



Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper

Draft title: Advancing Progress on Women, Peace and Security: Opportunities for GAP IV

Terms of Reference

Background

As the EU prepares its [next Gender Action Plan](#) (GAP IV), there is a timely opportunity to examine how the GAP can more effectively support the implementation of the EU's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda across EU external action. The discussion paper will provide an analysis of how GAP IV can serve as an effective vehicle for advancing the implementation of the EU's WPS agenda and in translating the EU's WPS commitments into programming, financing, indicators, targets, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

The timing of this Discussion Paper is particularly relevant as the European Commission is expected to present GAP IV in spring 2027, followed later in the year by a new EU Action Plan on WPS. Both frameworks are expected to guide EU external action on gender equality under the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Both documents are being drafted in a constrained environment: Increasing levels of violent conflict, growing pressure on Official Development Assistance (ODA), shrinking civic space, and organised backlash against gender equality and women's rights challenge the implementation of the EU's WPS commitments. Against this backdrop, it is important to identify approaches that ensure impact and protect ambition despite constrained resources.

Although the EU GAP and WPS frameworks are distinct policy instruments, they are closely interlinked. WPS indicators as set out in the Staff Working Document accompanying GAP III overlap with the indicators in the EU WPS Action Plan. As both policy documents are updated, this also provides an opportunity to assess how accountability can be strengthened and how complementarity between them can be further strengthened.

Gender action in the next budget has also come up in the MFF negotiations recently. The Council has stated in its [Council partial general approach on the regulation establishing Global Europe](#), the proposed external action instrument under the next MFF 2028-2034, that the objectives of the EU Gender Action Plans, "including relevant targets" should be upheld and applied (p. 26). While the overall position of the European Parliament (EP) on Global Europe is still being negotiated, the EP's [FEMM committee has already published its opinion on Global Europe](#) and proposed that "at least 85% of all EU ODA should be dedicated to programmes that have gender equality as one of their objectives (OECD marker G1 or G2) with 20% of ODA dedicated to gender-targeted projects (OECD marker G2)" and that "at least 5% of ODA should support women's rights organisations" (Amendment 25, Recital 47, p.21). It will be important to ensure that any agreed future commitments can be translated into effective implementation from the outset of the next MFF and the new GAP and WPS frameworks.



Objectives of the discussion paper

The Discussion Paper will assess how the EU's forthcoming GAP IV can strengthen the implementation of the EU WPS agenda across EU external action, particularly in a constrained context. This involves:

- Assessing the extent to which GAP III has contributed to the implementation of the EU's WPS agenda;
- Identifying strengths, gaps, and lessons learned from GAP III implementation, with particular attention to support for women's rights organisations and women-led organisations in conflict-affected contexts;
- Examining the coherence between GAP IV, the forthcoming EU WPS Action Plan, and the proposed Global Europe instrument under the 2028–2034 MFF;
- Examining EU indicators, targets, and accountability mechanisms for measuring progress on WPS objectives, also under GAP IV;
- Developing realistic and actionable recommendations for ensuring that GAP IV effectively advances the EU's WPS agenda, including in a context of potentially reduced financial and human resources.

Methodology/content

The consultant will undertake a desk-based analysis to identify how GAP IV can serve as an effective programming and accountability framework for advancing WPS objectives, including through improved indicators, targets, funding allocations, and support to women's rights organisations (WROs) and women-led organisations in conflict-affected contexts.

The analysis should include:

- A concise overview of the EU Gender Action Plans and the EU WPS framework, including their separate objectives, respective timelines, institutional arrangements, and progress achieved to date;
- An assessment of how GAP III has operationalised WPS commitments through programming, funding, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms;
- A review of relevant indicators and targets used under GAP III and the EU WPS framework, including their strengths, limitations, and implications for GAP IV;
- An analysis of EU funding flows and support mechanisms for women's rights organisations and women-led organisations in conflict-affected contexts, including through CLIPs and Gender Country Profiles, drawing on available evidence and examples;
- Potentially 1-2 examples of EU-supported initiatives that demonstrate lessons learned, good practices, or challenges in advancing WPS objectives through GAP III;
- An assessment of the opportunities and constraints of the next MFF and the proposed Global Europe instrument for sustaining ambitious WPS commitments under GAP IV;
- A set of consolidated, evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the contribution of GAP IV to the implementation of the EU's WPS agenda



The CSDN Discussion Paper will build on available evidence regarding the implementation of GAP III, including independent evaluations, progress reports, and research on EU support to women's rights organisations and women-led organisations in conflict-affected contexts.

Deliverable and scope of work

The external consultant will work closely with an EPLO staff member for the production of the paper. The consultant will agree to submit a first draft for the Discussion Paper, on which EPLO will then provide feedback, before the consultant submits a second draft if needed. EPLO reserves the right to perform a final editorial revision.

Timeframe

Deadline for expression of interest	02-08-2026
Signature of contracts and kick off meeting	Week of 10-08-2026
First draft due	04-09-2026
Final draft due	11-09-2026

10 working days are estimated.

Format

The Discussion Paper will be written in English (British English) and produced in a clear and accessible language for a policy audience. The Paper will have a length between 4000 and 5000 words, including an executive summary of maximum two pages in the format of the template for Discussion Papers (approx. 500-1000 words).

Required expertise and experience:

- Proven knowledge of EU external action/prior experience working on EU affairs with a focus on gender, peace and security (particularly frameworks relating to EU WPS policies and the GAP frameworks)
- Experience working on peacebuilding projects with a focus on gender equality/WPS will be an asset
- An interest in civil society and the Women, Peace and Security agenda
- Proven strong research, analytical, writing and editing skills
- Experience working with the non-profit sector
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English
- Alignment with EPLO's objectives and values
- Availability within the timeframe
- Strong interpersonal skills and responsiveness throughout the assignment

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fifth phase of the CSDN will last from 2023 to 2026. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).

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Remuneration:

10 days' work in the range of EUR 500-750 (excl. VAT) per day.

Application procedure:

Qualified and interested candidates should send their financial offer and the following documents to mgroenewald@eplo.org (subject line: GAP IV CSDN Discussion Paper) **by 2 August 2026 at 23:59 CEST (Brussels time):**

- An up-to-date CV, including contact details of a reference
- A short cover letter setting out how they will approach the research task
- Links to 2-3 recently published papers

Applications will be reviewed, and short interviews will be scheduled with short-listed candidates.



Reference documents

EU GAP framework

- Independent [Intermediate Evaluation of the implementation of the EU's Gender Action Plan III](#) (2021-2027) (8 December 2025)
 - The promotion of gender equality in partnership with CSOs and WROs is a focus evaluation area.
- [Gender Equality: EU extends the duration of the Gender Action Plan in external action until 2027](#) (21 November 2023)
- European Commission '[Joint mid-term report on the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan \(GAP III\)](#)' (20 November 2023)
- Independent [Mid term evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan III](#) (8 May 2023)
 - WPS is one of three thematic case studies in the report.
- [Presidency Conclusions on the Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) III](#) (16 December 2020)
 - GAP III was endorsed by the Council as Presidency Conclusions (and not as Council Conclusions) and supported by 24 member states.
- European Commission [Joint Staff Working Document on Objectives and Indicators to frame the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III \(GAP III\)](#) (25 November 2020)
 - States that "The EU action plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2024)⁵ - endorsed by the Council in July 2019⁶ - is to be read in conjunction with the joint communication on GAP III and with this SWD. Joint reporting will be ensured to the extent possible, in line with respective reporting timelines and obligations. The mid-term and final review of the action plan on Women, Peace and Security should follow GAP III timeline."
 - Indicators in Part II include the thematic indicators of the Women Peace and Security action plan (pp. 26-29).
- EU [Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations](#) (GAP III) (25 November 2020)

EU WPS framework

- [Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security](#) (14 November 2022)
- [EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\) 2019-2024](#) (5 July 2019)
 - "WPS monitoring and reporting is aligned with the GAP III, also to fully integrate the EU policy framework on WPS in the EU's overall gender equality policy framework." ([Source](#))
- [Council Conclusions on WPS and the EU Strategic Approach to WPS](#) - 10 December 2018

EPLO resources on EU WPS and gender equality in external action

- [EPLO position](#) for the European Commission's Have your say initiative on the 'EU action plan for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action (GAP IV)' (30 April 2026)



- EPLO Statement, [Reaffirming and safeguarding the EU's approach to Women, Peace and Security](#) (September 2025)
- EPLO [Statement on the Commission proposal for a Global Europe regulation](#) (September 2025)
- EPLO CSDN Background Paper '[Gender equality in EU external action: Mapping of policies and actors](#)' (June 2025)
- EPLO CSDN Discussion Paper '[Implementing the EU's Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\) as part of the Gender Action Plan III](#)' (December 2021)

Additional CSO publications

- ODI Global '[From GAP III to GAP IV: Rethinking the EU's global support for gender equality](#)' - 3 October 2025
- Kvinna till Kvinna '[EU's Gender Action Plan III: Halfway there? Observations at the mid-term of the EU GAP III](#)' - 27 June 2023
- CONCORD '[Implementing the EU Gender Action Plan III: Turning ambition into impact?](#)' - 21 June 2023
- ECDPM '[Gender equality in EU external action: The gender action plan and the women, peace and security agenda](#)' -17 April 2023

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