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The Director-General

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Secretary General

## **Gender Action Plan III- 2021-2025**

### **Country Level Implementation Plan – Armenia**

With the adoption by the College of the European Union (EU) Gender Action Plan III: An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU external action (GAP III) on 25 November 2020, the EU reaffirms the centrality of gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout EU external action at all levels and in all sectors.

This GAP III Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), built on the Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021 – 2027 (MIP), the Human Rights Country Strategy 2021-2024 and Gender Country Profile (CGP)<sup>1</sup> of the Republic of Armenia (Armenia) 2021, covers both the programmatic and political commitments and propose specific actions and initiatives for promoting gender equality in the Republic of Armenia.

The following actors have been consulted in the preparation of the CLIP: the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, EU Member States (EU MSs), women’s organisations and other civil society actors.

#### **1. Context for EU action gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country**

In the past few years, Armenia has been making some progress in the [Global Gender Gap Index](#), which is calculated each year by World Economic Forum. From being 102<sup>nd</sup> in numeric position in 2016, to advancing to 98<sup>th</sup> in 2019 and 2020. However, according to the data of 2021 report, Armenia is at 114<sup>th</sup> place in the Global Gender Gap Index<sup>2</sup>. The main changes occurred in the sub-index of economic participation and opportunity (from 78<sup>th</sup> place in 2020 to 96<sup>th</sup> in 2021)<sup>3</sup>. This might be explained by the severe consequences of the COVID-19

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<sup>1</sup> All the references for this CLIP can be found in the Armenian Country Gender Profile (CGP): <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news-and-stories/publications/country-gender-profile-of-the-republic-of-armenia/>

<sup>2</sup> The Global Gender Gap Index, 2021 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

pandemic of 2020. In the ranking of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Armenia is in 25<sup>th</sup> place out of 26<sup>th</sup> countries<sup>4</sup>.

The Government of Armenia addresses gender inequality through a number of policy instruments: i) the National Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 for Gender Equality, ii) the 2019-2021 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Provisions of the UN SC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, iii) the Law on Prevention of Violence within the Family, Protection of Victims of Violence within the Family and Restoration of Peace in the Family, iv) the Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

The national mechanisms of gender equality are the following:

- Council on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adjunct to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia;
- Equal Opportunities Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA);
- Permanent commissions on gender issues established in each *marzpetaran* (regional governing body);

Ever since 2018, the MLSA became the main government actor in the formulation and implementation of gender equality policy and promotion of gender mainstreaming.

In 2019, the Council on Women's Affairs, chaired by the RA Deputy Prime Minister, was established. The Council is a national mechanism that assists to the involvement of women in the democratic processes, and ensures equal rights and equal opportunities among men and women in Armenia<sup>5</sup>. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and war, the Council didn't get much work done.

The current CLIP is based on the Multi-annual Indicative Program (MIP) 2021-2027, the Human Rights Country Strategy 2021-2024, the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and on the Road Map for civil society and the Gender Action Plan III. The Gender Country Profile was elaborated with the EU4Gender Helpdesk, through various consultations with the government gender focal points, civil society organisations, representatives of the EU Members States and representatives of United Nations agencies.

The priority areas of EU cooperation with Armenia financed under the MIP are:

- **Resilient, sustainable and integrated economy**

*Main gender sensitive results to be achieved:*

- **Gap in economic activity of men and women is decreased**, especially for women in the age group 25-34 years old. Currently, the largest gap in economic activity occurs especially in this age group, in coincidence with childbearing among women. Consequently, women employment reached its peak in the 40-54-year-old age group, meaning that women are out of the job market during their most employable years, they

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=102587>

have fewer skills and working experience compared to men in the same age group and employers are reluctant to hire women over 40 years old.

- ***Preschool attendance in Armenia, especially in rural areas, is increased.*** At present the level of pre-school attendance in rural areas sits around 17.2%.
- ***The percentage of women employers and business owners is increased.*** A substantial gender gap is recorded in Armenia in favour of men among employers, since the 86% of employers are men. On the other hand, when it comes to women business owners, , women are under-represented among business owners and that women-owned enterprises are smaller and more disadvantaged than those owned by men as long as access to credit, resources and assets is concerned.
- ***Ensure increase of participation of women and girls from marginalized communities in the labour market.***
- ***Gender pay gap is decreased.*** In 2020, the gender pay gap in Armenia amounted to a rate of 34.7% and, according to data from the World Bank, women earn 20% less than men. Three factors influence the gender wage gap, such as women's age, geography (born in regions vs in the capital) and level of education;

- **Accountable institutions, rule of law and security**

*Main gender sensitive results to be achieved:*

- **Better gender parity in decision-making** in all branches of the government at the national and subnational level is ensured. Nowadays, at the national level, there is only one woman minister, At the local level, in only 1 out of the 46 urban communities in Armenia the mayor is a woman. None of the community leaders of the regions nor any governor is a woman.
- **Istanbul Convention to be ratified.** Armenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention was prevented by a strong anti-gender opposition movement
- **Gender-based discrimination in law and practice is addressed.** Only 26.6% of judges in Armenia are women. Moreover, the percentage of women judges decreases among the higher ranks of the judiciary.
- **Population's awareness about sexual and domestic violence is increased.** During the COVID-19 pandemic, local NGOs recorded an alarming increase in domestic violence, over 700 cases of domestic violence cases are reported each year, and women's organisations' hotlines receive around 3,000 calls in 2021. .

**Gender-sensitivity of state policy makers**, including law enforcement and judiciary, in order to improve gender-sensitive policies in the field of sexual and gender-based violence. Up to these days, the Armenian Criminal Code does not outline any specific guidelines for qualifying cases or punishing crimes which involve domestic violence. Law enforcement officers and judges lack of appropriate training.

- **Environmental and climate resilience**

*Main gender sensitive results to be achieved:*

- **Women are involved in the production of agricultural goods**, work in safe and protected environment. Currently, women are over-represented in informal employment in this sector, which undermines their full enjoyment of workers' rights and protection.
- Women's visions and experiences are utilized in the process of **addressing climate-related problems**.
- **Women have more access to natural resources and utilities.**
- **Improved living conditions** of women and men also through improved access to drinking and irrigation water;
- **New green economic development and jobs linked to the green transition**, equally available to women and men;
- **Frameworks for inclusive green economy and promotion of green growth and jobs** are enabled;
- **Resilience of health system through enhancing public health systems is increased.**
- **Access to public health by men and women, including women and girls with disabilities, is enhanced.** Physical obstacles and discrimination prevent women and girls with disabilities from exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights Biased attitudes and lack of knowledge and skills among the medical personnel affects in particular women and girls with disabilities and women living with HIV, especially in rural parts of Armenia.

- **Resilient digital transformation**

*Main gender sensitive results to be achieved:*

- **Percentage of women and girls involved in the innovation, science and technology** (IST) is increased. Women's involvement in the information and communications technology sector in Armenia is 30%. However, only 11% of leaders in the ICT sector are women and the pay gap in this sector is substantial.
- **Policy environment and infrastructure for digital transformation**, reduction of digital divide by narrowing gender, urban-rural digital disparities are enhanced.

- **Resilient, fair and inclusive society**

*Main gender sensitive results to be achieved:*

- **Protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms, gender equality, and anti-discrimination** is strengthened.
- **Evidence-based, inclusive dialogue and policies** are developed and adopted. Policies in Armenia presents some gaps when it comes to inclusiveness.
- Social inclusion through **equitable access to public services and socio-economic integration** is enhanced. Women in Armenia still represent the majority of the long-term unemployed population (53%) and the 60% of women work in sectors that are not particularly lucrative, including agriculture, education and health care.
- **Access of various groups of population, including those from disadvantage and vulnerable groups, to public education, social services, information, culture, and employment** are improved. Lack of essential gynaecological care is still a problem for women from marginalised and vulnerable groups in Armenia. A further example of the necessity to improve access of vulnerable groups to these kind of services is provided by the persisting gender bias in Yezidi communities. Indeed, among 40,000–60,000 Yezidis, only a handful of Yezidi girls attend university.
- Support measures for **continuous capacity building of women's civil society organizations** are ensured.

## **2. The objectives and the selected thematic areas of engagement:**

The overall objectives of the EU action for gender equality and women's empowerment in Armenia are:

1. to ensure freedom from all forms of gender-based violence,
2. to strengthen economic and social rights and empower girls' and women' s advancing for equal participation in leadership and gender equality in education
3. to integrate the women, peace and security agenda, and
4. to promote gender equality in the green and digital transformation.

Special attention will be paid to the gender specific needs of girls and women from marginalized communities, including those with disabilities.

The overall objectives, corresponding to four out of six GAP III strategic policy areas on gender equality and women's empowerment, will be addressed with actions deriving from the MIP 2021-2027 and to be promoted in the political and policy dialogues.

### **Freedom from all forms of gender-based violence**

To reach the overall objective that women and girls live lives free from gender-based violence, the EUD Armenia will focus on the following specific objectives:

- Promoting capacity building programs for representatives of state to increase their gender-sensitivity and skills to address gender-based violence.
- Supporting judicial reforms directed towards ensuring specific procedures in order to criminalize any form of domestic and sexual violence.
- Supporting the implementation of the Law on Prevention of Violence within the Family, Protection of Victims of Violence within the Family and Restoration of Peace in the Family.
- Supporting ratification of the Istanbul Convention.
- Supporting implementation of effective legal, policy and practical measures to address GBV against women with disabilities, particularly those living in institutions.
- Facilitating the adaptation of robust measures to combat gender stereotypes, discriminatory social norms and school-related gender-based violence in and through education.
- Supporting women's civil society organizations tackling gender-based violence, including online sexism.

### **Strengthening of economic and social rights and empowerment of women and girls**

In order to meet the objective that will enable women, men, girls and boys to exercise their economic, labour and social rights freely and equally, the EUD Armenia will pursue the following specific objectives:

- Supporting decreasing of inequalities and supporting resilience and human development, in particular targeting women, youth and marginalised groups.
- Facilitation of pandemic and post-war recovery and economic growth.
- Supporting further development of women's owned business, and enabling environment for the strengthening of women's entrepreneurship.
- Supporting human capital and supporting modernization of education, including better quality skills for jobs, preparing girls and boys, women and men, including those from a marginalized background for challenges and opportunities of labour market.
- Prioritizing free growth and jobs (with more accent on environment and innovation) and targeted recovery initiatives in Southern Armenia.
- Supporting building of a stronger gender responsive education systems to promote gender equality and deliver more equitable education results for girls and boys through safe and healthy learning environments, teacher recruitment, training and professional development, curricula and learning materials, work with parents and communities.
- Supporting improvement of access to comprehensive sexuality education in capital and regions of Armenia.

- Assisting government of Armenia in the introduction and fostering of policies for more flexible work-life balance for women addressing time poverty, providing childcare and family support.
- Assisting government of Armenia in the awareness raising campaign on harmonization of work, family and private life, equal division of reproductive work, and men's active participation in performance of parental responsibilities.

### **Integration of women, peace and security agenda (WPS)**

To reach the overall objective that, rights of women and girls affected by conflict are protected, and women and girl's participation and representation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict governance is ensured, the EUD Armenia will pursue the following objectives:

- Enhancing security, post-war recovery, and confidence-building, including improved border management, countering violent extremism, conflict transformation.
- Increasing efforts to enhance multilateralism, global solidarity, and to de-escalate geopolitical tensions, thus contributing to peace and security.
- Supporting implementation of UN1325 National Action Plan adopted by the government of Armenia, including localization of women, peace and security agenda in the border with Azerbaijan regions of Armenia.
- Supporting implementation of confidence-building activities, psychological and rehabilitation programs for women, men, girls and boys in Tavush, Syunik and Gegharkunik regions.
- Supporting implementation of programs aimed at increasing women's leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian action, and effective implementation of the WPS agenda in Armenia.
- Supporting monitoring of the violation of women and girls rights in the border regions.

### **Harnessing the challenges and opportunities of the green transition and digital transformation.**

To reach the overall objective that women influence decision-making processes on environmental conservation and climate change policies and actions, the EUD will pursue the following specific objectives:

- Promoting women's and girls' participation and leadership in order to ensure gender responsive strategies to climate mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and the inclusive and sustainable management of natural resources.
- Supporting women's networks in green transition sectors, such as sustainable forest management, agriculture and energy.
- Promoting digital education and skills for jobs and entrepreneurship while addressing gender norms and stereotypes that steer women and girls away from technology.
- Supporting women digital innovators and entrepreneurs across multiple industrial ecosystems to build an inclusive digital economy with the aim of closing the digital gender gap.

- Supporting improvement of secure and affordable e-connectivity and inclusive digital skills development, especially for disadvantaged groups, narrowing gender, urban-rural digital disparities.
- Supporting investments in girls' education to achieve equal access to all forms of education and training, including science, technology, engineering and maths, digital literacy and skills, and technical and vocational education and training.

To reach the GAP III target that at least 85% of all new actions in each priority area / sector of the MIP will have gender equality as a significant or principal objective, goals, objectives and indicators from the MIP - GAP III corresponding thematic engagement areas will be used in the design, formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the Annual Action Programs (AAP). Implementing partners will be provided with guidance in integrating these in their proposals / contracts.

Engaging with civil society has been critical in ensuring effective reforms, as it has supported gender equality in the Republic of Armenia. The civil society organizations will be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of EU actions. One of the priorities of MIP is to increase CSO' capacity in implementing the provisions of the EU Gender Action Plan.

Measures in favour of civil society, foreseen by CLIP, will accompany and inform all the priority areas, with the understanding that a fully democratic, open and inclusive society requires civic engagement, and collaboration of all actors, with civil society and independent media playing the role of fostering positive changes and public oversight. CLIP will also focus on the EU-Civil Society Roadmap 2021-2027 priorities in Armenia which include addressing the human rights agenda, democratisation, policy monitoring and dialogue, monitoring of CEPA implementation, capacities for engagement with citizens and greater sustainability of CSOs, supporting gender equality, youth, the most vulnerable groups and an inclusive and tolerant society, and resilience, engagement in environmental and climate issues.

### **3. Targeted actions supporting gender equality and women's empowerment**

The overall objective of the G2<sup>6</sup> action will be ensuring: (I) freedom from all forms of gender-based violence, (II) strengthening economic and social rights, (III) and empowering girls and women and advancing equal participation and leadership.

**At the national level**, the action will provide support to the Parliament and the Government to adopt and implement gender transformative laws, policies and budgets in selected sectors, by:

- Reforming and strengthening gender mechanism for effective gender mainstreaming in laws and sectoral policies, by piloting in employment (address the pay gap, equal access to jobs, access to finances and care services), education, digitalization and infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> Defined as G2 actions in line with OECD gender maker G2. These actions should aim at achieving a long-lasting change tackling harmful gender norms and stereotypes, by implementing a comprehensive and gender-transformative approach



- Supporting the Government to adopt mechanisms and principles of gender responsive governance.
- Advancing equitable public financing and accountability through gender responsive budgeting.
- Supporting the development of just and inclusive society through support of evidence-based, responsive, participatory, inclusive policies of the Government and assisting disadvantaged groups to improve their living conditions.

**At local level**, the actions will be aimed at the capacity building of Local/Regional Authorities and empower Civil Society Organizations, coalitions, women and youth from communities to engage in gender mainstreaming at local level by:

- Strengthening post COVID-19 and post war economic recovery, climate resilience and inclusion of women in local development.
- Enabling youth civic activism for gender equitable local governance and empower local women leaders to act as agents of change.
- Improving protection from gender-based discrimination and violence through access to legal services via survivor centered approach.
- Building capacities of local authorities in understanding and use of data for evidence-based violence prevention programs.
- Supporting local CSOs in the effective implementation of GAP III and monitoring of the EU support to the government of Armenia.

The action will address root causes of gender inequalities and apply a gender-transformative, rights-based and intersectional approach and accelerating progress towards global goals including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) at the core of the 2030 Agenda.

**Specific indicators under each area of engagement:**

**Area of engagement I - on freedom from all forms of gender-based violence<sup>7</sup>:**

- Extent to which legislation and/or policy prohibiting/addressing gender-based violence has been developed, strengthened and/or implemented.
- Proportion of victims of violence (sexual and gender-based violence) in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms, disaggregated by sex.
- Proportion of women's rights organizations, autonomous social movements and civil society organizations, including those representing young people and groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination /marginalization in a partner country, report having greater influence and agency to work on ending gender-based violence

**Area of engagement II - Strengthening economic and social rights:**

- Extent to which gender norms regarding women and men social roles, unpaid care work of women, "feminine" and "masculine" jobs are challenged through education.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2022, EUR 1,000,000 will be targeting activities and actions implemented by CSO to prevent all forms of gender-based violence (Thematic Programme for Human Right and Democracy)

- Number of women with increased management and leadership skills through government initiatives (disaggregated by sector – public/private).
- Extent to which appropriate policies and measures are implemented by government to improve the access of women and girls to inclusive and quality education, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields and quality digital education and training.
- Extent to which lifelong learning opportunities for women, including for occupational transitions is ensured.

**Area of engagement III - Empowering girls and women and advancing equal participation and leadership:**

- Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliament and (b) local governments.
- Number of reforms and specific measures taken by the Government to implement existing policy commitments on women’s and girls’ participation in decision making.
- Extent to which a gender parity system for appointments and accelerated recruitment of women into senior positions in the public and private sectors is implemented.
- Extent to which local and national media challenge discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes about women’s and girls’ participation and leadership.
- Extent to which local and national leaders and influencers, including traditional, religious and community leaders, engage in initiatives to challenge and change social norms and discriminatory practices.

Collaboration with the EU Member states and the UN agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, etc.) may be envisaged in order to implement the activities mentioned under the three areas of engagement.

Calls for proposals for civil society organizations, to implement Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) actions, will be launched every year, under different instruments, starting 2022.

Specific support will be provided by the EU and EU Member states to national gender machineries/networks. Women’s organizations and organizations working on gender equality will receive support in the framework of the civil society facility, civil society organizations and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Call for Proposals.

**4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment**

Gender equality is an important part of the EU-RA Government communication within the framework of the Association Agreement implementation. Article 85 in CEPA highlights the importance of promotion of equal opportunities and antidiscrimination aiming at enhancing gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities between women and men, as well as combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The EU also holds annual political dialogue with the RA, where gender equality figures in the agenda.

The EU will also work toward enhancing enabling environment for civil society. Increased participation of CSOs in tackling climate change, youth inclusion, COVID-19 impact on the

lives of marginalized communities, women's participation in decision-making, combating gender-based violence, and mitigating risks and vulnerabilities in fragile and war-affected communities is set up as a priority indicator.

The action results will be measured through the number of CSOs trained and received financial support.

The EU4Gender Equality: Reform Helpdesk provides regular support to the national gender machinery through consultations, awareness-raising and capacity building activities.

Further specific actions will be elaborated in the coming years in accordance with the priority areas outlined in the MIP.

## **5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities**

The EU Delegation actively highlights international commemoration days and periods, such as International Women's Day, 16 days against gender-based violence, stressing the importance of the commemorated issues in its social media posts, sharing relevant information materials, interviews of the Head of mission, other senior officials. The EU representatives together with the EU Member states participate in events of different levels targeting gender equality and women's empowerment: from the high-profile yearly International Women's Congress with participation of the top officials to the local training for female activists organised by EU-funded grants.

The EU Delegation also delivers demarches related to the Human Rights Council sessions and UNGA (United Nations General Assembly), where gender issues and women's empowerment featuring as EU's priorities.

At project's level public outreach will be organised in the framework of regional or bilateral projects implemented by UN agencies as well as different grants to NGO's to be awarded under various Calls for proposals and other upcoming national projects. The communication strategies of the above-mentioned actions envisage regular dialogue with civil society organisations, targeted media and social media campaigns, participation in various sectoral events, the distribution of promo items, contests etc. Another regional initiative, the EU4Gender Equality: Reform Helpdesk maintains regular communication with governmental officials, providing them with expertise and regular updates on EU gender equality actions and standards.

## **6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation**

The EU4Gender Equality: Reform Helpdesk will be used to provide further consultations and trainings to Armenian governmental counterparts as well as for gender mainstreaming actions financed by the Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP). The EU Delegation Communication support project will also contribute to the promotion of gender equality through the information and communication activities.