



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND GENDER Regional Advocacy Card

Gender equality and women's empowerment have come to be understood as crucial prerequisites to the overall progress of a country, being hence formally anchored in the development strategies of the international community. As stated in A Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010, "The EU is a key player in international development efforts and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Development Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). It has reaffirmed **gender equality as one of the five key principles of the development policy** in the European Consensus on development." Although the European Union's (EU) different levels of commitment provide aid recipient countries with opportunities to address gender inequalities on their domestic soil, challenges remain to bring these commitments into effect.

*As an active promoter of gender equality and women's empowerment, the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN), covering both aid recipient and donor countries of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia¹⁾, intends to engage in a **dialogue with national and European representatives in these regions, with the aim of reminding them of their commitments and ensuring practical implementation of policies.** In the aid recipient countries particularly, the IGPN has been consulting the European Commission Delegations (ECDs) on the matter of the upcoming revision of the country and regional strategy documents, with the intention to highlight the weaknesses of development cooperation and pre-accession assistance in terms of gender concerns, and to advocate for improvements. As for the donor countries represented by some of the new EU member states, IGPN seeks to advocate for a more effective approach towards gender equality in their bilateral ODA (Official Development Assistance).*

Addressing Gender Issues in EU Development Cooperation and Pre-accession Assistance

IGPN's advocacy work reveals there is an **urgent need for enforcement of the existing policies on both European and national levels, as well as for policy change in some of the recipient countries.** The EU officially follows the twin-track approach of promoting gender equality by mainstreaming gender into all stages of the country programming processes, along with supporting special measures for women's empowerment; in reality, however, these policies are undermined by a number of factors. **IGPN has identified as the key challenges the following:**

- Gender mainstreaming is not widespread in the EC-financed countries and there is usually **a limited number of gender-specific projects** in the recipient countries; more to the point, women-focused projects in the EC's assistance sometimes **support the traditional gender roles rather than gender equality and women's empowerment** (i.e. socially-oriented projects in Ukraine)
- Due to **the lack of specifically gender-oriented calls for proposals**, NGOs with gender expertise have encountered financial difficulties (i.e. NGOs in Serbia)

1) IGPN member countries include: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

- In general, projects lack gender indicators and it is clear that **gender is not typically integrated into all stages of the project cycle**, nor is gender mainstreaming applied to all the priority areas of the EU's country strategy documents
- Transparency of the **political dialogue** with CSOs is undermined by **the lack of clear arrangements** for the participation of CSOs; in Macedonia for instance, consultations with CSOs took place on 28. 10. 2008 without the awareness of some NGOs
- **Some ECDs appear to lack the human resources for gender issues** (i.e. the newly set up Delegations in Azerbaijan and Armenia), or gender is only one small activity within the workload of the Gender Focal Points
- Overall, the recipient countries face similar **concerns in the realm of gender equality which need to be addressed more intensively**: women are very far off from their political and economic empowerment; they are responsible for unpaid home duties; they are vulnerable to poverty, especially in the rural areas; they are exposed to human trafficking and domestic violence (domestic violence is closely linked with male unemployment, and consequently an increase in male alcoholism, i.e. in Central Asia)

Taking into consideration the persisting gap between policy and practice in the EU's development cooperation and pre-accession assistance, IGPN encourages the EU representatives to reflect on the following recommendations.

Recommendations to the EU:

- To integrate gender issues into all stages of country programming and project cycle
- To apply gender mainstreaming to the priority areas of the country strategy documents
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with the CSOs in partner countries
- To push the national governments to address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice

Addressing Gender Issues in Bilateral ODA of EU Member States

Regarding the development cooperation of individual EU states, country reports demonstrate that **gender equality is highly neglected in the bilateral ODA of the new member states**. As pointed out in the 2008 Concord report "No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality", gender equality and women's empowerment is "a secondary element for the moment" (Romania) or "non-existent in the development aid agenda" (Latvia). Among the most important deficiencies are **the lack of a gender strategy** (i.e. the Czech Republic), **the lack of gender expertise and understanding of gender mainstreaming at the MFAs** (i.e. Slovakia), **poor coordination of development aid** (Bulgaria), **the lack of efficiency and transparency of the ODA** (i.e. Hungary), and in general **disregard of the twin-track approach**. IGPN advocates that the individual national governments take their commitments seriously and reflect on the following recommendations.

Recommendations to the National Governments:

- To comply with the EU's accords (i.e. Consensus on Development) and place gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of their ODA
- To improve the efficiency and transparency of ODA
- To improve the institutional framework for implementation of gender into the ODA
- To improve the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the gender aspect in ODA projects
- To formulate a gender strategy respecting the twin-track approach
- To promote an understanding of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation and to increase gender expertise among the government's development experts
- To initiate closer cooperation with NGOs including women's rights organizations

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The full Regional Report is available at: www.igpn.net

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