrining gender equality as a basic human right paved the way for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the follow-up process and review through the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

external policies and sectors, remains the primary means to achieve gender equality (see Box 1).

On an institutional level, with GAP III, and in view of the significant yet uneven progress under GAP II, the EU also commits to take steps to strengthen further its capacity to tackle issues of gender equality and women's empowerment as a '**collective responsibility**' for all its staff. As put in the GAP III Communication, "*heads of EU delegations must promote gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral part of their appointment and performance assessment while continuing to reinforce an institutional 'gender equality culture'*".

As it proved impossible to reach a consensus on Council Conclusions, Presidency Conclusions were drafted instead, with 24 (out of 27) delegations supporting the text in its entirety as annexed to the document.¹⁸ For further details, see *Annex 2. Overall GEWE External Policy Framework*.

Box 1

Gender mainstreaming and the EU's three-pronged approach to GEWE

As established by GAP II and carried further by GAP III, the EU external action adopts a three-pronged approach to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment – targeted interventions, gender mainstreaming and political dialogue¹⁹. The concept of gender mainstreaming, which corresponds to the systematic integration of gender perspectives (both men's and women's) in policies, institutions and projects/programmes,²⁰ emerged from the 1995 Beijing Programme of Action and may be interpreted as a reaction against

previous approaches that reduced gender to women's issues and often stand-alone and small 'Women in Development' (WID) projects. Following the lead of the 1997 ECOSOC Report, the EU adopted a combination of both targeted and mainstreaming, mixed and adapted as appropriate to the context. The concept has been further brought forward in more recent frameworks, including the +25 Beijing review²¹, the 2019 EU Action Plan on WPS, GAP III and the 2020 EU Gender Equality Strategy.

The role of values

Gender equality is enshrined in a number of international and regional legal instruments, whose implementation in partner countries is supported by EU external action. Gender equality, in addition to being enshrined in international law, is a fundamental value for the EU, to be projected in its external action in line with strategic orientations taken under the previous MFF²² and the "Policy First" principle, which is at the core of the current MFF.²³ There is alignment on GEWE between EU's fundamental values, its policies for global development and enlargement, and international legal instruments to which it

¹⁸ Council of the EU (2020): Gender Action Plan III: Presidency issues conclusions welcoming an ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action. Press release, 16 December 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/16/gender-action-plan-iii-presidency-issues-conclusions-welcoming-an-ambitious-agenda-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment-in-eu-external-action/>

¹⁹ A third strand of the EU's approach runs through policy and political dialogue, including human rights dialogues.

²⁰ This definition corresponds to the 1997 ECOSOC Report of the Economic and Social Council definition of gender mainstreaming which was used by most actors in the following decades. See also: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

²¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

²² See, for instance, EU (2016): Shared Vision, Common Action - A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign And Security Policy.

²³ See EU(2021): Regulation 2021/947 establishing the NDICI-GE instrument.

and most partner countries are signatories. In interviews, many counterparts perceive this alignment, and some therefore refer to “EU objectives on GEWE”, “EU values” and “international standards/commitments” on GEWE interchangeably. In some cases, this has been (mis)construed by political actors as the notion that GEWE is a “Western” (or “foreign”) value at odds with deeply held national or local cultural, traditional or religious values. Universal values are always subject to cultural nuance, but such nuance cannot negate the fact that the EU seeks, through its external action and in line with GAP III (and previous GEWE strategic frameworks), to promote fundamental values, which are linked to core elements of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

3.2 Mapping of EU spending activities

Main results of the mapping of spending activities

The evaluation team carried out a detailed mapping of EU gender-responsive and -targeted support.²⁴ As a first step in the mapping process, the team worked on the identification of interventions in scope, i.e. GEWE-relevant interventions under GAP III. For this, the evaluation team relied on the ‘Gender Equality’ marker. In addition to the use of the markers as an initial source, complementary tasks, particularly text search applied to various fields of the database, were carried out in order to develop the disaggregation of interventions between those to be categorised as WEE and those to be considered as WPS²⁵ – see Annex 5 for further details regarding the methodology of the mapping. Unless otherwise specified, financial figures of EU support mentioned in this section correspond to **contracted amounts** whereas the 85% and 5% targets mentioned above refer to committed amounts.²⁶ The main overall findings include:

- During the period 2019 to 2022, the evaluation team identified a **portfolio of EUR 31 billion** contracted interventions promoting gender equality. Of these, EUR 21.6 billion (70%) have been allocated to country-level support and EUR 9.3 billion (30%) to regional/multi-country interventions.
- **WEE** accounted for 24% of total support to GEWE throughout the period while support to **WPS** represented 3% of the total. Overall, support for WEE grew in the period under study, with more decrease in 2021 and a new peak in 2022.
- When analysing **gender markers** in EU support to GEWE, WEE and WPS, in all cases the proportion of the volume of funds marked as G1 exceeds 80%. In the case of funds marked as G2, these represent 7%

²⁴ This includes, mainly, interventions categorised as with gender as a main objective (i.e., ‘Gender Equality’ marker = 2) or as a significant objective (i.e., ‘Gender Equality’ marker = 1). As explained above, this category may contain interventions identified as Non targeted (i.e., ‘Gender Equality’ marker = 0) but which the team has identified as having a link to GEWE and therefore considered as within the scope of the evaluation.

²⁵ To help in this analysis, the evaluation team developed specific typologies for the WEE and WPS themes, which have been used to guide the keyword search and determine whether or not certain interventions are to be considered as ‘WEE/WPS interventions’. Refer to Annex 5 for additional details regarding these typologies.

²⁶ The evaluation team has carried out the present analysis on the basis of retrieved information on contracted amounts for all EU external actions from EU internal databases (EU Statistical Dashboard). The team has worked on cleaning and structuring the database to try to ensure that the mapping is as accurate and as close to reality as possible and that the margins of error in the calculations remain low.


of the total GEWE portfolio, 10% of the WEE portfolio and 9% of the WPS portfolio.

- The region receiving the highest financial amounts (overall) is **Sub-Saharan Africa** (EUR 11.4 billion, or 37% of the grand total); the one with the lowest regional support is the Americas & Caribbean region (EUR 2 billion from 2019 to 2022, or 7% of the total for GEWE interventions). Regionally, WEE follows a similar trend as the overall GEWE portfolio, but in the case of WPS-specific support, Asia-Pacific gains comparative relevance.
- **National governments and authorities in partner countries and UN and development agencies** are by far the main channels for implementing EU funded GEWE support, accounting for 26% and 25% of the total budget respectively, followed by European Financing Institutions (EFIs) and International Financing Institutions (IFIs). When only assessing the WEE portfolio of interventions, while national governments and authorities in partner countries remain first and UN and development agencies second as recipients of EU support, the relative importance of EU MS grows compared to the overall GEWE portfolio. Further growth in loan finance is to be expected under NDICI-GE and, specifically, the European Sustainable Development Fund Plus (EFSD+) and associated External Action Guarantees (EAG). As for WPS interventions, UN and development agencies are the main actors implementing EU support, followed by international CSOs/NGOs.

4 Main findings

This section presents the responses to the evaluation questions based on the evidence gathered by the evaluation team all along the process.

4.1 Evaluation Question 1 - Policy and strategic framework

<p><i>To what extent have GAP III approach and objectives been integrated into EU strategic programming of its external financing instruments?</i></p>	
<p>Summary answer to the Evaluation Question</p>	
<p>GAP III was deployed in the context of higher GEWE visibility in EU strategic documents (e.g., MIPs, regional and thematic strategies, and internal strategic guidance on thematic areas). This visibility, which emerged under GAP I and GAP II, was significantly strengthened under GAP III.</p> <p>Playing a decisive role was the 85% G1/G2 share target for committed actions in NDICI-GE, which likely owed its adoption to GAP III (the target was already present in GAP II, but not embedded in a financing instrument regulation). Persons interviewed agreed that GAP III targets related to EU financial contributions to GEWE through mainstreaming (G1) or targeting (G2) have helped to increase the volume of funds available for GEWE-oriented actions, as did pressure from Brussels and the more formal framework of GAP III as compared to GAP II. This is also evidenced in the evaluation team's analysis of the inventory of EU spending activities, which reveals that actions funded by the 2021-2027 MFF marked as G1+G2 increased by 45% compared to the previous MFF. GEWE has moved well beyond traditional projects into modalities such as budget support and blending although, regarding</p>	

the latter, at EUD level, concerns are expressed as to how seriously gender will be mainstreamed into actions under EFSD+ and (EAGs). Opinion in EU HQ and the European Financial Institutions is more positive. GAP III has encouraged the emergence of gender champions at all levels, both in Brussels and EUDs, as well as in MS. Team Europe is still in its early stages, but gender appears to be adequately represented in initiatives in areas such as green economy and digital transformation, although these are only recently emerging. In some, but not all countries, CLIPs, discussed in more detail under EQ2, bring EU MS together in a unified approach.

GAP III objectives are well represented in External Financing Instrument regulations and strategic programming documents, but GAP III offers little concrete guidance on how these objectives are to be pursued at country level. This is the function of CLIPs, the subject of EQ2. High-level upstream commitments to GEWE (e.g., at MIP or Programming Framework level) tend, despite the CLIP innovation, to be diluted as programming moves downstream towards actual implementation.

The EU's ability to pursue GAP III objectives is subject to external constraints. Partnership and shared ownership are a cornerstone of the EU's approach to external cooperation. The EU must operate within the prevailing political, social, and cultural context, which ranges, in partner countries, from highly favourable to outright hostile to GEWE. While gender equality is a universal value as reflected in international human rights conventions and relevant law, it is socially constructed at country level, and constructions cover a broad spectrum. Where differing views are an impediment to concrete GEWE-promoting cooperation between the EU and government partners, the EU strengthens gender-related political and policy dialogue, and / or supports civil society organisations that promote gender equality.

GEWE expertise is still developing throughout the EU services – but where it exists, it is in high demand. While the organisational structure based on GFPs has helped, the GFP system is, taken as a whole, weak because it is so variable. GFPs at EUD level, even when professionally qualified (not always the case) are largely dependent on the decision-making authority of the HoC and HoD. Many feel they do not have enough time to deal with GEWE as well as they would wish to. As discussed here and in more detail under EQ2, EUDs commonly rely on external gender expertise for the production of Gender Country Profiles (GCPs) and CLIPs. Properly managed, this can help to build gender capacity in-house, but when it represents mere offloading, it makes no such contribution. Gender responsiveness in EUDs has, however, grown with increasing representation of women in staff and evolution in the attitude of senior management. At Brussels HQ, INTPA G1 does an excellent job of providing guidance, but is itself overstretched. A number of gender experts, e.g., in EEAS are seconded and must juggle multiple responsibilities in addition to gender equality.

4.1.1 GAP III and GEWE at strategic policy level

A more explicit and ambitious policy framework for GEWE ...

GAP III was deployed in the context of generally continuously increased visibility afforded to GEWE from one GAP to the next, among the EU staff, as well as in EU strategic documents at global, regional and country levels. Persons interviewed also expressed the view that GAP III provided a more explicit and ambitious policy framework for GEWE than its predecessors, providing emerging gender champions (staff members committing to supporting GEWE through example, leadership and innovation) within the EU with a stronger policy platform and with a clearer discourse. As a Joint Communication to the EU Parliament and Council (rather than a joint staff working document, as was the case with GAP II), GAP III has gained political importance. As a result, the interviewees and the evaluation team observed the increased leadership on gender equality and its growing importance on the agenda, both in Brussels and some (not all) EU

Delegations. Yet, the effective translation of GAP III into strategic directions at global, thematic, regional, and country level requires decision making and the commitment of human and financial resources: it therefore depends largely on three factors: the general ranking of gender equality among EU priorities; the level of awareness of GAP III throughout the services; and the level of commitment of the senior decision makers (Commissioners, DGs/SGs, Directors, Heads of Units, Heads of Services, Heads of EUDs, Heads of Cooperation) to channel GAP III into implementable decisions through programming.

Box 2

Good practice – Clear messaging from the top

Good
practice



Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy was instrumental in creating an enabling environment for the integration of GAP III within Sweden's external actions, as it reinforced gender mainstreaming approaches in this regard and sent a clear message from the top that promoting gender equality was a Swedish priority both within Sida and the MFA and externally. Internally, for example, Swedish personnel are required to include a gender equality objective in each of the

agency's regional, thematic and country strategies and to report on how these actions have contributed to increasing gender equality, which has ultimately resulted in MFA and Sida staff dedicating the extra time needed to make it work.

While this policy has recently been rescinded, Germany has also recently adopted a feminist foreign policy and France is also moving in this direction in its diplomatic approaches.

Source: Sweden Good Practice case

... accompanied by a highly visible target

Growing prioritisation of GEWE precedes GAP III – both in EU external action, and in the EU Member States' external cooperation. Societal and political changes placed increased demands on the EU. Building on the achievements of GAP I and GAP II, GAP III since the start of its implementation has nonetheless contributed to a significant increase of the EU attention paid by the staff, in all services, and in the reviewed documentation, to gender equality, as confirmed in interviews in headquarters, and in EUDs, where reference was made to stronger pressure and guidance from Brussels to assure that GEWE received adequate attention. The addition of a specific objective within the NDICI-GE instrument played also a strong role: this regulation, adopted shortly after GAP III, incorporated a visible 85% G1/G2 target and contributed to increase EU accountability towards achieving this objective (monitored as other thematic objective climate change, migration etc). EU staff confirmed that GAP III, by highlighting the overall coherence between overarching guiding documents regarding GEWE, made this target more visible and better understood. It is also unlikely that the gender equality target would have been included had it not been for the intensive consultations and preparatory process leading to GAP III: these increased the visibility of this target, linked it to treaty commitments, in a context where a number of priorities competed for targets.

Both number and value of GEWE-

The inventory (mapping)²⁷ developed by the evaluation team for the period 2019-2022 also provides evidence of the impact of GAP III in the number of GEWE-oriented (G2+G1) contracts launched and the volume of funds dedicated to these contracts. Over the period under analysis,

²⁷ Contracts relating to non-programmatic administrative costs, as well as EU-funded humanitarian actions are not included in this inventory.

*oriented
actions rose*

there is a steady decline in the volume and number of gender-blind contracts (G0). Between 2019 and 2022, funding marked as G2+G1 increased by 23% in volume of funds, while decreased by 11% in terms of total number of contracts. In other words, there are fewer contracts in number which are “bigger” on average in terms of funds reflecting efforts to rationalise the number of committed actions.

When analysing the trend from a programming cycle perspective²⁸ (Table 2), a positive trend is observed, with an overall increase in funding and number of G1+G2 contracts funded under the most recent programming exercise (MFF 2021-2027). The increase in the gender marking of the most recent MFF compared to the previous one is most notable when examined in terms of financing volume, with 68,3% of the funds contracted under the new MFF being marked as G1+G2, representing an increase of 22% compared to the previous MFF. See Annex 5 for more details on the Mapping of EU support.

Table 2 Percentages of gender-marked EU actions and funding for the period 2019-2022, by programming period (MFF) under which they were funded

Gender marker (GM)	Funding		Number of contracts	
	GM category / total funding under MFF 2014-2020 (%)	GM category / total funding under MFF 2021-2027 (%)	GM category / total # contracts under MFF 2014-2020 (%)	GM category / total # contracts under MFF 2021-2027 (%)
Main Objective (G2)	4,7%	1,8%	4,6%	3,6%
Significant Objective (G1)	48,3%	66,5%	29,8%	49,9%
Not Targeted (G0)	47,0%	31,7%	65,7%	46,5%
G1+G2	53,0%	(↑) 68,3%	34,3%	(↑) 53,5%

Source: Particip, based on Statistical Dashboard data

Internal awareness of GAP III cannot be taken for granted

Evidence from the e-survey suggests that internal awareness of GAP III should not be assumed. Of 110 EUD staff replying to the survey, 55% felt they were highly familiar of GAP III (“to a great extent”), but that still leaves close to half with limited familiarity. Among the 30 EU Headquarters staff responding, less than half claimed high familiarity. Asked whether GAP III had led to internal processes that are more conducive to promoting GEWE, only slightly less than half of e-survey respondents thought they had, and over a third responded either that they did not know or preferred not to answer. Given a certain amount of positive-response bias, and triangulating with interviews in EUDs, where task managers sometimes admitted they had never read GAP III, the inference is that internal awareness of GAP III is not to be overestimated.

“Programming” means different

The word “programming” is used interchangeably by EU interlocutors (in focus group discussions and interviews) to designate “strategic” programming (through the MIP and associated processes) and “operational”

²⁸ The analysis presented in this table has been carried out considering only the period under analysis in this evaluation (2019-2022), and not the entire MFF period. To make the distinction by MFF period, the team has considered the instruments under which each action/contract was financed. This is on the understanding that, for example, an action contracted in 2021 may have been funded under the MFF 2014-2020 due to aspects related to the timing of programming.

*things to
different
people ...*

programming (through AAPs and Action Documents -ADs-). The EU's strategic programming guidelines and subsequent MIPs are broadly coherent with GAP III, which served as a timely policy framework providing an overall vision. GAP III as a political strategic document recalling that GEWE is an EU policy priority and ambition embedded in External Financing Instruments regulations (e.g., the 85% G1/G2 target in NDICI-GE). GAP III priorities and objectives are also better reflected in the new financing instruments than in their predecessors (particularly NDICI-GE and IPA III, although the IPA III regulations do not include a strategic target. The same is observed in multiannual programming documents such as MIPs and in IPA countries, multi-annual Programming Frameworks. Lower-level, operational country programming documents (e.g., AAPs and ADs) often reflect GEWE as a priority and quote GAP III. CLIPs, as discussed under EQ2, faithfully represent GAP III objectives, transposed to country level.

*... and GAP
III's influence
was stronger
at the
strategic
than
operational
level.*

GAP III did not change the way strategic programming is done – but it is gradually affecting GEWE's relative importance. Over half of EUD staff responding to the e-survey stated that GAP III influenced their programming “to a great extent,” as did just over 40% of the EU HQ staff responding. Among comments received from respondents who found GAP III to be of limited use were time constraints, the existence of already-clear programming guidance, and the view that attitudes towards GEWE were already evolving in a progressive direction even without GAP III. Nonetheless, nearly half of EUD and HQ respondents felt that, following GAP III, GEWE was taken into account “to a great extent” in high-level strategic documents such as MIPs, RIPs, and Strategic Responses.

However, while at strategic programming level, GAP III is used as a reference it gives little guidance how its objectives for GEWE should be pursued further downstream in the programming process. This is partly due to the fact that GAP III arrived (November 2020) late in the 2021-2027 strategic programming cycle. The EU's programming process is long – the length of time from consulting internally and with partners, setting strategic directions and priorities to the design of interventions at country level, and implementation through negotiation and signing of actual contracts, which themselves need to produce results take months, in some cases several years. Of importance is the strength of the EUD-internal review processes (far from uniform across EUDs, especially for GEWE) for more operational downstream programming documents, and this is very dependent on individual EUDs' gender capacity and commitment to GAP III goals. Brussels HQ services dealing with GEWE also do not have the capacity to review all ADs, although there is the goal to do so.

4.1.2 Financial contributions and priorities at country level

*The political
and cultural
context for
GEWE
varied widely
in partner
countries ...*

The EU's ability to implement GAP III priorities at country level depends largely on the national political context and EUD capacity. Cooperation under GAP III, based like all EU external action on the principle of partnership, cannot override government priorities. Therefore, regardless of the efforts made by the EU to embrace GEWE and the GAP III principles and thematic priorities within the EU's institutional environment, external action remains highly dependent on the national political and cultural contexts in the countries where it is active. Globally, partner governments' alignment with GEWE as a value, and with the objectives of the GAP, can range from strong, to moderate,

to weak, to hostile. Some political forces, who may provide crucial support to or lead partner governments, associate their GEWE commitments under international law to “Western” or European values and objectives, often in a negative context. A flashpoint is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ) issues, but backlash is much broader than that. It is much easier to promote gender transformative actions where GEWE is already a priority, even if at times a sensitive one. It is near-impossible where backlash and polarisation are the rule of the day, GEWE being seen as a fundamental social, political, and cultural value to be embraced or rejected. In these contexts, the EU’s strategic positioning on GEWE is double-edged, especially when it is most vocal and where GEWE is presented from a political angle, rather than a way to concretely improve the lives of the citizens. When GEWE goals as embodied in GAP III are not politicised or viewed as foreign values intruding on national identity and way of life, the effectiveness of EU GEWE promotion is enhanced. Where the context for GEWE is hostile, more robust political and policy dialogue and strengthened support to progressive civil society, or to NGOs with a broader focus who are supportive of gender equality, have been appropriate responses, although there is the danger (documented in some CLIPs) that such NGOs are subjected to harassment and violence.

... but country-level programming paid increased attention to GEWE overall.

Country strategic programming (e.g. MIPs) and intervention design (AAPs, ADs) pay greater attention to GEWE under GAP III than they did under GAP II. This is true not only in the fundamental rights and rule of law windows/pillars, where GEWE has long been present, but also in sectors which were less responsive to GEWE in the past; for instance, environment, rural development, and growth and competitiveness through support to Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). There is also progress in the types of approaches, modalities, and delivery methods, which give more space to GEWE outside the traditional project/grant approach. Examples of the latter are GEWE-specific budget support (e.g., Morocco and Tanzania); inclusion of GEWE-specific indicators for budget support disbursement tranches (Tanzania and Colombia), GEWE facilities (Gender Equality Facilities in IPA countries), and blending.

4.1.3 GEWE expertise

There is a scarcity of gender expertise at all levels of the EU.

GEWE expertise is gradually developing throughout the services – and where it exists, it is in high demand. While the organisational structure based on GFPs has helped, GEWE expertise is not sufficient to meet this demand. One of the strongest recommendations of the GAP II evaluation was that the EU needed to increase institutional commitment to GEWE at the top level in Brussels and in EUDs. Yet, GEWE expertise remains scarce throughout the HQ services. It is entrusted to a very small number of specialised professionals, often (e.g., EEAS) relying on external financial resources such as secondments by EU MS which champion GAP III. Small entities with GEWE expertise are present in DG INTPA, DG NEAR (at geographic desk level), and to a lesser extent in thematic DGs. Most of these units consider that their financial resources for operational (project) activities limit their ability to launch meaningful EU-internal or outward-looking initiatives (e.g., capacity building or participation in international platforms and arena).

Where HQ expertise exists, it is in high demand by those higher in the institutional hierarchy when they have a personal or political commitment to GEWE and by their peers and EUD staff (especially GFPs). However, being often responsible for an array of cross-cutting issues, gender experts need to multi-task, which dilutes their capacity to respond to the demand for their advice, contributions or review.

At EUD level, it has repeatedly been reported in this evaluation that a decisive factor is the commitment of top management (HoD and HoC) to gender equality. Cited as a positive factor has been the progressive feminisation of EUD professional staff. The role of the GFP is also crucial. Despite good work from Brussels HQ to build the network of GFPs, using online resources, SharePoint, webinars, guidelines, and direct inputs – all appreciated by the interviewed GFPs – the GFP system, taken as a whole, is still too weak to support GAP III implementation as effectively as intended.

EUD Gender Focal Points are often over-stretched ...

The EUD GFP system is under stress. A quarter of EUD GFPs answering the e-survey report spending 20% or less of their time on gender issues. Over half of the 25 Headquarters Gender Focal Points responding to the e-survey report spending less than 20% of their time on gender issues, and this is confirmed in focus group discussions. EUD personnel acting in this role have limited decision making power, and sometimes little influence. Mirroring what takes place in some EU MS embassies, in some EUDs the position is assigned to a recently arrived (typically young and relatively inexperienced) staffer. Where this is the case, it has a negative effect on GEWE mainstreaming because it reflects poorly on the priority afforded to the issue in the perception of colleagues and counterparts.

Some GFPs explained during focus group discussions and in country case study interviews that their functions as GFP were not reflected in their job description. Unless reflected in job descriptions, GFP tasks are likely low on the incumbents' priority lists, because they are not necessarily part of their individual performance review. In large delegations, several GFPs argued that they would require a 100% full-time equivalent (FTE) to perform their function properly. As a result, and despite their motivation, GFPs often lack the time to engage, coach and support their EUD colleagues to mainstream GEWE. They lack time to self-train and to perform in-depth gender analysis.

However, the evaluation has also found examples of EUDs which benefit from the presence of a GFP who, even with limited decision-making power, is motivated and experienced in the area and has long served in this role. They have institutional memory, respect from their peers, have absorbed the logic of the successive GAPs, and benefit from long-lasting relationships with GEWE champions and partners within the countries, whether in international agencies, national CSOs, or MS embassies. This enables them to contribute meaningfully to GEWE programming, provided EUD leadership is committed. A strong professional relationship between the GFP and HoC, fed by regular exchanges, is particularly important.

Box 3

Good practice – Internal training and resources

Good practice



Education and training has been an important factor in helping Swedish government personnel mainstream

regard. It also increased their basic knowledge of what a gender equality approach in development cooperation

gender and to increase the gender-responsiveness of their programming. At the Swedish MFA and Sida, among other things, it was a requirement for all staff to take a two-hour online course on Sweden's feminist foreign policy. This made a big difference in enabling people to understand what their government expected of them in this

and external relations and actions looks like. This was complemented by the recruitment of gender experts in both MFA and Sida. Sida staff also have access to a specialised gender helpdesk that they can call upon to help them find the best way to integrate gender equality into their specific areas of work.

Source: Sweden Good Practice case

... and relying on external expertise can have positive and negative effects.

To inform their thinking on GEWE, most EUDs' strategy is to procure external expertise rather than to develop it in-house. For example, in Serbia, the Gender Country Profile was entirely drafted by one consultant hired by UN Women under the EU's Gender Equality Facility. In the Philippines, the Gender Profile was outsourced to a University of the Philippines consultant. In Colombia, GEWE mainstreaming in rural development action has been entrusted to the Italian development agency as implementing partner. Such outsourcing has plusses and minuses. On one hand, the strategic goal of mobilising high-level specialised expertise and external/neutral consultation of stakeholders can be a sound reason for commissioning the preparation of Gender Country Profiles from consultants or UN Women. Bringing in high-quality external expertise to work with EUD staff can be helpful when it adds value to the EUD's own work and contributes to forming capacity (as was observed in Colombia, for instance). However, simply offloading gender analysis to external experts can crowd out rather than contribute to the development of in-house expertise; particularly the capacity needed for effective GEWE mainstreaming. What has been observed in some case study countries is that, due to lack of institutional capacity within the EU Delegation, many processes related to country-level GEWE programming are delegated to service providers or implementing partners (in Serbia, for example, Action Fiches are screened for GEWE by UN Women, not by the EU). It is good that EUDs are able to build on existing partnerships and that there is flexibility, but outsourcing as practiced is often due more to the lack of in-house capacity than to a conscious strategy.

4.1.4 Team Europe and EU MS coordination

Team Europe approaches for gender equality appear most common at the opposite ends of the context spectrum ...

In some cases, the EU has taken the lead to organise GEWE coordination platforms with EU MS and other like-minded donors and international partners. However, such initiatives were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic – as every actor struggled to maintain their level of activity, coordination platforms, especially those on cross-cutting issues such as GEWE, were the first ones to be postponed or abandoned. In a continuum running from extremely challenging to extremely conducive partner Governments on GEWE, genuine Team Europe joint programming is usually observed where challenges or opportunities are strongest, whereas intermediate situations seem to trigger less intense joint approach. A particularly challenging context (e.g., Myanmar) incentivises the EU and EU MS to plan, fund, implement, and communicate jointly, as they reinforce one another in a political landscape which is hostile to GEWE and generally to human rights-oriented efforts. On the other end, a particularly like-minded Government on GEWE (e.g., Colombia) encourages a Team Europe approach as a multiplier to progressive Government policies, which led in that

case to the retrofitting of an existing Trust Fund with strong GEWE components into the foundations for joint work as Team Europe.

... and were most common in WEE, especially green economy and digital transformation

CLIPs (the subject of EQ2), because their drafting involves consultations with EU MS (as well as other stakeholders), should encourage joint actions. The CLIP is sometimes used as a Team Europe document, but the understanding of the CLIP's function in relation to Team Europe varies widely: the CLIP is rarely understood as a joint, committing strategic document for the EUD and EU MS; most often it is understood as an EUD document channelling the outcomes of EU MS consultations. Nonetheless, in our sample of 27 CLIPs²⁹, 13 of the 27 CLIPs sampled were used as vehicles to agree on one or more Team Europe Initiative(s) (TEIs) gender-marked G2 or G1. These almost all relate directly or indirectly to WEE, as they are usually dedicated to supporting women's gainful employment or entrepreneurship. The majority (seven) envisage WEE through support to green economy or digital transformation, whereas four concern WEE in other areas. The remaining two concern SGBV and WPS. In addition, seven CLIPs in our sample foresee a Team Europe approach to policy dialogue and/or public diplomacy, including some joint communication initiatives and events on GEWE.

Box 4

Good practice – Rotating EU MS Gender Champion

Good practice



In **The Philippines**, the emergence of a designated Gender Champion (GC), rotating among EU MS Ambassadors and for which the EUD GFP (as well as the GFP in the relevant embassy) serves as a sort of secretariat, has proven catalytic in making the CLIP a unifying document to inform political dialogue. The presence of the GC gives strength to an EU MS GFP group, broadening its role beyond that of an information-sharing

mechanism. The GC brings gender into the monthly meetings of Heads of Mission (among whom interest in gender issues is variable) and, in dealing with Government, the presence of an Ambassador lends weight. The choice of the GC, which rotates every year is done through informal consultations and, in the end the GC is a volunteer.

Source: *The Philippines case study*

The impact of the “financialisation” on the pursuit of GAP III objectives is debated.

A critical aspect of the Team Europe approach is that it combines the efforts of the EU and international, typically European, financial institutions, with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) being the most prominent of these, but national development finance institutions also playing a significant role. In this context of “financialisation” of EU external action, i.e., the growing role of blending, budgetary guarantees, loan guarantees, etc., under EFSD+ and EAGs, concerns emerge on how effectively GEWE is being mainstreamed in these instruments. EU HQ staff stressed the need to focus efforts on putting a systematic process in place to

²⁹ The sampled list of CLIPs includes Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Colombia, DRC, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Guinea Conakry, India, Kenya, Kosovo, Moldova, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela. The selection was based on information currently available to the evaluation team, who has considered the following criteria: i) whether the country CLIP included a priority on WEE; ii) whether the country CLIP included a priority on WPS; iii) whether gender was included as a sector or subsector in the country MIP; iv) whether the G2 action(s) in the country could be considered as strong/ ambitious; and v) whether the country was identified by key informants interviewed.

ensure that gender equality is considered seriously in blended finance options and guarantees, in line with the clear directions outlined in GAP III and guidance provided by the EU to the EIB and other EFIs, plus the EFIs' own gender strategies and action plans put in place in recent years. The evaluation team observed strong commitment of relevant EU personnel at HQ to examining gender and the human rights-based approach mainstreaming in the sector affected by the loans and guarantees. Yet, EUD cooperation operational managers interviewed in some case study countries, accustomed to more traditional approaches, express concerns that gender may take a backseat as “bankability,” “hurdle rates,” and the like take their place along development criteria such as vulnerability, No One Left behind, etc. Some were also concerned that they lacked expertise and advice to develop meaningful gender-sensitive (not to mention gender transformative) indicators for such operations. It is indicative that, of 150 respondents to the e-survey (HQ and EUDs combined), less than 10% responded that gender was mainstreamed “to a great extent” in blending and EFSD+ operations and 40 percent either answered “Do not know” or “Prefer not to answer.”

4.2 Evaluation Question 2 - Design and implementation of CLIPs

<p><i>To what extent have the design and implementation of the CLIPS strengthened i) the programming, design and monitoring of EU support to GEWE at country level and ii) related political and policy dialogue?</i></p>	
<p>Summary answer to the Evaluation Question</p>	
<p>CLIPs and Gender Country Profiles (GCP) (the latter initiated under GAP II) constitute progress for GEWE mainstreaming and targeting. With CLIPs, messaging on GEWE in policy and political dialogue (and opportunities to do so) has become stronger under GAP III than it was under GAP II. However, despite the comprehensive guidelines received from Brussels HQ, CLIPs vary widely in form, content and quality.</p> <p>Much depends on whether the GCP was available to feed into the CLIP. In at least one case study country, the CLIP, the Gender Country Profile, and the MIP were drafted at much the same time. To judge from country case studies, in some countries, CLIPs were drafted in a joint process including EU MS, civil society, and Government; in others they were not.</p> <p>In a number of countries, EUDs retained external expertise to produce GCPs and CLIPs, a double-edged sword, as discussed under EQ1 and further below. When external experts worked closely with the GFP, even perhaps integrating a training and capacity building aspect into their work, the use of external expertise was a sound strategy. In other cases, the commissioning of external expertise was simply a means of offloading a task that the EUD itself did not have the capacity to undertake credibly.</p> <p>Awareness of CLIPs is variable. In some case study countries, EU MS and civil society were fully aware of the CLIP and, at least in the case of EU MS, had a high degree of ownership. Of concern, the partner least likely to be aware of the CLIP and to feel a sense of ownership was the Government. Variable CLIP awareness of and buy-in is even observed at EUD level, where the degree of staff involvement in the drafting process ranged from low to high.</p> <p>The CLIP template indicates that CLIPs serve “both the political and the programmatic commitments for gender equality.” Yet, it is still uncertain where CLIPs stand on the spectrum between (i) an aspirational statement of objectives and priorities in line with GAP III; i.e., a general country-level vision (the lack of which was pointed out by the evaluation of GAP II) and (ii) a guide to operational programming and monitoring; “a collective political</p>	

and operational EU approach to GEWE in a specific country,” as it was put in a INTPA G1 Webinar for EUDs. The country case studies show that the EUDs have served the first function well; less well the second.

CLIPs have encouraged the mainstreaming of gender in line with the NDICI-Global Europe gender target. The drafters of ADs have strong incentives to mainstream GEWE in order to receive a G1 gender marker and the target has encouraged gender-targeted G2 actions. At the same time, gender mainstreaming still requires strengthening. A review of ADs shows that the gender marking system is not universally understood, and gender targets give rise to “gender significance shopping.” As programming proceeds downstream from the strategic MIP to AAPs and ADs to detailed actual project design and eventually contract negotiation, there is the possibility of “gender dilution.” A classic case would be when ambitious, high-level narrative gender goals end up being translated into indicators such as “Availability of gender-disaggregated data improved.” In some EUDs, the active role of the GFP discourages this; in others, the dilution factor is evident, despite the detailed guidance documents (guidance notes, model terms of reference) developed by DG INTPA. The existing guidance documents may not be sufficiently used, or uniformly applied by the EUDs, and by the consultants contributing to ADs’ development. Commission services responsible for GEWE have the ambition, but not yet the capacity, to review all ADs and ensure harmonious application of the gender markers.

CLIPs have provided a useful resource for EUD political sections as a source of priority gender issues to be raised in dialogue. It must be recognised, though, that GEWE is not often among the most pressing political issues to be discussed. CLIPs have also proven useful for EU MS embassies, where GFPs use CLIPs to brief their Ambassador. In one case study country, the Philippines, the emergence of a designated Gender Champion, rotating among EU MS Ambassadors, has proven catalytic in making the CLIP an unifying document to inform political dialogue. There is no doubt that CLIPs have raised the profile of GEWE overall and have provided a strong platform for EU gender communications and messaging.

As also discussed under EQ1, a high-level political dilemma that cannot be solved by GAP III itself but should be duly considered when drafting/revising CLIPs is how to advance GEWE, including with an intersectional approach, in particular with consideration to the different political, social, cultural, and religious contexts in the respective countries.

The flashpoint is the intersectional approach in regards to LGBTIQ, but the issue is broader. In many EU partner countries, there is significant resistance to what is viewed as the import of what are characterised as foreign views and values. This applies even to the IPA region, with countries’ commitment to the EU acquis. Gender equality is a universal human right and enshrined in customary international law, including conventions and treaties to which most countries are committed; but gender aspects of these commitments, sometimes made under previous, more progressive governments, are increasingly contested in many partner countries.

4.2.1 Design of Gender Country Profiles (GCPs) and Country-level Implementation Plans (CLIPs)

CLIPs, an important step forward in pursuing GEWE

CLIPs are a significant step forward in ensuring that GAP III objectives are pursued and increasing the likelihood that results are achieved. All examined CLIPs (N=27) faithfully reflect the thematic priorities of GAP III and offer the opportunity to choose among them, focusing on the most relevant. All CLIPs reviewed adhere to the guidelines, but range in the evaluation team’s judgment from poor to adequate to excellent quality.

Quality begins with the Gender Country Profile.

The quality of the CLIPs depends largely on the availability, ownership and the quality of country specific gender analysis (gender country i.e., the Gender Country Profile), meant to underpin all other sections, and providing the basis for translating GAP III objectives, including transformative change, into implementation. In this sense, the CLIP is inseparable from the GCP, which serves as a basis for the CLIP's analytical section. Much depends upon whether or not the EUD was able to update its GCP prior to drafting of the CLIP; as when this was not done, some EUDs did not have the capacity to assess which GAP III strategic priorities should be mainstreamed into the country programme or how this could be done effectively. In most CLIPs examined, the context section is a general snapshot, a factual overview of the current GEWE situation, rather than a dynamic analytical section feeding directly into the selection of thematic areas and the design of actions. However, ideally, the choice of CLIPs priority areas – both in terms of mainstreaming and gender specific interventions – was expected by headquarters to stem from a cross examination of the GEWE situation, and of potential future areas of EU interventions. As noted under EQ1, EUDs frequently externalise production of the GCPs which inform CLIPs, CLIPs themselves and, sometimes, ADs which reflect CLIPs. This could have played a role in the separation between the analytical section of CLIPs (largely based on GCPs), and the priority areas. The up- and downsides of importing external expertise have been discussed above under EQ1.

Box 5

Good practice – Comprehensive sector analysis³⁰

Good practice



The **CLIP in Colombia** contains a strong gender analysis, both general and under the respective GAP III selected areas.

To produce this analysis, the EUD in Colombia prepared its CLIP in-house through a co-creative process strongly backed by the Head of Cooperation and with the participation of all task managers, coordinated by the GFP.

The process was made possible because the EUD developed their own guide for gender analysis about the MIP priority areas prioritized in the CLIP under the selected GAP III thematic areas. They then shared this guide across other EUDs in the region of their own initiative.

Source: Colombia and CLIPs case studies

External consultation processes, hence, inclusivity, promoted ownership in some cases but not in others.

The drafting process for GCPs and CLIPs varied. There is a general acceptance that there should be a participatory, consultative process to inform both documents, but especially the CLIP. Like the Commission's February 2022 study on CLIPs, the evaluation team found that all CLIPs in the sample that they examined (N=27) followed the guidelines, in that they all rest on some consultations, which inform the assessment of the country GEWE context in terms of current situation and actions of various stakeholders. Concurring with the EC analysis, the CLIPs sampled by the evaluation team found that EU MS and CSOs were the most often consulted partners. However, the EUD was not always in the lead for these consultations. In some cases, an implementing partner (e.g., UN Women) was entrusted with this role on behalf of the EU. A risk in such situation is that

³⁰ EUD Nepal plans three sector GEWE analysis for its most pressing and relevant priorities: nutrition, forestry and WASH. EUD Serbia's Gender Country Profile has strong analysis under the GAP III thematic areas: this sector analysis was done by a consultant hired through a UN Women-implemented EU project, and is reflected in the CLIP, but it was not led within the EUD.

stakeholder perceptions are blurred; that some stakeholders associate the CLIP with the partner (such as the UN), not the EU and GAP III. Consultation took place sometimes with Government, sometimes with EU MS, sometimes with combinations of actors including civil society and international NGOs. EU MS were consulted as per the GAP III guidance, in different ways and at different times in the preparation and drafting processes. The choice of actors consulted has occasionally triggered misunderstandings, for instance when some CSOs at the local or national level were not included. Finally, the consultation base was rarely the same for the GCP and for the CLIP in a given country (i.e., the EUD consulted one set of actors for the GCP and a different set of actors for the CLIP). As a result, and also because some EUDs treated their CLIP as an internal document (often related to the sensitivity of the topic in a given country), the EU's partners and stakeholders were not always aware of both documents. Based on case study countries, sometimes only a few promoters / champions of gender progress outside the EU family (e.g., GEWE-focused NGOs, UN Women) have that awareness. It is also not always the case that the responsible government Ministry or agencies are aware of the CLIP (e.g., Occupied Palestinian Territories). In short, there is space to increase the ownership and visibility of the GCPs and the CLIPs (both internally within the EUD, Team Europe and external partner governments, CSOS, and other development partners).

The stresses on the EUD GFP system were evident in CLIPs.

In EUDs in the case study countries, where the CLIP is produced in-house, the lead pen author is typically the GFP, although all EUD's sections and EU MS were invited to comment. The CLIPs' production was timed to match the preparation of the MIPs, and CLIPs which clearly tie GAP III thematic areas with MIP sectors, sub-sectors and indicators, are also most likely to review GEWE stakeholders, identify clear messages, and strongly uphold GAP III principles. In some countries, the CLIP preparation also coincided with the preparation of the Civil Society Roadmap. When these processes were strictly running in parallel, EUDs' human resources were sometimes stretched – in which case the MIPs took precedence, and GFPs were sometimes left alone to produce the CLIPs, with leadership and sector leaders only reviewing. Services at HQ level were available to answer questions on the CLIPs but according to interviews with EUDs and headquarter staff, had limited capacity in terms of available human resources to do so. They did not proactively review all CLIPs and did not comment on all CLIPs or on all GCPs, which can be very long documents.

Box 6

*Good practice – the CLIP as a genuine joint programming document*³¹

Good practice



The **CLIP Morocco** is a strong programming document, and a genuine joint EU/ EU MS document. It was approved by all EU MS' Embassies (except Hungary and Poland) as a Joint Response document and, to the team's knowledge, it is the

This CLIP is owned jointly by the EUD and all EU MS, represented by their Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions. This was made plausible because:
1. Morocco is a country where virtually all EU MS have diplomatic

³¹ Other EUDs have used a similar approach to the CLIP as a joint programming document (e.g. Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda), or supported it with a robust results framework (e.g. Guatemala), but none to that level. It should be noted, however, that the CLIP Morocco does not feature the most elaborate analytical section: instead, it refers to a Joint GEWE analysis implemented jointly by the EUD and EU MS.

first of its kind exclusively dedicated to GEWE.³² The CLIP includes several annexes, including: i) a comprehensive review of all GEWE actions; ii) a very precise results and monitoring framework, including a monitoring plan with indicators, and a “labour division”; iii) a Roadmap for Joint Political dialogue and public diplomacy on GEWE, identifying priorities and responsibilities among these stakeholders.

1. representation, and many have cooperation activities;
2. The State has a clear GEWE policy and institutional framework;
3. The EUD in Morocco is large and well-capacitated;
4. There is a practice of policy dialogue and planning on GEWE, thanks to an existing GEWE Budget Support Operation.

Source: CLIPs case study

In EUDs where the CLIP preparation was outsourced, the GFP was in charge of the process and ultimately responsible for content – subject to clearance by the senior staff. As discussed under EQ1, use of external expertise is not necessarily a bad thing if there is accompanying capacity building within the EUD; it is offloading that is of concern. Case studies and focus group discussions with GFPs show that the EUDs which invested their own human resources, with strong leadership backup, are the ones that produced the strongest documents.

As with external consultations, EUD internal consultations varied.

Within EUDs, the evaluation team observed mixed co-creative processes for the CLIPs; some involving a wide range of EUD staff with substantive input; some few with little. Because EUD task managers and senior management were typically busy with the programming cycle and implementation of activities, their input into the CLIP was often limited. They had, in addition, limited knowledge of the GCP.. Some smaller EUDs expressed the view that their size made co-creation and buy-in easier. As a FGD participant put it, “in small delegations, it is easier for the GFP to reach out to other colleagues.” When Delegations have large sector teams, GFPs may encounter more resistance to GEWE mainstreaming and contribution to the CLIP, coming from busy or more distant sector leaders, especially in sectors which are often (wrongly) perceived as requiring less GEWE mainstreaming (e.g., public finance, energy, connectivity, transport, business environment). Inclusive or co-creative analytical processes in drafting the CLIP, especially within the EUD staff, yield stronger EUD-wide ownership – which in turns conditions the implementation of the CLIP objectives and the effective mainstreaming of GEWE in all actions of the EUD.

4.2.2 Contribution of CLIPs to gender mainstreaming

e-survey results show enthusiasm for CLIPS ...

The e-survey administered for this evaluation shows that the CLIP contributes to better gender mainstreaming: 62% of respondents consider that the CLIP helped gender mainstream the project modality - either a lot (35%) or to some extent (27%). Budget support action design seems to benefit less from the CLIP: 29% of respondents considered the CLIP helpful to mainstream gender in budget support operations – to a great extent 11%, and to some extent 18%.

... but probing interviews

Probing these aggregate numbers, however, focus group discussions and case study country interviews reveal a wide range of opinions regarding CLIPs’ contribution to more and better gender mainstreaming

³² Though reminiscent of other joint programming documents, such as the Joint analysis conducted in Moldova in 2018, it is to the team’s knowledge the first of its kind exclusively dedicated to GEWE.

and focus group discussions are more nuanced ...

and targeted actions. In the evaluation team's judgment, the main reason for widely varying opinions on the usefulness of CLIPs lies in the unevenness of CLIPs themselves. While all draw upon GAP III objectives and suggest actions to outline strategic programming and policy approaches, many do not yet fully serve their purpose as "a collective political and operational EU approach to GEWE in a specific country" (as it was put in a CLIP Webinar for EUDs). Systematic analysis of the CLIP documents shows that they do not always provide sufficient details regarding how the EUD's strategic vision on GEWE (expressed by the choice of GAP III thematic areas), will be operationalised through cost actions or dialogue. Interviewees and focus group participants were also concerned that the CLIP guidance provides little orientation on how to monitor.

... because EUDs would like CLIPs to also address how to operationalise the GAP III vision

This raises the issue of what CLIPs were intended to provide – a general country-level vision (the lack of which was pointed out by the evaluation of GAP II), or a roadmap for country-level operational programming on GEWE. The guidance provided by DG INTPA envisaged CLIPs as providing both: the CLIP template indicates that CLIPs serve "both the political and the programmatic commitments for gender equality." This is also coherent with the contents of the training on CLIPs delivered to EUDs. This means that the CLIPs should not only articulate a general vision on GEWE (by selecting among the six thematic areas of GAP III), but also outline how the EUD will implement this vision through concrete future actions. Yet, out of our 27 sampled CLIPs, 15 simply report ongoing actions (or pending actions already planned before GAP III): in these EUDs, the CLIP was used to articulate thematic priorities chosen from GAP III, but not to outline ways to operationally implement this vision. Four of the reviewed CLIPs present planned actions under the new MIP (not always clearly connected to the thematic priorities selected), six present both, and three present none. All in all, a bit more than a third of the CLIPs reviewed present concrete future actions for GEWE.

Most CLIPs reviewed were stock-taking exercises ...

Several case study countries confirm that the CLIP was mostly used as a mapping / stock-taking exercise. In most cases, it was not used as an opportunity to feed into programming, and/or make new commitments for GEWE results based on new evidence, analysis and consultations. As a consequence, most CLIPs present a mismatch between a future-oriented section on thematic priorities, and an often past-oriented section on major G1/G2. This does not help structure the pursuit of specific GAP III goals, nor orient the future monitoring of the CLIP. On the contrary, the few CLIPs which, going beyond the guidelines, also feature a results framework (e.g., Morocco, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda), in some cases with indicators, already display strong institutional capacity to monitor the CLIP. This is a good practice, but such detailed and comprehensive framework may not be feasible for all EUDs.

... which is largely due to the fact that they are a first-generation tool that was launched during the

The evaluation team sought to explore why CLIPs were used to map and report existing actions, rather than to program operationally for concrete future results. As highlighted by several FGD participants and some interviewees in case study countries, in practice, the CLIPs are not the document carrying operational decision-making to respond to the GEWE context: for this, AAPs and ADs are the key. But the programming cycle is such that during the first year or two after GAP III adoption (and rollout of the CLIP guidance), EUDs implement mostly pre-GAP III actions. Therefore, the effects of the CLIPs on programming will only be visible once the majority of

transition between MFFs.

actions under the current MIPs are developed and deployed – a process which is only just starting, with the start of implementation of the 2021 AAPs. Therefore, in some countries, there are discrepancies between: i) the stated thematic priorities and objectives (chosen among the six GAP III thematic priorities); and ii) the concrete actions/programmes described in the CLIPs. Typically, the first are future-oriented. They state the intentions of the EUD until the end of the current multiannual programming document (at least 2025, end date for GAP III normally). As to the second, among case study countries, four CLIPs reflect past programming: they report on ongoing or about-to-start actions, most of which were programmed under GAP II and under the previous multiannual programming document – therefore not inspired by GAP III and the EUD-selected GAP III thematic priorities. Only DRC and Tanzania CLIPs announce G2 actions. In other words, the CLIPs are not usually a tool contributing to concrete decision-making.

Despite guidance, there is still lack of clarity at EUD level about the gender marker system...

An evident achievement of GAP III is that upstream staff (task managers and Heads of Cooperation) perceive a strong incentive to achieve at least a Gender Marker G1 score (containing gender-significant aspects; calling for gender equality to be mainstreamed). That is probably the cause of the largely favourable attitudes reported in the e-survey. However, many responsible EUD staff interviewed admit that, despite guidance “from Brussels”, they are unclear on how much gender relevance is necessary for a G1; how to estimate what proportion of an action contributes to GEWE, and whether the contribution should be gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, or gender-transformative (concepts often inadequately understood despite guidance). Given the target, they understandably apply it liberally. This phenomenon we call “gender significance shopping.” Some interviewees report that G1 and even G2 (gender-targeted) markers are still incorrectly applied in ADs. For instance, some actions with circumscribed gender sensitivity can be labelled as G1, which arguably was not the purpose of the target. In addition, as the AD moves downstream towards projects, in some EUDs, there is a phenomenon of “gender dilution.” This means that GEWE elements are often, albeit not always, added as afterthoughts, are not adequately resourced, and are not monitored using meaningful indicators. These elements are at times rather with weak ones having to do merely with gender balance, availability of sex-disaggregated data, etc.

... a problem which can be addressed by stronger review and QA.

In EUDs with a particularly empowered GFP, QA is enforced all along the stream from an AD to a project. But not all EUDs have strong gender capacity. More typical is that EUD staff analyse the gender aspect of interventions after they have received the initial project proposals, too late in the process for this analysis to be useful. The HQ level Quality Review process also does not yet have the capacity to systematically address gender in project proposals, although the goal is to eventually be able to review all ADs. At EUD level, weak gender analysis is due in part to a lack of understanding of why it is important to conduct the gender analyses prior to the project design or as an essential part of that process, and in part to a lack of time and structured process to mainstream gender in programming. EUD officials noted, for example, that there is a need for more than instruction notes (which they find tend to be shelved) and for a systematic process to analyse proposals from a gender equality perspective in the EU's Quality Review process. Currently the Quality Review teams in the EUDs do not always have gender expertise. In addition, the quality review performed by the country teams in headquarters, although supported by the services

with gender expertise, intervenes very late in the process of action document design, and the EUD officials interviewed indicated that they have never seen comments on gender regarding project proposals from the Quality Review team in Brussels. As one put it, “In words we are very good – but in methodologies and capacity we are behind.”

4.2.3 Integration of gender perspective into EU political and policy dialogue

CLIPs have contributed significantly to EU public diplomacy.

Thanks in part to CLIPs, messaging on GEWE in policy and political dialogue (and opportunities to do so) have become stronger under GAP III than it was under GAP II. The same was true of public diplomacy and project communications. The e-survey shows that 59% of EUD respondents consider that the CLIPs facilitated GEWE mainstreaming in communication products and events. 50% believe that since the rollout of GAP III (and the CLIPs), dialogue on GEWE with institutional actors has become stronger (about 40% think it remained the same). Similar figures are found regarding dialogue with the civil society, including women’s rights CSOs. Interviewees in the case study countries and FGD participants explained, and a review of EC reports, press statements, event observation, publications, communication products confirmed, that, as the CLIP consultation and dissemination process have had positive effects on EUD’s GEWE messaging. The messages are more harmonised, more constant across events, sectors, and as time passes. GEWE has become an issue more visibly championed by the EU, with GEWE messages stronger and more frequently issued. This is further in line with the EU Global Gateway, which promotes a partnership based on values – among them gender equality. EUDs have become more vocal because, by preparing the CLIP, they gained a stronger sense of responsibility for GEWE. Messages have become clearer, and more grounded in evidence, because they rely on the CLIP as an approved country-specific overarching document on GEWE.

CLIPs have strengthened EU political dialogue ...

While gender is seldom a headline topic in political dialogue, it is broadly present, and Political Section staff interviewed were pleased that CLIPs provide gender guidance and talking points. This important CLIP function is also diffusing to EU MS embassies. GFPs in embassies representing EU MS favourable to GEWE report that CLIPs provide them with brief talking points to be passed to their Ambassadors. Gender objectives and priorities, within broader promotion of international human rights standards, are being communicated through more varied channels than before: public diplomacy (press releases, public statements, events, communication products, etc.), public reporting (EC annual reports, publications, public reports on ongoing actions), policy dialogue (especially in the context of Budget Support, as well as high-level technical assistance), and political dialogue at the highest level (traceable in EAMRs). GAP III and CLIPs can take some of the credit for this. CLIPs have also helped strengthen EUDs’ convening power and leadership position amongst donors.

Box 7

Good practice – CLIP development building on Gender Focal Points Group

Good practice



The CLIP in the **Philippines** built on an existing and very active Gender Focal Points Group, which strongly contributed to the analysis and the

stakeholders, like the National Commission on Women, UN agencies, Gender Institutes, CSOs etc.

identification of opportunities for actions, policy dialogue, and communication.

The group is composed of the EUD and EU MS GFPs, as well as the EU Gender champion. The group is conducting dialogue with several

This Group has long held monthly meetings. Its members are therefore accustomed to working together for common objectives.

Other EUDs such as Rwanda follow similar approaches, though none can rely on a group convening that regularly

Source: The Philippines and CLIPs case studies

... but the strength of political response in a context of backlash is difficult to assess.

These advances were made possible because GAP III has set the framework for the EU to address two important changes in dialogue and public diplomacy. The first is the worsening backlash against GEWE, and feminist views overall, in many partner countries, sometimes accompanied by harassment and actual violence directed at CSOs advocating for GEWE, at women politicians, or other women public figures such as journalists or human rights defenders. The second is the different foreign policy positions among EU MS on the extent to which the intersectional approach promoted by GAP III, interlinks with the human rights of LGBTIQ persons. A higher- (i.e., political) level dilemma that cannot be solved by GAP III, but should be tackled by the CLIPs, is how to advance GEWE, including with an intersectional approach, in particular with consideration to the different political, social, cultural, and religious contexts in the respective countries. This has affected the extent to which the countries have embraced the EU's intersectional approach to gender equality. For example, some CLIPs in our sample (Kenya, Kosovo, Myanmar, Nepal, Serbia, South Africa, Venezuela) mention either LGBTI or LGBTIQ, others do not. The majority of the 27 analysed CLIPs further highlight other aspects of intersectionality, primarily disability, belonging to a national minority, migration status, and poverty. Equality of rights and non-discrimination are universal human rights enshrined in international law, to which all countries are committed; but various aspects of these commitments, sometimes made under previous, more progressive governments, are increasingly contested in many partner countries.

4.3 Evaluation Question 3 - Priority area: Women's Economic Empowerment

To what extent does the EU external action contribute to women's economic empowerment in partner countries?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

GAP III's specific provisions on WEE provide greater clarity (and breadth) regarding what WEE covers and the types of actions the EU should be taking to further strengthen its approach in this priority area. Specific areas of action are creating an enabling environment (reportedly the most difficult area as it includes regulatory issues as well as discrimination), improving access to finance and investment, and specific sectoral support (reportedly an area in which GAP III has been especially useful to EUD staff).

EUD representatives also find GAP III to be a useful reference document they can use to help to advocate for EU messages and to which they are able to refer to it in their meetings with Government interlocutors. GAP III has also helped EUDs to promote an intersectional

approach to WEE. Document review reveals concrete examples of the stronger integration of GEWE into regional strategic documents post-GAP III.

However, there have been no fundamental or conceptual changes in WEE objectives with GAP III, as this is an area in which the EU has long worked. EU personnel at all levels are using GAP III to add more weight to work that the EU was already doing to create an environment in which women's economic rights will be strengthened. Significant new developments have, however, been the emergence of green economy and digital transformation and the growing emphasis on women's access to finance in the context of investment programmes under EFSD+ and EAGs. A number of blending programmes, mostly for SME development, have set targets and quotas for women-owned firms in lending, with direct effect on women's access to finance. Like all quantity-based measures, these require scrutiny for the equity-efficiency trade off and raise some of the issues of achieving a shared EU-EFI view that were discussed under EQ 1. Many EU investment programmes finance infrastructure (often related to environment and climate change) benefitting both men and women, and an area where improvement is needed is the quality and application of this analysis at design stage of the gender-differentiated impacts of such projects.

EUD personnel often find it easier to promote WEE-related issues in policy dialogue processes than other GEWE issues that are perceived to be more culturally and politically sensitive. Where discussion of WEE issues can become more sensitive, depending on context, include themes such as the unpaid care economy and women gaining increasing financial autonomy and agency at the household level. Obviously, the political and social environment regarding issues such as dowry, inheritance, land ownership, etc., represent barriers that GAP III-based dialogues on WEE must deal with.

As discussed under EQ 1, there is diversity of views between EU HQ (and EFI representatives) interviewed, on the one hand, and EUD programme managers, on the other, regarding the mainstreaming of GEWE issues in investment projects. The first view protocols, procedures, criteria, and the like as clear and adequate; the second are concerned that "financialisation" of EU support may make gender mainstreaming more difficult. If nothing else, the observation suggests that more work is needed to achieve a shared, common approach between the EU and its Team Europe EFI partners, particularly with regard to indicators and monitoring. At the same time, GAP III was cited by both HQ and EUD personnel as being effective to help increase women's access to blended finance options through blended finance. Based on the e-Survey results, what can be said with confidence is that, while investment approaches add new modalities to the EU's tool kit, GAP III has predominantly reinforced existing approaches and actions related to WEE. There has been an increase in the number of actions which are self-rated as having gender as a significant objective but there is also considerable inconsistency in how this rating is applied and the content of action documents does not always reflect clear evidence as to why this rating is merited.

Willingness to address WEE and related thematic objectives is still being left to individual EU personnel and ranges from high levels of commitment to limited or only cursory treatment in action proposals, etc. This suggests a need for stronger messaging and political will from senior EU leadership. There is still too strong a tendency to monitor GEWE results at a cursory level, rather than at a level that could be considered transformative; indeed, despite a clear definition in GAP III of transformation as involving changes in power relations that are inconsistent with GEWE, staff understanding of the concept varies widely. As in other areas covered by this evaluation, the level of commitment of senior EUD staff to GEWE is an important variable.

4.3.1 EU strategic engagement on WEE, including policy dialogue

While there is much continuity, GAP III adds more specificity to WEE; in addition to which, new areas have emerged.

While there is a great deal of broad continuity in objectives related to WEE in the progression from GAP I to II to III, there is a stronger focus on multiple specific aspects of WEE in GAP III, where they are clearly and explicitly outlined.

INTPA's 2021 guidance on WEE observes that: "... the definition of WEE varies, but it is generally agreed that WEE is a transformational process in which women gain increased access to and power over economic assets and decisions and that economic empowerment is a process that enables a woman to succeed and advance economically and have the power to make and act on economic decisions."

The guidance further elaborates that to succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions and that, to have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources required and profits gained. This general approach to WEE is reiterated in the types of actions suggested in GAP III in its section on social and economic rights for women and girls.

The key content of GAP III related to WEE serves to both broaden the scope of what WEE covers as well as to provide more guidance as to what constitutes a WEE-related action for EU personnel and partners. However, there has been no fundamental change related to WEE since 2020 because this is a thematic area on which the EU had already worked under previous GAPs and work in this area has continued under GAP III (although, as described below, new areas of opportunity have opened in the areas of green economy and digital transformation).

The specificity of GAP III has promoted WEE; in addition, it is often less controversial than other aspects of GEWE ...

The fact that GAP III includes reference to WEE has helped EU staff promote its inclusion in their discussions with different partners. In particular, EU HQ staff have observed that GAP III includes reference to the three priority areas of work and engagement they are promoting at the policy level:

- Creation of an enabling environment (i.e., addressing underlying barriers, regulations), support structures such as women's representation in business associations, and structures and processes that can increase women's participation.
- Women's increased access to finance and capital through the EU's financial instruments.
- Specific sectoral support to improve WEE across sectors, such as entrepreneurship support, training and incubation, and decent work in sectors where women are prevalent, such as agriculture and textiles.

HQ-level informants have observed a significant difference in terms of what the EU is doing in these areas since GAP III was adopted, while also noting that the regulatory aspect of creating an enabling environment is the most difficult in which to make progress. At the country case study level, EUD personnel interviewed by the evaluation team have identified GAP III as providing useful guidelines for understanding the kinds of action they can take

to help fulfil these goals, particularly with regard to specific sectors. GAP III has also helped EUDs to promote an intersectional approach to WEE.

One example of an action that now has a stronger focus on WEE due to GAP III's influence is the Sub-Saharan Africa Team Europe Initiative "Investing in Young businesses in Africa" which was launched in 2021. This TEI has a strong focus on reaching women and includes a specific working group on WEE which is looking at how EU MSME financing mechanisms and technical assistance can target WEE more effectively and specifically. The Working Group is led by Spain and INTPA.

EUD personnel often find it easier to promote WEE-related issues in policy dialogue processes than other GEWE issues that are perceived to be more culturally and politically sensitive, such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). It is easier to discuss women's incomes, often in sectors where women predominate or which are perceived to be an extension of "traditional" household responsibilities, as this is not seen as being as threatening to or as undermining existing social norms regarding women's work in and outside the home. Where discussion of WEE issues can become more sensitive, however, includes themes such as the unpaid care economy and women gaining increasing financial agency at the household level. In some contexts, the political and social environment is so hostile to GEWE that it overrides any significant effect GAP III can have on this type of dialogue.

There remains limited awareness among some EUD personnel of the institutional guidance that defines WEE in detail. However, even in the absence of this awareness, GAP III has provided a range of options the EUDs can follow in their strategic planning processes and in action development and implementation. EU personnel at all levels have been using GAP III to add more weight to work that the EU was already doing to create an environment in which women's economic rights will be strengthened.

... but much still depends on the level of interest of individuals.

Willingness to address WEE and related thematic objectives is still being left to individual EU personnel and ranges from high levels of commitment to limited or only cursory treatment in ADs, etc. There is a need for stronger messaging and political will from senior EU leadership on WEE priorities. Responsible staff's understanding of what represents a transformative result related to WEE needs strengthening. Where the Head of Cooperation has a good understanding of GEWE and WEE and is personally committed to promoting these issues, the evaluation team found systematic and comprehensive approaches to achieving WEE results using a combination of targeted and mainstreamed approaches in private sector development and other sector foci such as agricultural development. Where this was not the case, less attention is being paid to these issues despite the stronger provisions and guidance outlined in GAP III.

GAP III has been particularly effective in promoting WEE in regional strategies

GAP III has had a particularly strong effect on how gender and WEE, in particular, are dealt with in regional strategies. To take one example, the 2014-2020 Multi-annual Indicative Strategy for Asia makes no reference to women, gender or empowerment anywhere in the document. By contrast, the 2021 to 2027 MIP for Asia includes detailed references and indicators to ways in which this MIP will contribute to very specific means of increased gender equality, including aspects of WEE. There are also multiple references throughout the text that refer to WEE using language and actions similar to those outlined in GAP III. Similarly, the 2016 strategic document

“Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan” briefly mentioned creating jobs for women and young people through support for SMEs, but provided no related analysis or other recommendations for strategic actions related to WEE. The 2020 document “*Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa document,*” by comparison, includes multiple references to WEE that draw upon the strategic actions outlined in GAP III. This pattern is also quite evident in the EU’s post-Cotonou agreement. The EU has had particular success in extending actions in areas where WEE aspects might not always be so obvious, such as Business Environment Reforms (BER). For instance, an existing regional programme, the Investment Climate Reform Facility -- a demand-driven technical assistance in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries working on creating an enabling business environment – has been transformed to become focused on WEE related BER support. EU HQ personnel attribute this change also to GAP III.

An additional relevant example includes that the EU has invested in a private equity fund “Women’s World Banking Capital Partners II”, which supports financial service providers in emerging markets to reach more low-income women clients. This EUR 10 million anchor investment helped the fund raise additional public and private investments towards this objective, and in 2021 it closed at a total of USD 103 million. These funds are now being invested to support women’s economic empowerment and access to finance.

Box 8

Good practice – Investment Climate Reform Facility

Good practice



The EU has had particular success in extending an existing regional programme, the Investment **Climate Reform Facility**, to become much more inclusive of WEE related supports. It is a demand-driven technical assistance in the ACP countries. The ICR Facility is co-funded by the European Union (EU), the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), together with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the British Council. It is implemented by GIZ, the British Council, Expertise France, and SNV. It is working on Business Environment Reforms. This means working on tailor-made economic reforms based on public-private dialogue to help creating a better business environment, now with focus on supporting women’s full participation in the economy. The extension of the Facility coincided with the adoption of GAP III and as a result, its current iteration added EUR 10 million of EU funding to address WEE issues. This was followed also by BMZ adding additional funding to support the new WEE focus in line with Germany’s new feminist foreign policy.

EU HQ personnel attribute this change also to GAP III.

The coincidence of this timing was cited as one contributing factor influencing the strengthened WEE focus of the Climate Reform Facility

The technical assistance interventions now include for instance supporting the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI), with the objective of Identify successful business models and recommendations for business environment reform to help improve the prospects of women-led businesses in agri-food value chains in West Africa in post covid 19 period and benefit from the future potentials of an African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Other examples includes undertaking an evaluation study of the Federation of Uganda Employers’ (FUE) Female Future Program (FFP) in Uganda to support improving its impact and to increase action towards women’s in leadership in Uganda. Other example is supporting Employers’ Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) in working with its members and policymakers to build conditions

that minimise the prevalence of workplace GBV.

Source: WEE case study

4.3.2 Strengthening women's rights, access, and inclusion

Under GAP III, the areas of greatest traction for WEE have been access to education incl. TVET and access to finance under the “financialisation” of EU external action.

The evaluation e-survey indicates that EUD officials have observed the most change in women's access to education including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and skills (29.8% “to a great extent”); followed closely by changes in community and social norms and cultural practices that restrict women's economic participation and economic and social policies. The WEE area where survey respondents observed the least extent of change is in the reduction of occupational gender segregation and greater diversity of the types of employment opportunities open to women (11.4% “to a great extent”).

The aspect of WEE in which GAP III has the most traction is women's access to finance. The 85% obligation on G1/ G2-rated actions has contributed to this significantly. GAP III was cited by both HQ and EUD personnel as being particularly effective to help increase women's access to blended finance options, including with the European Investment Bank. This is not the only influencing factor as the EIB has also been working in recent years on related issues through its adherence to the 2XGlobal. The other area in which some EU HQ staff indicated that the EU has been working to strengthen WEE is that of agency, especially since the EU emphasises working with women entrepreneurs to build the success of their business and thus increase their economic independence. An example of an effort to promote this is a Tanzania blending action under the Africa Investment Platform (due for approval end-2022) which will provide EIB credit lines for on-lending, with the stipulation that 30% of borrowers will be “women-owned enterprises” (according to the 2X challenge definition). However, quantity-based targets, quotas, and set-asides raise efficiency and equity issues, making it important to arrive at a shared view between EU HQ, EUD staff, and financial institution partners.

WEE is emerging in green economy and digital transformation. Evidence on EU contribution to WEE-related policy reform is mixed.

A review of a sample of 27 CLIPs from across all regions found that most EUDs identified the mainstreaming of WEE into future actions as their preferred strategic approach, with selected G2 targeted actions in specific sectors. A summary of the associated actions proposed in the 27 sample countries found three related to green economy, one in digital transformation, two related to changing norms, four to support increased women's participation in economic development, 18 related to diverse aspects of SGBV and 11 actions in the areas of business development services.³³ This confirms the perspective offered by diverse EU personnel that GAP III has predominantly reinforced existing approaches and actions related to WEE.

Although multiple personnel interviewed indicated that the EU has covered diverse areas of policy reform well with regard to WEE, this is not borne out by the future proposed actions outlined in the 27 country CLIP sample, which identifies only a few future actions in this area. However, the evaluation e-

³³ See WEE case study (Volume II) for more detailed examples of this support

Survey did find evidence that the EU's support for policy change in the past has been contributing to policy change related to decent work and non-discrimination, with 16.8% of respondents at the EUD level indicating that this type of change had occurred to a great extent. The remaining 20% did not think there had been much or any change.

The e-Survey results find 20.6% of respondents indicating that the quality of gender analysis underpinning EU support to WEE had improved to a great extent since the adoption of GAP III and an additional 51.2% that this had happened to some extent, 24% only to a little extent and 3.3% not at all. Overall, this indicates a positive trend, but also confirms that there remain weaknesses in the quality of WEE-related gender analysis. Field interviews indicated that, as discussed under EQ 2, one of these remains timing and having the gender analysis take place at the right time in the project/programme development cycle to inform action design.

Good
practice



As a result of a coherent incremental approach, the EU has been evolving towards a more intersectional approach. This is reflected in several countries as more comprehensive, cross-cutting and that has multiplied its entry points. In the **DRC**, for example, all but one of the G1 decisions adopted in 2021 include a WEE component. Similarly, **Tanzania's** EUD has increased its ambition to support WEE and plans to integrate it into policy dialogue in all sectors. In Tanzania, this multiplication of strategic entry points is a positive change compared to the previous MIP, which only supported WEE in two sectors (agriculture and business enabling environment/governance).

In **Colombia**, meanwhile, the EU has gradually reflected the complex nexus between WPS, WEE and intersectionality (with a focus on rural women and women belonging to diverse groups such as youth, indigenous communities, conflict-affected communities and migrants). This has been reflected in a diversification of its portfolio of WEE projects investing in this area in sectors as varied as health, the care economy, rural and local development, migration, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and land rights.

Source: Colombia, DRC and Tanzania case studies.

There is still little evidence of transformative change, which is long-term by nature, in WEE.

A common practice in EU support is to integrate WEE as a cross-cutting component in sectors or areas of interventions including SGBV, agriculture, and increasingly, green economy, digital transformation, and blending operations. However, there was no significant evidence of transformative or systemic change related to WEE in the case study countries in these diverse sectors or in private sector development initiatives. This is in part because this type of change requires long-term reform, e.g., in policies related to access to decent work and education, to generate measurable change. Specific concerns raised with regard to digital and green transformation initiative include that the relevant labour force is largely male, and that women's participation is not adequately addressed. A review of CLIPs also found that they propose little to increase the access of women who are victims of SGBV to economic opportunities that would support them to securely leave abusive situations (protection) or protect them from potentially abusive situations (prevention). There is also a tendency for much of EUD messaging to focus on women as victims, and not women as economic actors, and there is a need for a shift in related thinking and understanding of the link between women's economic agency and reduced SGBV. Exceptions to this general observation exist, particularly the case in countries that are participating in the Spotlight Initiative, which clearly highlights the approach of increasing women's economic independence as a strategy to help women escape abusive situations. Another area demanding attention, whose importance was highlighted by COVID-19, is the care economy, addressed in GAP III. One challenge is that the work the EU is doing in this area is not always that visible since the related support provided through diverse EU-funded projects tends not to be placed under a care economy umbrella but is integrated into the projects in other areas. This makes this work less visible.

Box 10

Good practice – Targeted Private Sector Development Interventions

Good
practice

The EU has been working with UN Women in different regions to support a series of joint gender targeted programmes designed to increase the number of women who lead and participate in private-sector businesses. In Asia, this WE Empower programme operated in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Its aim was to advance inclusive and sustainable growth and build stronger links between European and Asian markets through supporting adoption of gender-sensitive trade and supply chains. This work built on similar programmes introduced during GAP II in Latin America and among the G7 countries. WE Empower Asia had a duration of 36 months (2019-2022) and a budget of EUR 8 million.

It represents a good practice which provides targeted and gender-specific approaches to private sector development to accelerate women's participation in the private sector. It does this by promoting adoption of seven core women's empowerment principles by the private sector, working

with 700 women entrepreneurs to increase their participation in supply chains and strengthen their business approaches, and contributing to WEE related policy dialogues in the region – amongst other actions.

It also sought to build women's links with international trade in ways that are more far reaching than it is sometimes possible to achieve using a more integrated approach to private sector development. This is partly a question of a targeted approach serving to increase the numbers of women led or owned businesses reached and partly due to the level of gender sensitive expertise a targeted approach can make to address a gender specific challenge in a particular regional context. The programme also served to complement other EU-supported PSD initiatives in the region by increasing awareness of what the gender-related issues are for women involved in the private sector that these other interventions need to consider in their more gender-integrated approaches.

Source: WEE case study

Most of the case study EUDs plan to address inclusion of women in the transition to a green and circular economy. Half of them also take actions to support inclusive digital transformation. However, it is still too early to assess whether these intentions have translated into actions and results through these new areas of strategic entry points for WEE. This harkens back to the transitional phase aspects discussed under EQ 2. The accompanying gender analyses still tend to focus on women's vulnerability, as opposed to seeing women as potential dynamic economic actors in these social transformations. This is critical: despite the male domination of these economic sectors, there are multiple opportunities for the EU to support a more gender-equitable division of their benefits and to help harness the opportunities that women offer, if included. There is also a need to better analyse the differentiated impacts of the large infrastructure projects associated with environment and climate change. For discussion of investment vehicles, such as blending and guarantees under EFSD+ and EAGs, see also discussion under EQ 1.

4.4 Evaluation Question 4 - Priority area: Women, Peace and Security

To what extent does the EU external action contribute to the integration of the WPS agenda in partner countries where relevant?



Summary answer to the Evaluation Question

GAP III, responding to the EU's Strategic Approach to WPS and the EU's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024, makes WPS a priority thematic area and promotes a comprehensive gender-transformative approach extending to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and in various contexts affected by fragility or conflict and at any time of the conflict cycle/continuum (including therefore post-conflict situations, countries at risk of conflict, or experiencing high level of violence, etc). However, overall, the WPS agenda has been lagging behind the broader GEWE mainstreaming agenda. The tools to implement GAP III and the WPS Action Plan are not well aligned, as the indicators of the WPS Action Plan are not always suitable for ADs – a key avenue for the implementation of GAP III. Moreover, it is often not clear how to identify specific actions that are WPS-relevant or specific.

While WPS is better integrated than before into EU external action and the related institutional framework under GAP III, it lacks dedicated resources and attention, and iterative capacity building. DG INTPA (Units G1 and G5) keeps the lead on programming for implementation of the WPS thematic priority, whereas EEAS is leading the political agenda on WPS, including dialogue platforms. However, INTPA does not have core financial resources for WPS programmes, and human resources dedicated to WPS are very limited. Similarly, at EEAS there are no financial resources earmarked for actions on gender equality or WPS. Human resources dedicated to WPS are similarly limited and consist in significant degree of secondments with multiple responsibilities. There are insufficient human resources to provide tailored and specialised advice throughout the EU, especially to EUDs.

The EC and EEAS both have guidelines and dedicated personnel who provide sensitisation, guidance, advice and training on WPS to the staff in the field and in headquarters. In the EC HQ Directorates and EUDs, GAP III training for GFPs includes a specific section on WPS; moreover, a dedicated training on gender, peacebuilding and conflict has been designed and piloted by Unit G5. However, none of this, including the EC's thematic guidance note on Gender, based on the GAP III, proposes a comprehensive set of possible specific objectives, or details on how to integrate WPS in gender analysis, CLIPs, or the design of ADs. At country level, many CLIPs mention WPS as a priority area, however not always with associated actions or concrete objectives. When these are specified, to judge from sampled programmes and CLIPs reviewed, as well as based on most interviews, the main focus of WPS is on SGBV, an important subject deserving priority, especially in terms of human rights, leaving no one behind, and intersectionality. However, this does not broaden the focus to encompass women as agents of peace, security actors and/or combatants, as it tends to qualify them mainly as victims or survivors. Contributing to addressing this concern, DG INTPA Unit focusing on GEWE has designed conflict sensitivity guidance notes on Gender and Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (including WPS), in the context of the mandatory requirements on conflict and gender sensitive programming in the NDICI-GE.

4.4.1 EU strategic engagement on WPS, including policy dialogue

GAP III contributes to a steadily The EU has made specific commitments on WPS, building on UNSCR 1325. In 2008 the EU Council adopted its Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, which served as a defining

*increasing
EU
engagement
with WPS
....*

document. Ten years later, the EU Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) of 10 December 2018 incorporating the EU's Strategic Approach to WPS in a changing world. On 5 July 2019, EEAS issued its working document, the EU's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024. The EU Council conclusions on Women, Peace and Security of 14 November 2022 reiterates previous commitments and the ever-increased relevance of WPS in the current context, highlighting the emerging and increasingly complex new security challenges, commits to closer partnership with civil society organisations, calls for gender-responsive leadership and highlights the importance of grounding WPS support on gendered conflict analysis. The EU Council's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence of 21 March 2022 further integrates a WPS component serving as a guideline for all EUDs.

In line with the approach of the above commitments, the successive EU GAPs have referred to the EU's strategic engagement with WPS. GAP I (2010-2015) refers to the 2008 Comprehensive Approach and focuses on protection and participation. GAP II (2016-2020) emphasizes the importance of differentiating the effects of conflict and reconstruction on women, highlights the prevalence of SGBV in conflict situations, insists on women's participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction, and stresses the opportunities for gender equality offered in reconstruction contexts. GAP III (2020-2025) considers WPS a priority thematic area and promotes a gender-transformative approach which encompasses prevention, participation and leadership (including within the EU), justice, recovery, inclusion of women in peace processes, and in all measures related to security-related issues (including outside of conflict-affected situations), and engagement of men and boys in the WPS agenda.

In practice, some dimensions of WPS are particularly relevant for EEAS, especially when it comes its civilian and military missions and engagement in peace processes. In addition, EEAS is engaged on security policies and political dialogues relevant to WPS. The EC staff, both in headquarters and in EUDs, contribute to WPS through political and policy dialogue, public diplomacy and spending actions, especially when related to recovery and reconstruction, participation of women as civil society actors and human rights defenders, women as agents of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and protection and prevention of SGBV. Other sectoral and thematic priorities of GAP III may offer opportunities and entry points to support WPS, in relation to medium- and long-term development cooperation in support of peacebuilding or local conflict resolution and prevention through climate change actions, women's economic empowerment, the promotion of human rights and civil society spaces. The evaluation team has observed some good practices in this respect, although it also found that these opportunities could be seized more often.

*... but WPS
lacks
dedicated
resources
and
attention.*

WPS is better integrated into EU external action and the related institutional framework under GAP III than before, but it lacks dedicated resources and attention. As a result, the steering and monitoring of implementation of the WPS thematic priority require strengthening. Overall, according to interviewees, the WPS agenda has been lagging behind the broader GEWE mainstreaming agenda. Tending to confirm this, WPS is less well documented than other areas, and interviewees have fewer experiences and opinions to share on WPS than other topics.

Gender analysis and conflict analysis tend to be independent from each other, although the EU Guidance Note on Conflict Analysis 2020 tries to address this challenge by providing requirements and standards on the integration of gender analysis into conflict analyses. The EU conflict Early Warning System, on the other hand, includes gender in its analytical risk analysis. GAP III also aims to remedy this situation, and the most recent ADs of actions gender-marked G1 and G2 tend to show an improvement -- but GAP III starts from a relatively low baseline of broad internal capacity development and requirements in the area of WPS. Exceptions among case study countries are Colombia, DRC, and the Philippines, where the EU has conducted specific research on WPS.

DG INTPA and EEAS visions of WPS are well aligned, but tools for implementation are not.

The GAP III WPS thematic area was designed in a collaborative effort between the EC (DG INTPA in the lead on programming) and EEAS. GAP III integrated WPS indicators (both EU-internal and on external action results) which had originally been prepared for the EEAS WPS action plan. As a result, there is no fundamental contradiction between the GAP III vision on WPS and the pre-existing EU policy and strategic framework on external action. For instance, WPS as a thematic priority is in line with EU 2018 commitments to the WPS agenda, the EU Global Strategy, the EU Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis, and the regulatory framework governing the EU External Financing Instruments; in particular, the NDICI-GE regulation requires both gender- and conflict-sensitive approaches. However, the tools to implement GAP III and the WPS Action Plan are not well aligned, as the indicators of the WPS Action Plan are not always suitable for action documents – a key avenue for the implementation of GAP III. These indicators further include EU-internal and political indicators, which are not directly related to WPS.

Spending and non-spending (e.g., political dialogue) WPS actions operate on different tracks.

CLIPs tend to focus on specific WPS spending actions while providing general views on the place of WPS in political dialogue and support to peace talks. Where spending and non-spending actions on WPS (as identified by the 27 CLIPs analysed, and in the EU actions' portfolios in case study countries) coexist, they operate on separate tracks. This is partly due to the institutional structure, partly due to the sensitivity of peace talks and the lack of gender equality – but also to the fact that coordination between the political and cooperation wings of EUDs addresses issues of high priority, among which WPS is unlikely to number. Country-level experience also shows that it remains difficult to include women at the table in conflict-related dialogue platforms (in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue facilitated by the EU and discussed below, for instance). Persons interviewed pointed out one reason the EU has difficulty covering the gender dimension of conflicts is because the related dialogues are male-dominated and do not include CSOs.

The integration of pre-existing WPS indicators into the GAP III indicators has resulted in a perceived discrepancy (at HQ level) between GAP III WPS indicators and indicators in other thematic areas: while all other thematic priorities mostly focus on outcome-level indicators, WPS indicators further include EU-internal and political indicators, which are not directly related to WPS.

Both EEAS and DG INTPA are short of

In July 2021, the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity and Special Advisor to the EEAS Secretary General, was appointed, with a mandate that includes WPS (among other themes). To adjust to the broadening of mandate from Gender and WPS to diversity, her team has increased since then,

human resources to pursue the WPS agenda.

although mostly with seconded personnel who must juggle multiple priorities. WPS is one of them, but there are insufficient human resources to provide tailored advice throughout the EU, especially to all the EUDs. EEAS has no programmatic budget, including for WPS.

Under GAP III, DG INTPA keeps the lead on programmatic implementation of WPS as a GAP III thematic priority. Unit G1 and G5 teams contribute to the EU's strategic approach on WPS both transversally and at country level through expertise, guidance documents, and participation in relevant internal and external consultation platforms. However, INTPA does not have core financial resources for WPS programmes, and human resources dedicated to WPS are very limited (although not dependent on secondments as is the case in EEAS).

In parallel, after intense dialogue during the preparation of GAP III, according to several interviewees in EEAS, the level of interaction between INTPA and EEAS on WPS has decreased since 2021 and the finalisation of GAP III, as the focus has been on implementing GAP III according to the respective mandates. The two have developed respective approaches to reporting; in addition, they engage with different communities of practice, expertise, and experience, which is not in line with the EU Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis.

4.4.2 EU support to WPS

There has been a great deal of guidance and training...

Among informants and based on evidence from document review, there is a general agreement that GAP III adds urgency to the WPS commitment already contained in the EU's Women, Peace and Security Strategic Approach. However, there is also a general concern that the EU requires operational guidance, training, and dedicated workforce to bring these commitments to bear in a tangible and coherent matter. To this end, the EC and EEAS both have guidelines and dedicated personnel who provide sensitisation, guidance, advice, and training on WPS to the staff in the field and in headquarters:

- In EEAS, the CSDP staff centrally and in operations integrates a gender perspective in peace and security interventions in line with the EU commitment to WPS, and as included in GAP III, using dedicated operational documents. For civilian missions, there are 2018 Civilian Operations Commander operational guidelines on gender mainstreaming, as well as an instruction on the implementation of GAP III with a dedicated monitoring framework. There is also a dedicated Strategy and Action Plan to enhance women's participation for 2021-2024. For military missions, there is an Action Plan for military CSDP on the implementation of GAP III, and operational guidance on GEWE, both dating from 2022. Both documents were prepared by the EU Military Staff main Gender Focal Point.
- Every CSDP staff going to field operations undertakes a variety of general courses upon joining, which include a section on human rights and gender equality.³⁴ Practically, this is done through several

³⁴ The percentage of staff trained was not provided by EEAS, because it is a very challenging and potentially misleading indicator, due to the frequent and fluid staff rotations, especially on the military side.

avenues which are challenging to monitor. Pre-deployment is mandatory and should have a component on gender, but this is a Member States' responsibility. The pre-deployment training in Brussels offered by the European Security and Defence College includes sessions on human rights mainstreaming and on gender/WPS. So does the EU training centre in Spain. Additionally, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability supported by the Folke Bernadotte Academy, and the dedicated field operations, have additionally trained selected in-service gender advisors and GFPs on GEWE (the evaluation team did not receive details about the percentage of trained staff). This training includes general GEWE awareness, EU normative framework, guidelines, and operating procedures, as well as entry points for WPS. All Gender Advisers (field and headquarters) meet monthly for coaching, ongoing training and discussions led by the EU Military Staff main Gender Adviser (this practice has been continuous on the military side, while it was momentarily interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic on the civilian side). Training on the 2022 GAP III implementation Action Plan for military CSDP and on the corresponding Operational Guidance on GEWE will be rolled out in 2023.

- In the EC, particularly the EUDs, the key documents are the Notes to GFPs and Heads of Cooperation on GAP III, and the CLIP template and thematic briefing notes, complemented by the Gender Country Profile template: they all insist, but to variable extent, on the importance of WPS. The EC's thematic guidance note on Gender, based on the GAP III, proposes a comprehensive set of possible specific objectives. However, these documents do not provide details on how to integrate WPS in gender analysis, CLIPs, or the design of Action Documents. The Gender Country Profile template does not have a section on fragility and conflict.
- In the EC HQ Directorates and EUDs, GAP III training for GFPs includes a specific section on WPS, particularly peacebuilding and gender and conflict. However, interviewees in case study countries usually express their concern, sometimes regret, that they have limited knowledge about WPS. A review of all EUD and HQ semi-structured interviews reveals that the section dedicated to WPS is significantly shorter than those devoted to other EQs (strategic framework, CLIPs, WEE). In some cases, interviewees simply admit that they have very little to share on the topic. The exceptions are specialised staff (EC INTPA G5 in particular) and EEAS. EC INTPA G5 has produced a dedicated Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitivity and Gender, as well as including the WPS agenda in the Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Note on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (there are part of a suite of 12 thematic, methodological and sectoral guidance notes on CS). EC INTPA G5 has also piloted a training module on Gender, Conflict and Peacebuilding in 2022, and it is currently redesigning it based on the pilot feedback and will offer it again in 2023. Some interviewees in the EC considered that the primary target of WPS training, however, should be senior managers in EUDs.

... but the perception has been that the training has been insufficient to lead to full uptake of the guidance.

Informants in headquarters and in the EUDs (country case studies, GFP focal group discussions) and in the CSDP Missions and Operations (a group interview) generally consider that, since the adoption of GAP III with its increased emphasis on WPS, the amount of relevant guidance has increased. However, several informants have also expressed the concern that the coverage of training has been insufficient to ensure that this guidance is taken up uniformly and widely enough. Our survey results confirm this perception: the percentage of “don’t know” answers to all WPS-related questions is much higher than on any other subject, ranging from 37% to 54% of respondents, which is extremely high. There is also a concern among several interviewees at headquarter level that these tools (guidelines and training) have been developed on separate tracks for the EC and EEAS respectively: there may be a missed opportunity to explore joint training, and to bring the EUD and CSDP staff closer in their daily, operational approach and coordination. Overall, despite some progress, there is still a lack of human resources specifically dedicated to WPS – and where it exists, it often results from secondment. In the Military CSDP, all country-level actions on WPS also depend on the Member States’ deployed personnel, including the seconded military Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points.

The issue is compounded by the feeling that the staff which is not specifically dedicated to WPS lacks the capacity and/or the interest to actively work on it in view of their juggling of multiple responsibilities. WPS could benefit not only from stronger capacity in gender-sensitive conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive gender analysis, but also from stronger capacity to program accordingly. The overall picture is that the EU (both EC and EEAS) has invested in its internal tools and capacity to strengthen gender-sensitive conflict analysis, but that the results of these efforts are slow to materialize.

Gender is under-represented in conflict analysis and conflict issues are under-represented in gender analysis.

Gender equality is still not fully mainstreamed in conflict analysis, and conflict/WPS issues are still under-represented in gender analysis. The NDICI-GE regulation (Annex 2) foresees support to a broad range of WPS-relevant areas along with various requirements on conflict sensitivity and resilience, which are interlinked with gender equality, human rights, democracy, and rule of law, but as a regulation it does not provide guidance on how to underpin this support with analysis. The NDICI-GE thematic concept note on “Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention” mentions gender equality as a cross-cutting area and foresees participation of women in peace- and confidence-building efforts. It does not mention gender sensitive conflict analysis (as the EU Guidance Note on Conflict Analysis 2020 clearly provides for a greater commitment to incorporating gender analyses in conflict analysis methodologies). In the EUDs, analysis dedicated to WPS is still limited. Among our extended sample (27 EUDs), WPS is under-represented in the Gender Country Profiles and in the analytical sections of the CLIPs – with some noteworthy exceptions such as Colombia and Myanmar. What is concerning is the contrast, in some CLIPs, there is an absence of reference to the commitment to work on the issue, including (where applicable) to produce gender sensitive conflict analysis in support of conflict sensitive programming and gender mainstreaming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In our extended sample of 27 EUDs, eight do not integrate WPS analysis or conflict-related issues in their analytical section (and do not refer to a recent, full-fledged gender sensitive conflict analysis), although they foresee actions and/or identify WPS as a thematic area of engagement. The obvious risk is that the intended interventions are ill-informed. Several

interviewees expressed concern regarding the level of gendered conflict analysis and the poor quality of some WPS-related indicators within action documents where it was very relevant -- despite the efforts invested for the country profiles, and for country-level conflict analysis. This strongly suggests that, despite gradual efforts, conflict analysis with an integrated gender perspective, or gender analysis with a conflict and/or security perspective (as applicable), where they are performed, it is not sufficiently channelled into action document design. Limited WPS-specialised human resources in headquarters, particularly in the EC, are not sufficient to support the EUDs in this respect. Conversely, EUDs are not always aware of what resources are available.

Box 11 *Good practice – A comprehensive integration of WPS*

Good practice



Interviews and inventory of actions revealed several examples in which **EU support envisages WPS comprehensively**, covering i) GBV response; ii) reintegration of women (former) combatants, participation of women in peace negotiations and in the rollout and implementation of peace accords where applicable; and iii) WEE and women's political participation as avenues towards lasting peace. This tends to be the case where women themselves imposed their role as actors of conflict (as cadre in the Defence Ministry, current/former combatants, or as peacebuilders, or a

combination of the above; e.g. Colombia, Philippines, Ukraine). For instance, in Colombia, WPS spending actions cover reintegration of women combatants, WEE as an avenue for peacebuilding, and community-based peacebuilding. WPS forms an integral part of the political and policy dialogue. In the Philippines, gender has been thoroughly mainstreamed in all aspects of the EU's ambitious programme supporting peacebuilding in Mindanao and the EU supported Government to design its peacebuilding strategy, including gender aspects.

Source: Colombia, The Philippines and WPS case studies.

The EU is not a historical leader in WPS.

At country level, despite strengthened attention to WPS, the EU does not have a history of leadership in the area. The UN, some EU MS (e.g., Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Finland), and international and country-based NGOs/CSOs are regarded as the leaders in WPS, not the EU. The EU's support often encourages WPS initiatives and builds on them – but rarely does the EU catalyse them or create the space from which they emerge. It is telling that, in the 27 CLIPs examined by the team, WPS was the least-selected priority area and ten do not even mention it. In some cases, this may represent a lack of government partner interest.

There are no data – reliable or not – about the amounts committed or spent for WPS, because there is no DAC coding related specifically to WPS (or an agreed convention on measuring WPS expenditure through a combination of DAC codes and gender markers), nor meta-data relevant to WPS in CRIS or any other database or platform of the EC. However, the review of CLIPs, the review of the EU portfolio in the case study countries, and the interviews in Headquarters and in the case study countries (EUDs and partners) converge to indicate that WPS is lagging behind, both in frequency and amounts, the effort on WEE and SGBV.

Exceptions are where women themselves have agency and visibility as conflict or peace actors (as actual or former combatants, or as peacebuilders, or both, e.g., Colombia, Philippines), and more generally in DDR (disarmament-demobilisation and reintegration) processes. The evaluation has also revealed examples in which EU support envisages WPS

comprehensively covering i) conflict-related SGBV response; ii) reintegration of women (former) combatants, (iii) participation of women in peace negotiations and in the rollout and implementation of peace accords where they are in place, and iv) WEE and women's political participation as avenues towards lasting peace. In Colombia, WPS spending actions cover reintegration of women combatants, WEE as an avenue for peacebuilding, and community-based peacebuilding. WPS forms an integral part of the political and policy dialogue. In the Philippines, gender has been thoroughly mainstreamed in all aspects of the EU's ambitious programme supporting peacebuilding in Mindanao and the EU supported Government to design its peacebuilding strategy, including gender aspects.

4.4.3 EU support to participation of women in peace building, negotiations and mediation processes

EU support for WPS is strongest when women have themselves been actors in conflict

There are new FPI projects supporting women as mediators, especially in Africa, and these have been useful in some of the most challenging peace processes. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the CLIP envisages WPS as a thematic area, but proposes nothing more specific. In fact, the political context has been so difficult that work on WPS in general, and peace building in particular, is exceptionally difficult. CSOs who benefitted from EU training and attempted to subsequently contribute to reconciliation have been threatened and their members assaulted. CSOs supported by the EU document SGBV by both Israeli and Palestinian security forces. In the Philippines, as well, EU-supported CSOs document "red tagging" of women's organisations and advocates and the harassment that follows from the security and justice systems. In general, participation of women in peace processes – and the EU's support to it – tend to be more likely where women were involved in armed conflict (e.g., Colombia and the Philippines), or where there were women in high-level positions related to diplomacy and/or national integrity before recent conflicts (e.g., Georgia).

WPS suffers from the fact that women are underrepresented in peace - related dialogues

Coordination between the political and cooperation wings of EUDs addresses issues of high priority, whereas WPS is often viewed as less urgent, less relevant, and overall, less important. WPS therefore may be underserved in preparation for high-level policy dialogue. The same issue appears in peace-related dialogue platforms. Persons interviewed attribute the difficulty covering the gender dimension of conflicts in various peace dialogue platforms, to the fact that peace-related dialogue is male-dominated and does not include CSOs. For instance, since the departure of the former woman EU High Representative, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue does not feature a single woman (whether from the EU's side, or from the side of the parties to the Dialogue), and WPS issues have fallen out of the agenda after the Dialogue was interrupted: the fragility of the Dialogue is considered too high to bring up the issue of WPS, and the EU focuses on "urgent, higher priority issues" or more consensual issues.

The WPS agenda is still largely influenced by framings of women as

The WPS agenda is still influenced by the persistent framing of women as victims, not as agents of change, or of conflict or of peace, in conflict-affected contexts. At country level, many CLIPs mention WPS as a priority area, however not always with associated actions or concrete objectives. When these are specified, to judge from sampled programmes and CLIPs reviewed, as well as based on most interviews, the focus of WPS is on SGBV. Responding to SGBV often forms the bulk of the EU's WPS interventions or

victims, not agents.

communication messaging. Indeed, violence in conflicts affects women and men differently. SGBV has been one of the first WPS aspects receiving the EU's attention historically, and document review as well as interviews show the issue deserves the highest priorities – especially in terms of human rights, leaving no one behind, and intersectionality.

However, SGBV in GAP III is now treated as a stand-alone thematic priority, and it is additionally mentioned under the WPS thematic priority. According to the majority of interviewees who expressed an opinion on WPS, at country level, the frequent narrow focus on SGBV in the context of conflict misses a broader perspective which includes women as not only victims, but as enablers and perpetrators of violence, or indeed as actors of peace and conflict prevention. Also often missing from this approach is the role of women as agents in the peacebuilding effort, as well as in recovery and reconstruction. Literature review and interviews (in particular with EU staff having gender expertise, EU MS, CSOs) suggest that limiting WPS to SGBV means missing opportunities to capitalise women's contribution to peace making and peacebuilding. There are, however, exceptions to this trend (for instance, within our sample, in Colombia) and the gender experts within the EU put increasing emphasis on a broader approach to WPS. Some are however concerned that, with increased hard security threats (including the war in Ukraine), such approach is superseded by more traditional responses.

Box 12

Good practice – Women's Advisory Boards

Good
practice



Sweden has been working to support the creation of women's advisory boards to increase women's participation in peace processes. They did this in Syria and had also done a lot of work to do so in Ukraine as well before the war started there earlier this year. This was a Swedish MFA initiative. In general, Sweden has found that their increased role in supporting the WPS agenda is less geared

towards specific projects supporting women and more towards influencing the related background analysis needed to help identify where Sweden should put its efforts and supports. MFA staff are also learning how speak to the right people and engage more women in mediation and at different levels in mediation processes from the community level upward

Source: Sweden Good Practice case

5 Conclusions

The evaluation has identified nine conclusions in three key areas: i) policy and strategy, ii) implementation, and iii) results. Table 3 links these conclusions to the EQs.

Table 3 Overview of the conclusions

Cluster	Conclusion	Main related EQs
Policy and strategic level	C1: Strategic importance of GEWE	EQs 1 and 2
	C2: Approach to gender equality in external action	All EQs
	C3: A strengthened platform for dialogue in a difficult global context	EQs 1 and 2
	C4: Persisting internal constraints	EQs 1 and 2
Implementation	C5: The role of CLIPs as a first-generation tool	EQ2
	C6: The role of Gender Country Profiles	EQ2
	C7: CLIP drafting process	EQ2
Results	C8: Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)	EQ3
	C9: Women, Peace and Security (WPS)	EQ4

5.1 Policy and strategic level

5.1.1 Conclusion 1: Strategic importance of GEWE

Building on a positive trend observed during GAP II implementation, GAP III has helped to continue significantly increasing the strategic importance of GEWE in EU external action.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 2

While the importance of gender equality in EU external action had been increasing under GAP I and GAP II, GAP III (and the CLIPs to operationalise it) marked a significant increase in the effort to promote GEWE. Its status as a Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council (unlike GAP II) lent it weight. Also increasing its importance and relevance, GAP III was released just before the start of the new MFF. The external financing instruments, MIPs, RIPs, and IPA Programming Frameworks are globally consistent with GAP III. With the NDICI-GE 85% G1/G2 target – which almost certainly owes its existence to GAP III – there is a strong incentive to allocate financial resources to GEWE. G1 actions are now more varied in scope. Comparing pre- and post-GAP III MFFs, there are more G2 funds allocated per contract than before, and a growing number of “umbrella” G2 Actions (e.g., Gender Equality Facilities, GEWE Budget Support programmes, regional or thematic TEIs).

5.1.2 Conclusion 2: Approach to gender equality in external action

GAP III has contributed to follow a broader, deeper approach to gender equality in external action.

This conclusion is based on all EQs.

In addition to identifying six thematic areas, a significant broadening of scope, GAP III (in alignment with the EU Gender Equality strategy 2020-2025) brought to the top of the agenda intersectionality to target those who suffer most from discrimination and gender bias, and

stated explicitly the need for a transformative change – defined as a shift in the power relations that give rise to gender discrimination and disempowerment.

From a mid-term GAP III perspective, there are GEWE elements now to be found in virtually all sectors, including the “non-traditional” ones where the evaluation found some excellent examples of actions which concretely mainstream GEWE, with positive results. Yet, GEWE still remains predominantly a topic under human rights and governance in part because this provides a safe harbour under so many MIPs. The most frequent “port of call” for GEWE support is still SGBV, then support to the “gender machinery” (relevant Ministry, Women’s Commission, Ombudsperson’s Office, etc.) as a means to promote women’s participation, then WEE (including green economy and digital transformation), then WPS and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Energy, transport, and competitiveness are catching up with other sectors in terms of GEWE mainstreaming.

The broad scope of the GAP III thematic areas, and the quantitative targets, have contributed to this.

There is now a great variety of gender responsive actions, and gradually more gender transformative ones. The most transformative initiatives to date are ones which target the interface between several GAP III areas: for example, WPS/WEE, WPS/Participation, WEE/Green economy/Digital transformation. These use sustainable development initiatives to empower women economically; or take the opportunity of peace accords’ implementation measures to empower them economically and foster their participation in political and economic governance. Outside of WPS contexts there is also work to address structural issues regarding implementation of anti-discrimination laws, eliminating labour code aspects that disempower women, and putting in place policies related to maternity /paternity leave, reformation of property law and family law, etc. These actions are more likely to have a transformative impact than traditional sector programmes.

Once confined largely to grants and international organization contribution agreements, GEWE response is now represented halfway through the GAP III implementation period in almost all modalities (except, perhaps, Macro-Financial Assistance or MFA). Budget Support is particularly challenging, as it means tailoring indicators, but there are several good practices in the form of targeted GEWE budget support actions and gendered indicators for disbursement triggers. Blending operations are pose difficulties for gender mainstreaming, but there are also good practices of blending that include gender-responsive indicators, and which target women, especially in support for women-owned MSMEs and access to finance. The evaluation has noted concerns on the “financialisation” of EU external action (discussed under EQ 1). While actions are currently on-going at HQ level to set up processes allowing meaningful gender mainstreaming of these new instruments (with the establishment of a working group between EU HQ and partner financial institutions, to find common ground for effective gender mainstreaming , or reinforced cooperation between DG NEAR and INTPA gender experts on this issue, etc); EUD staff expressed strong concern that it may be marginalised.

5.1.3 Conclusion 3: A strengthened platform for dialogue in a difficult global context

GAP III was introduced in a global context mostly negative for GEWE but has (along with CLIPs) provided a strengthened platform for political and policy dialogue.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 2.

The global context in which GAP III was launched was mixed, but mostly negative when it comes to GEWE. On the positive side, there was increased gender awareness on the part of policymakers and citizens. On the other hand, in many partner countries and to some

extent in the EU MS themselves, there was rising backlash against GEWE. In partner countries, GEWE has frequently been presented in illiberal political discourses as a “Western value” seeking to displace traditional religious/national/family values. Backlash is to some extent foreseeable, but unforeseeable events gave rise to new challenges during the first years of GAP III implementation. COVID-19 disproportionately affected women worldwide, especially in the form of increased domestic violence and care responsibilities (children and the sick) under lockdown conditions. Economic sectors in which women are heavily represented, such as retail, hospitality, tourism, and services in general, were heavily affected. The direct impact on women of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has been mostly restricted in geographic terms, but its indirect effects, in the form of the ensuing global economic crisis, particularly increased energy and food prices, have been worldwide.

GAP III and CLIPs have provided a strengthened platform for political and policy dialogue, including providing talking points for EU MS. Yet, the EU has limited leverage on Governments’ commitment to GEWE, even in the IPA region, where commitment to international standards and EU acquis are necessary for candidate status, but in practice there has been significant backsliding which the EU has been unable to prevent. In countries where commitment to shared GEWE objectives has been dwindling, GEWE has been low on the list of priorities pursued by the EU in its dialogues. However, dialogue and cooperation with civil society groups favourable to progress on GEWE has proven a strong vehicle for pursuing GAP III objectives in countries where the level of Government interest is low. Public diplomacy, where CLIPs have helped EUDs to be more creative and forward-leaning, has also played a role. Thanks to CLIPs, there has been more synergy between project-based communications and EUD- level public diplomacy.

5.1.4 Conclusion 4: Persisting internal constraints

As the EU’s commitments to GEWE have grown, available financial resources have grown *pari passu*, but not, so far, the human resources to manage these resources for maximum effectiveness.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs1 and 2

Institutional incentives for the staff responsible for EU external action to promote GEWE, both through mainstreaming and targeting, have increased since GAP III was introduced, but remain, so far, uneven. GAP III has had a strong demonstration effect; because, as stated under Conclusion 1, it carries more institutional weight than its predecessors. There has also been a general undercurrent across the services of greater personal commitment to GEWE, due in significant degree to increasing presence of female officials and staff. Since GAP III was introduced, there are more GEWE change leaders at all levels, both men and women: some (not all) decision-makers are committed to GEWE at commissioner level, ambassador level, heads of cooperation and political sections in EUDs, directors, head of units, heads of sections, and in EU MS.

However, a constraint to realizing the full potential of GAP III remains, at midpoint, that EU human resources to promote GEWE lag behind commitments to do so. There is, as well, still not a culture where GEWE is considered a responsibility for all staff. The practice prevailing so far has been to either add GEWE tasks/functions to existing staff, or to add a very small number of dedicated GEWE-only staff, some of whom at HQ level are seconded and juggling broad portfolios. At EUD level, despite exceptions, GFPs are most of the time staff without decision-making responsibilities, dependent on HoC and HoD support. Under GAP III human resources to promote GEWE effectively or, closely related, to monitor its effects once support has been committed, lag behind commitments.

5.2 Implementation

5.2.1 Conclusion 5: The role of CLIPs as a first-generation tool

The quality of the CLIPs varies widely, in part because it is a first-generation tool introduced during the transition between two MFFs.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 2

The evaluation has found that the quality of CLIPs varies widely, from poor to adequate to excellent. Not to be forgotten, though, the uneven scope, consultation and inclusion processes, and drafting modalities of the first-generation CLIPs are largely due to the very fact that they represent a first-generation tool. The first-generation CLIPs mark the transition between the previous and current MFF, and the inertial weight of GAP II-era programming is still, halfway through GAP III, to be felt today. Most of the actions described in the CLIPs were planned before GAP III and long before the CLIP was prepared. Though they were timed in parallel with the MIPs, by the time they were drafted there were very few ADs developed for the new MIPs (under the new MFF). EUDs were caught between competing priorities, so they prioritized the preparation of the MIP. As a result, CLIPs have so far been used more as a tool to report on existing actions which were planned under GAP II than to decide on new actions to implement GAP III priorities. In this transitional phase, EUDs tended to use the CLIP as a consultation and decision-making tool on the general GEWE vision (strategic level), but only as a reporting tool for concrete actions (operational level). That problem can be effectively addressed as the transitional phase passes and CLIPs are updated.

5.2.2 Conclusion 6: The role of Gender Country Profiles

The quality of CLIPs depends fundamentally on the quality of the gender analysis (i.e., the Gender Country Profile) that informs them.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 2.

CLIPs depend on Gender Country Profiles (GCPs), translated into the CLIP as an analytical section. For this reason, the quality of the CLIP is inseparable from the GCP. But in practice, the GCP has often been envisaged as an exercise separate from operational programming. Because EUDs have lacked time, capacity, and expertise, many have relied on external expertise for GCPs (as well as CLIPs). When combined with active internal supervision (typically by the GFP) and staff involvement, external expertise can be leveraged into internal capacity building, but if outsourcing amounts to offloading, then no such virtuous process is set in motion.

The first factor essential to the quality of GCPs is inclusiveness, i.e., a participatory and consultative drafting process. This has two dimensions: internal (within the EUD, as well as involving the CSDP missions and operations, where applicable) and external (with EU MS and other partners). In some, but not all, case study countries, the evaluation found genuine internal consultation, or even co-creation of the GCP. External inclusiveness, particularly with EU MS, ensures joint analysis that results in shared ownership of a common understanding, so that GEWE support is coherent, and resources are pooled. Based on evidence from the first half of GAP III, the evaluation found evidence of this in some, but not all, case study countries.

5.2.3 Conclusion 7: CLIP drafting process

The process of drafting the CLIP did not always guarantee its crucial role as the link between the overall GAP III vision, country gender context, identified priorities, and proposed actions.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 2

The essential function of the CLIP is to tailor the EU response, within GAP III's vision, to the GCP analysis and EU areas of action (as per the MIP). The CLIP served as a new and needed vehicle to channel the EU's and EU MS' common interest in GEWE support. However, as with GCPs, the consultation processes leading to the CLIPs have so far varied widely depending on context/feasibility, motivation and capacity. The level of inclusion of EU MS has ranged from simply commenting to joint commitments for concrete results (including through TEIs). Tailored response also requires joint decision-making within the EUD and here, the level of involvement of the EUD's sectors in contributing to CLIPs has been so far uneven. Typically, the GFP took the lead in close communication with the Head of Cooperation and, in some cases, sector managers. But CLIPs have often lacked a discernible link between the GEWE analysis, the selection of GAP III thematic areas, and the envisaged actions. The choice of thematic areas (and corresponding objectives) has not always been justified, and its rationale is at times difficult to understand.

The evaluation team has statistically documented the post-GAP III increase in G1/G2 actions. However, despite guidance from Brussels, understandings of the gender marker system still vary. The level of skill and motivation of EUD staff, often with low level of training and limited HQ support due to capacity limits in Brussels, remains variable. So far GAP III has been a success in high-level "strategic" programming (typically at MIP level). But translating GAP III commitments into results hinges not only on strategic programming, but on "operational" programming (typically at AAP and AD level), because this is where there is sufficient granularity to identify the expected concrete results and to map resources available onto results expected. The essential function of the CLIP is to make this link between strategic commitment to GEWE, and operational programming for GEWE. Yet, the evaluation has found a distinct "gender dilution" as high-level gender narratives embedded in GAP III and MIPs have moved downstream through AAPs and ADs and eventually to contract negotiation.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Conclusion 8: Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)

GAP III has provided greater specificity on what the EU means by WEE, including the important concepts of intersectionality and transformative change. Despite new opportunities for action in areas such as digital transformation and green economy, there is more continuity than change in terms of what is actually being supported by EU external action.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 3

GAP III has served to provide greater clarity (and breadth) regarding what WEE covers and the types of actions the EU should be taking to further strengthen its approach in this priority area. This has made it a useful reference document for use in advocacy with government and other partners. Concrete examples of increased specificity regarding WEE can be found in regional MIPS. This was less so the case in country strategy documents (MIPs) but mainly basically because the EU has long worked in this area and these documents already included references to WEE, including paying attention to intersectionality. Thus, the country

level MIPs reflected more of a continuation of past approaches to WEE stimulated by GAPs I and II and the EU's longer-term approach to women's economic empowerment. By the time of the MTR the evaluation team did not find any fundamental or conceptual changes in WEE objectives in operations that would accelerate a shift to more transformative change in women's economic empowerment. The potential for an exception to this lies in new developments related to: 1) the emergence of green economy and digital transformation with a caveat that these still focus on male-dominated industries; and 2) and the growing emphasis on women's access to finance in the context of investment programmes under EFSD+ and EAGs, a number of which set targets and quotas for women benefiting from lending.

An important issue that emerged during GAP III is the need for a more shared gender view as between two of the main wings of the "financialisation" of EU external support discussed under EQ 1 – the EU and the EFIs, the first development grant makers and the second development bankers. Now under GAP III, WEE initiatives support, more than under GAP II, environmentally and economically sustainable, market-friendly initiatives. In addition, they increasingly address the root causes of economic exclusion, especially national normative legal frameworks (such as anti-discrimination laws). In general, though, the new instruments available are being deployed to support areas in which the EU was already active such as the integration of support for women entrepreneurs in private sector development. One area that is still relatively unexplored is the care economy, due to the way support for this work is subsumed and reported under other projects, as opposed to being identified as its own action category. While there are a few related targeted projects to help women gain financial agency and autonomy this approach has not been mainstreamed well in economic development interventions. Obviously, the political and social environment regarding issues such as dowry, inheritance, land ownership, etc., represent challenges that GAP III-based dialogues on WEE must deal with. Willingness to address WEE and related thematic objectives ranges from high levels of commitment to limited or only cursory treatment and this inconsistency in political will and leadership particularly at the country level limits the effectiveness of the implementation of GAP III's WEE objectives.

5.3.2 Conclusion 9: Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

Through the different GAPs, the EU has made increasing commitments to WPS, culminating in its identification in GAP III as a thematic priority requiring a transformative approach. However, the WPS agenda has been lagging behind the broader GEWE mainstreaming agenda.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ 4

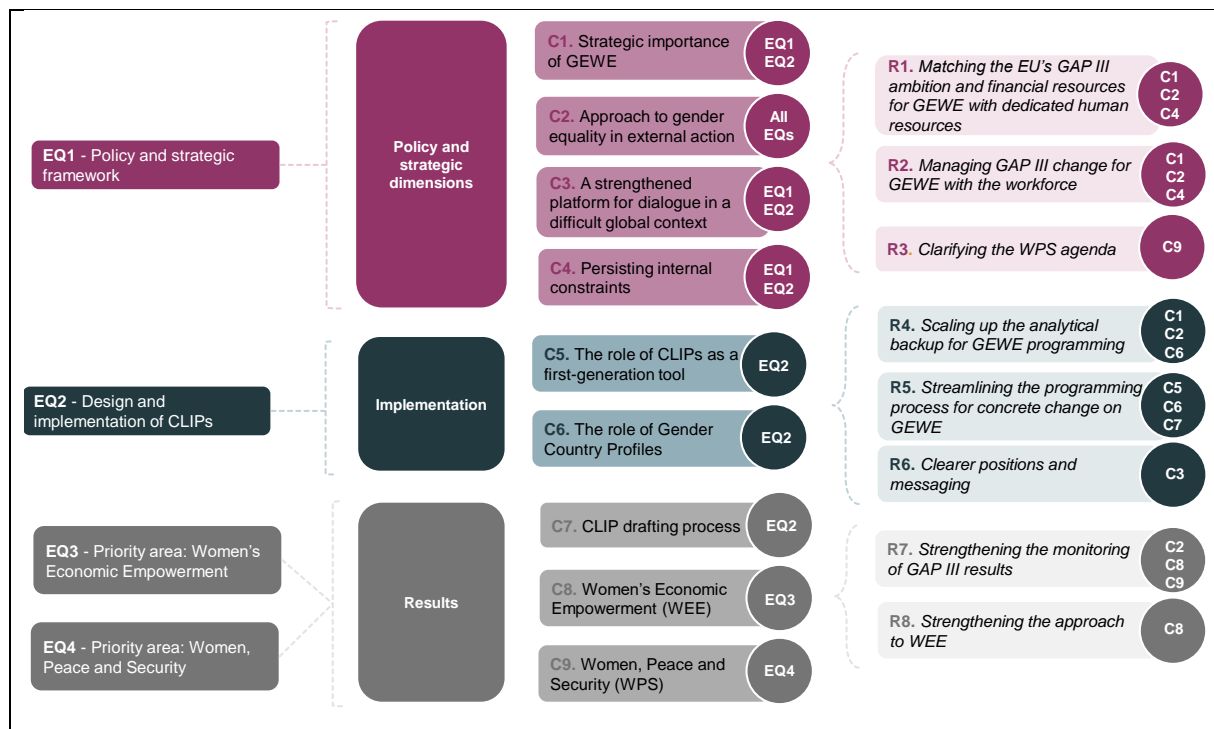
Over the course of successive GAPs, the EU has made steadily increasing commitments in the area of WPS, culminating in it being identified in GAP III as a thematic priority requiring a transformative approach and in the EU Council's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence of 21 March 2022 integrating a strong WPS component serving as a guideline for all EUDs. WPS is better integrated into EU external action and the related institutional framework under GAP III than before, both within the EC and EEAS (particularly through a network of specialists within EEAS). Yet, the EU lacks dedicated resources, operational guidance about the programmatic side (EC spending actions), and training to make good on the WPS commitment already contained in the EU's Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. The tools to implement GAP III and the WPS Action Plan are not well aligned, as the indicators of the WPS Action Plan are not always suitable for action documents – a key avenue for the implementation of GAP III. While all other GAP III thematic priorities mostly focus on outcome-level indicators, the WPS thematic priority is mostly about mainstreaming (output-level) targets. Overall, according to most interviewees, the WPS agenda has been

lagging behind the broader GEWE mainstreaming agenda. Tending to confirm this, WPS is less well documented than other areas, and interviewees are less familiar with it. With some exceptions, WPS is under-represented in the Gender Country Profiles and in the analytical sections of the CLIPs. To implement the GAP III thematic area of WPS, EEAS leads on CSDP missions and operations as well as peace dialogue, whereas DG INTPA keeps the lead on programming for spending actions on the WPS thematic priority. Unit G1 and G5 teams contribute to the EU's strategic approach on WPS both transversally and at country level through expertise, guidance documents, and participation in relevant internal and external consultation platforms. However, EEAS does not have core financial resources for WPS programmes, whereas human resources dedicated to WPS in the EC are very limited, as well as iterative capacity building and training. In contrast, specialised gender and WPS capacities, action plans and training resources exist in the civilian and military CSDP, though they are still insufficient to propel WPS to the fore of the CSDP's concerns and activities.

6 Recommendations

This section presents seven recommendations, which emerge from the conclusions presented in the previous section. Figure 5 shows the linkages between EQs (findings), conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 5 Linkages between EQs, conclusions and recommendations



Source: Particip.

6.1 Policy and strategic level

6.1.1 Recommendation 1: Matching the EU's GAP III ambition and financial resources for GEWE with dedicated human resources in all external action services

The EU, devoting a substantial portion of its external action resources in support of gender equality, mainly through gender mainstreamed interventions, should put in place the human resources at all levels to ensure that gender mainstreaming

requirements, as well as the OECD-DAC gender marker system, are fully understood by all staff.

This recommendation is linked to: [Conclusion 1](#), [Conclusion 2](#), and [Conclusion 4](#)

What should be done?

1. The EC and EEAS should create full-time positions dedicated to GEWE in all key branches (e.g. directorates) of DG NEAR, DG INTPA, ECHO, FPI, and EEAS. The EC and EEAS should increase the GEWE-only dedicated human resources at Headquarters level (EC) and at central level (EEAS).
2. The EC and EEAS should create one full-time position dedicated to GEWE per sub-region, located as a "hub" in one EUD of the sub-region and serving as a complement to, and transition with, HQ GEWE specialists, as well as a facilitator for mutual support among EUDs on GEWE.
3. The EC/EEAS should add clear GFP functions to the job descriptions and to the performance appraisal schemes of the GFP (gender advisors in EEAS) who hold other functions (this concerns most GFPs in EUDs, in geographic desks, and in thematic services). The job descriptions should contain a percentage of the full-time-equivalent which should be dedicated to GEWE, and this should be reflected on the full-time-equivalent dedicated to other tasks.
4. Building on past efforts relating to this issue, the EC and EEAS should jointly develop terms of reference for different types of GFP functions (headquarters, field, thematic coverage, geographic coverage). These ToR should include typical tasks, required percentage of FTE, desired level of seniority and decision-making power, training and experience requirements, reporting and accountability lines.

6.1.2 Recommendation 2: Managing GAP III change for GEWE with the workforce

The EU should further train, coach, advise, and motivate its staff to implement GAP III, relying on gender-responsive leadership as per GAP III recommendation.

This recommendation is linked to: [Conclusion 1](#), [Conclusion 2](#), and [Conclusion 4](#)

What should be done?

1. Develop and deploy, as systematically as possible, training and coaching targeting managers (e.g., Heads of Units in headquarters and in EUDs/CSDP missions and operations, Heads of Cooperation, Heads of Political Section, etc.) and new GFPs, on the fundamentals of GEWE in the EU external action under GAP III. The training should be continuously updated and cover:
 - Fundamental GAP III concepts: gender responsiveness, gender transformation; intersectionality; gender mainstreaming vs. gender targeting (and the markers associated);
 - The GAP III strategic framework on GEWE, and key international standards;
 - GAP III indicators, and how to use/tailor them in action documents and country-level/regional level GAP III reporting;
 - WPS, including conflict- and security- sensitive gender analysis, conflict analysis with an integrated gender perspective (where applicable), as well as programming for WPS;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A region-specific module (one per region) on the key features of national <i>frameworks</i> and key issues in countries of the region.
<p>2. Develop and deploy, as systematically as possible, a series of sector-specific trainings targeting the respective sectors' GFPs, and then (cascading) task managers, and officials in thematic line DGs such as Trade, Agri, Connect, and others (GFPs but also other technical staff). These trainings should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector GEWE analysis (and/or gender-sensitive sector analysis); • Unpacking (e.g., with good practices from EUDs) of what a gender transformative approach could look like in operational programming (mix of modalities in AAPs, partnerships...); • Typical entry points to GEWE in the respective sectors; • Typical gender-specific indicators at Action Document Level (including the GAP III thematic areas and outcome indicators), and realistic ways to tackle the challenges (and resources needed) with gender-disaggregated non-GEWE outcome indicators.
<p>3. Use the dedicated GEWE human resources to (both proactively and on demand) advise and coach the GFPs and their peers (staff of geographic Desks, Heads of Cooperation and Heads of Political, thematic DGs' technical staff).</p>
<p>4. Systematically entrench GEWE in results-based management and performance monitoring processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include GEWE-specific indicators in programming documents, to be covered in reporting processes. • Systematically include GEWE-related personal objectives in individual performance assessments.

6.1.3 Recommendation 3: Clarifying the WPS agenda

The EU should more clearly define and harmonise the WPS agenda, so it is uniformly understood and embraced across services.

This recommendation is linked to: [Conclusion 9](#)

What should be done?

- 1.** Update and complement the existing internal guidance on the EU-wide vision on WPS under GAP III. This could be done through:
 - Thematic guidance notes on WPS, with modules on various types of contexts (security sector reforms in non-conflict affected countries; DDR; fragility contexts, active conflicts, recent conflict, less recent conflict; gender and conflict issues vis-a-vis other thematic areas of the GAP III); and modules on various pillars of WPS and interconnection between WPS and other areas (SGBV, but also WEE and access to resources, women's political participation including participation in security- and conflict-related policy and dialogues, etc...)
 - Harmonisation of guidance on conflict analysis with an integrated gender perspective between EEAS and EC – with different levels of depth depending on the service, and specific methodological guidance and capacity building. Harmonised guidance should, in particular, clarify the division of labour, cooperation and coordination processes, among the various services.

- Inclusion of WPS in sector-specific GAP III training, ideally with:
 - A section on the WPS aspects of the respective sectors (e.g. the training on GEWE in growth and competitiveness could include a segment on WPS in rural development, the importance of women's DDR in local economic development in conflict-affected countries, support to women's access to financial and natural resources in fragility contexts and in reconstruction, economic opportunities for most at-risk women in such contexts...
 - A component dedicated to WPS as a whole, developed jointly by EEAS and EC.

2. Progressively increase the in-house WPS-specific expertise. This could be done by:

- Gradually dedicating (more) specific positions to WPS in EEAS (particularly at central level, so as to increase human resources dedicated to building capacity and developing knowledge-based guidance and expertise on WPS), and the EC (particularly at the level of geographic desks and where possible in the most relevant EUDs), and limiting over-reliance on seconded staff, so as to secure institutional ownership and memory.
- Training GFPs and the staff working on security (in the context of conflict, but also security sector reforms) on WPS.

6.2 Implementation

6.2.1 Recommendation 4: Scaling up the analytical backup for GEWE programming

The EU should strengthen gender analysis at the beginning of each key programming stage (i.e. multi-annual programming, annual programming, and design of specific interventions).

This recommendation is linked to: Conclusion 1, Conclusion 2, and Conclusion 6

What should be done?

- 1.** Develop GAP III guidance notes on all thematic priority areas of GAP III, including a section on analysis.
- 2.** Amend the ToRs and guidelines of the Gender Country Profiles, requiring in-house analysis with the participation of task managers, supported by (not substituted with) external expertise when necessary.
- 3.** Develop ToRs for sector gender analysis (adapted to each sector), in cooperation with thematic Directorates of the Commission's external action DGs.
- 4.** Strengthen involvement of CSOs and EU MS in joint GEWE analysis.

6.2.2 Recommendation 5: Streamlining and aligning GAP III with the programming process for concrete change on GEWE

The EU should more strongly align the MFF and GAP III cycles. The EU should also clarify the role of Gender Country Profiles and CLIPs as country-level operational documents supporting EU programming, acting as a bridge between MIPs and AAPs/action documents stewarded by the GFPs.

This recommendation is linked to: Conclusion 5, Conclusion 6, and Conclusion 7

What should be done?

1. Use the opportunity of the Mid Term Report of GAP III, scheduled for 2023, for all EUDs to review and where necessary update their CLIP.
 - Update the first-generation CLIPs, including future planned actions under the current MIP, preferably specifying which action will be launched under which AAP (timing).
 - Strengthen EU and EU MS commitments around a handful of key, achievable, results.
2. Aligning GAP III duration with the current MFF (i.e., until 2027). Adopt GAP III successor so that new GAP objectives can be incorporated in the next MFF guidance and related instruments. Send instruction for the update of the gender country profile early enough to feed both MIPs and CLIPS design. CLIPs could, in the future, form an annex to the MIPs. – to make it coincide and aligned with the MFF while ensuring that both preparation processes cross-fertilize. In addition, AAPs could include a section on how the CLIP will be implemented through actions, in the given year.
3. Reinforce the GFP's role as steward of the GCP -- CLIP process, ensuring engagement of HoC, HoP, and sector leads, under management leadership
4. Reinforce the GEWE quality assurance of action documents, and the systematic, continuous collection of data on the results of quality assurance by EU external action services responsible for GEWE.

6.2.3 Recommendation 6: Clearer positions and messaging

The EU should clarify that, while it wishes partnership and will always seek common ground for cooperation, it will call out and respond to partner countries policies incompatible with international laws and convention on GEWE.

*This recommendation is linked to: **Conclusion 3***

What should be done?

1. The EUDs should communicate concomitantly (and in proportions that are for them to decide, based on context) on:
 - Partner country Government's international commitments (and their possible violations), as well as shared values and principles on GEWE
 - The concrete, grass-root benefits of GEWE and of what the EU does in each country to support GEWE.

To this end, each EUD should identify key concrete, grass root-level benefits of their recent GEWE actions (whether in G1 or G2 actions), and systematically communicate on these through public diplomacy and policy dialogue.
2. Each EUD, in line with the GAP III, should reflect on GEWE red lines which would trigger active public diplomacy and possibly the activation of conditionalities (e.g., for budget support), as has been done in the past in relation to the Rule of Law and corruption
3. Each EUD should identify coalition partners (EU MS, CSOs, like-minded donors/IOs, including IFIs) on each GAP III thematic priority area selected in their CLIP, and regularly consult with them to define common messages.

4. DGs INTPA and NEAR and EEAS should use the CLIP GAP III mid-term review process to encourage EUDs to formulate key messages in the CLIPs' sections on dialogue and communication.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Recommendation 7: Strengthening the monitoring of GAP III results

The EU should increase the monitoring of GEWE financial allocations, their utility and their adequacy. To this end, it should more clearly define GEWE targets and train its staff on their use, and strengthen mechanisms for monitoring this spending.

*This recommendation is linked to: **Conclusion 2, Conclusion 8, and Conclusion 9***

What should be done?

1. Systematize the monitoring of GEWE financial allocations through systematic review of G1 and G2 actions, and confirmation/deletion/rightsizing of the marker.
2. Increase attention to GEWE in the review of blending and other loans and guarantees, as well as Macro Financial Assistance, through the implementation of dedicated studies assessing opportunities and challenges related to the integration of GEWE in these interventions.
3. Reconsider introducing specific coding for specific GEWE thematic areas (in priority, WPS).
4. Ensure that GEWE coding and meta-data in OPSYS enables reliable data extractions on GEWE financial flows and performance results.
5. Invest resources to consolidate the data on the G1/G2 markers in Action Documents, allowing timely analysis and consistent reporting.

6.3.2 Recommendation 8: Strengthening the approach to WEE

The EU should adopt a more transformative change approach to WEE, including developing a unified and coherent approach to mainstreaming and monitoring.

*This recommendation is linked to: **Conclusion 8***

What should be done?

1. Provide widespread training on existing WEE guidance that includes: a clear definition of what transformative change related to WEE is for the EU, clear Theory of Change, good practices that EUDs could implement.
2. Clarify what is required to mainstream and monitor WEE within its blending and financial instruments, e.g., criteria for QA processes and how mainstreaming will be measured
3. Make the EU's support for care economy work more visible by clarifying how care economy activities that are mainstreamed in other projects or sectors of work can be reported distinctively in results achieved, budget allocations and indicators as care economy inputs.

4. Conduct a WEE portfolio review to identify where the EU's support for women's economic empowerment is contributing to related transformative change and how the EU can shift to a more transformative approach in the future.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or
- by electronic mail via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications


You can download or order free and priced EU publications from EU Bookshop at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

The European Commission Directorate General for International Partnerships - INTPA


INTPA Mission

Our mission is to contribute to sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, peace and the protection of human rights, through international partnerships that uphold and promote European values and interests.

Follow us:

 : @EU_Partnerships

 : EUPartnerships

 : eu_partnerships

 : EUintheWorld

