

Knocking on EU's door:

An exploration of EU funding for gender equality

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Women's Funds Europe is a coalition of 12 women's funds based in 10 countries in Europe working to achieve gender equality and human rights for all in communities and regions around the globe. Their aim is to support and strengthen women's rights groups and movements by providing them with financial and other resources to realise their vision of social justice and gender equality. Each year, they mobilise an average of €17 million to accompany and provide over 470 grants to women's organisations across 76 countries. Women's Funds Europe is part of Prospera, an international network of women's funds. Participating members of this project:

Bulgarian Fund for Women	Reconstruction Women's Fund
Calala Fondo De Mujeres	Slovak-Czech Women's Fund
Ecumenical Women's Initiative	Taso Foundation
Filia Die Frauenstiftung	Ukrainian Women's Fund
Mama Cash	Women's Fund in Georgia
Mediterranean Women's Fund	Women Win

Prospera is a global hub of women's funds and philanthropic organisations driven to transform the world for women, girls, trans* people, and their communities. With 38 members in 33 countries, working at the national, regional and international level, its network partners with grassroots organisations and movements to provide them with access to resources, expertise and structural support. Learn more at: www.prospera-inwf.org

Weisblatt & Associés is a Paris-based philanthropic advisory firm focused on creating impact for social change. Founded by Karen Weisblatt in 2005, it specialises in philanthropy and social sector consulting, and is committed to promoting respect, diversity, equality and innovation. The firm's expertise is in human rights, women's issues, diversity, faith-based missions, advocacy, youth leadership, and social entrepreneurship. Services include strategic advising, grantmaking, research, monitoring and evaluation. Weisblatt & Associés' client base is comprised of institutional and family foundations, as well as non-profit organisations. Learn more at: www.weisblatt-associates.com

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Foreword

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In 2016, members of the Prospera international network came together to create “Women’s Funds Europe” (WFE), a loosely-structured coalition of 12 women’s funds from 10 countries. Collectively, we launched “Knocking on EU’s Door,” an initiative centred on building our capacity to engage with and influence European grantmakers. As creators of a culture of feminist philanthropy, as movement strengtheners, as funders and as fundraisers, our goal is to advance women’s rights and gender equality both locally and globally to create a fairer and more inclusive world.

“The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has found women’s funds to be strategic allies in advancing women’s rights and gender equality as well as the international development goals. Women’s funds are able to connect our funding effectively with grassroots organisations that are key to strengthening civil society and women’s rights worldwide.”¹

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017)¹

To further our aims, we have carried out a number of activities including networking, strategy meetings, team-building exercises, and break-out sessions at conferences. In order to gain deeper knowledge about the European Commission funding process and how best to organise effective advocacy for more funding, we commissioned this report. Our initial hypothesis was that financial flows to civil society organisations and women’s funds working in the field are currently not substantial in the context of the overall EU budget. This report provides many elements crucial to understanding and contextualising this issue.

We would like to thank the administrators of the European Commission units and the stakeholders for their openness, expertise and valuable contributions to this report. We are confident that it is an important step along our journey to secure better access to funds for gender equality in order to advance this issue in the future.



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For the duration of this project, all decisions were made collectively and were overseen and accompanied by Calala Fondo de Mujeres, Ecumenical Women’s Initiative and Mediterranean Women’s Fund as co-coordinators.

1. Women’s Funds Europe, Infographic, 2017, www.prospera-inwf.org

Executive summary

Knocking on EU's Door: An Exploration of EU Funding for Gender Equality is a timely and salient examination of European Union-level support for gender equality. It comes in response to the need for deeper knowledge regarding the scale of this funding and how it is distributed. The report specifically aims to provide insights into:

- How much money is available and who benefits from it
- How women's funds and grassroots organisations can increase their share of this funding in the future

The overall picture of funding for gender equality at the European Union (EU) level is mixed. While there have been many positive initiatives, notably in gender training, the development of measurement tools and contributions to global development aid projects, there is still much to be done. In particular, funding needs to focus on organisations best positioned to advance the goals of gender equality. Further, more concrete data needs to be made accessible to the public.

Among key findings:

1. Despite high-level commitments, gender equality funding across EU public policies is fragmented

2. Concrete data on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting is lacking at the EU level, and there is no centralised body or tool dedicated to measuring gender equality data within Europe
3. EU funds tend to go to large consortia and seasoned practitioners
4. Women's organisations, which are widely regarded as being among the most qualified to work on gender equality, receive almost none of this funding
5. The way in which women's funds currently operate may impede their success in competing for this funding

Research for this report included twenty-five confidential interviews with leaders from women's funds, representatives of EU agencies, advisors to multilaterals and foundations, directors of European networks, human rights specialists and a diverse sampling of philanthropy and NGO professionals (see Annex 1). In addition, 23 representatives from European Institutions provided detailed information. Due to the difficulty in obtaining data, this report is not comprehensive, but rather aims to provide an informed understanding of the current funding situation. Every effort was made to be as precise as possible given these limitations.

In highlighting the current status of financial flows to this area, as well as the challenges facing women's funds, this report can be used as an advocacy tool as well as a resource to help guide strategic thinking for foundations, think tanks and NGOs to further develop the field.

Introduction

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Over the past several years, there has been growing concern at the EU level that despite genuine progress and rhetoric promoting gender equality, an evidence-based analysis of the state of the field is difficult to achieve. It was in this context that the European Parliament published a landmark study in 2015 entitled “The EU Budget for Gender Equality,”² which sought to highlight successes and challenges.

The report demonstrated that the EU has made high-level commitments to gender mainstreaming, the main tool for promoting gender equality, but concluded that these commitments are not always acted upon. While enhanced use of gender-related indicators and more systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data were recommended,³ implementation still largely relies on the goodwill and interpretation of the Member States and the actors involved.⁴

The paucity of verifiable information in this field has bedevilled efforts to clearly understand how much money is available and to whom it is going. This contrasts sharply, for example, with the ease of following European Commission (EC) funding for women and development, monitored closely by the OECD and a variety of other sources.⁵

European Union interest in and support for gender equality is evident, but the fragmented nature of these efforts is so complex that much more ongoing assessment and monitoring is necessary in order to understand what is actually being accomplished. A recent European Parliament report stated:

“A clear gender strategy, with specific objectives, targets or allocations, does not emerge from the 2014–2020 MFF⁶ and often it is not possible to derive the resources allocated to achieving gender objectives. In many programmes information from a gender perspective on financial allocations, on implementation and outcomes are lacking or are incomplete. Important tools for gender mainstreaming, such as gender indicators, Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) and Gender Budgeting (GB) are very rarely adopted in both EU and national institutions.”⁷

Slow implementation of already-existing strategies is an obstacle to making larger strides towards gender equality, which a 2017 European Parliament Resolution aimed to address:

“There has been minimal implementation of existing policies and insufficient budgetary resources earmarked for gender issues... the EU’s earlier high-level commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming have not yet been fully reflected in the budget allocations and spending decisions in EU policy areas.”⁸

This report is a response to the need for deeper knowledge about how gender equality funding works at the European Union level. It aims to provide insights into how much money is available, who benefits from it,

2. European Parliament, Directorate General For Internal Policies, Policy Department, Budgetary Affairs, Gender Equality, “The EU Budget for Gender Equality,” Dr. Firat Cengiz, University of Liverpool, Prof. Fiona Beveridge, University of Liverpool, 2015, see: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/490708/IPOL_STU\(2015\)490708_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/490708/IPOL_STU(2015)490708_EN.pdf)
3. “The EU Budget for Gender Equality,” Dr. Firat Cengiz, Prof. Fiona Beveridge, University of Liverpool, 2015, quoted in “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS, Daniela Loi, IRS, 2016.
4. Petra Debusscher, “Gender Equality Policies in the European Union: Economic Integration and Feminist Transnational Advocacy,” AG About Gender-Journal of Gender Studies, 2015, Vol 4 N°8, pp. 1-19.
5. See for example: www.devex.com
6. Author’s note: For more on the Multiannual Financial Framework, see section “Financial Overview – the EU Budget and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020”.
7. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS, Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016, p. 9.
8. European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2017 on EU funds for Gender Equality (P8_TA(2017)0075).

and how women's funds and grassroots organisations can increase funding in the future. In recent years there have been improvements in gender equality efforts, notably in gender training, the development of measurement tools and contributions to global development aid projects.

Yet while much has been accomplished, there is still more to be done. In highlighting the current status of financial flows for this priority, as well as the challenges facing women's funds, this report can be used as an advocacy tool, as well as a resource to help guide strategic thinking for foundations, think tanks and NGOs to further develop the field.

Methodology

Research for this report was undertaken between May and October 2018 on the main funds and programmes contributing to reaching the targets and objectives of gender equality, as laid out in the EC's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019.⁹

Due to the difficulty in obtaining data, this report is not comprehensive, but rather aims to provide an informed understanding of the current funding situation. Every effort was made to be as precise as possible given these limitations. Case studies have been included as examples to provide context and depth. In all instances, the most recent information available was used; most data covers the period of 2014–2016. Three distinct strands of investigation were pursued:

Seven main funding streams were analysed¹⁰:

European Structural Funds (ESF)

Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)

Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport

Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF)

EU external funding instruments

- European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)
- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

1. **Generating institutional knowledge** – 17 representatives from the European Commission (EC) and European Parliament (EP) provided information in writing and 6 interviews were undertaken with representatives of EC Directorates-General (DGs)
2. **Consulting independent stakeholders** – 25 confidential interviews¹¹ were conducted with:
 - Leaders of women's funds
 - Representatives of EU agencies
 - Advisors to multilaterals
 - Foundation professionals
 - Directors of European networks
 - Human rights activists
3. **Undertaking desk research** – the main funds and programmes contributing to reaching the targets and objectives of gender equality were analysed.¹²

9. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

10. While EU external funding is not the subject of this report, to accommodate certain funds that commissioned this study, funding streams in Georgia and Ukraine were also examined.

11. These stakeholders are quoted anonymously throughout this report.

12. As laid out in the EC's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

Timeline: Gender Mainstreaming Policy Milestones

Source – EIGE website:
<http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

Gender Mainstreaming (GM) has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.

Gender Budgeting (GB) is a strategy to achieve equality between women and men by focusing on how public resources are collected and spent. The Council of Europe defines gender budgeting as a “gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.”

1957

Treaty of Rome
Incorporates the principle of equal pay for equal work (Art 119)

1996

European Commission's Communication on Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women
Commits to GM as a strategy for promotion of gender equality in all its policies and activities, alongside the implementation of specific measures

1999

Treaty of Amsterdam
Articles 2 and 3 formalise the commitment to GM by establishing equality between women and men as a specific task of the Community as well as a horizontal objective affecting all Community policies and programmes

2003

European Parliament Resolution on Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament
First Resolution on GM, which contains a commitment to regularly adopting and implementing a policy plan

2006–2010

EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men for 2006–2010
Outlines priorities: equal economic independence for women and men; reconciliation of private and professional life; equal representation in decision-making; eradication of all forms of gender-based violence; elimination of gender stereotypes; promotion of gender equality in external and development policies

2006

First European Pact for Gender Equality

2007

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

Article 19 provides the legal base for EU legislation combatting discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Takes gender into account in: the principle of gender mainstreaming; social exclusion and discrimination; equality between man and woman with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment; prevention and action against all kinds of trafficking and sexual abuse of women; the fight against domestic violence

2008

Communication “Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities: A Renewed Commitment”

Establishes the legal framework for the Commission to carry out different activities aiming to fight against discrimination

2009

Treaty of Lisbon

Includes enhancements to the social dimension of EU, adding non-discrimination principle and equality between women and men to values of EU (Article 2 of TEU). Mandates that EU shall combat discrimination and promote equality between women and men (Article 3 of TEU)

2010

Charter of Fundamental Rights

Article 21 affirms the principle of non-discrimination based on any grounds, including sex. Article 23 relates to women’s rights and gender equality, affirming that “equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay”

2010–2015

Strategy for Equality between Women and Men for 2010–2015

Specifies priority areas for action. All Directorates-General are invited to set gender equality objectives in the Commission’s yearly programming cycle and work programme

2016–2019

Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019

Prioritises GM as a horizontal issue, identifies five priority areas for action

2011–2020

European Pact for Gender Equality 2011–2020

In context: EU gender equality policy 1957–present

The institutional development of women's rights in the European Union began with the Treaty of Rome in 1957.¹³ As established in Article 119, it enshrined the principle of equal pay between men and women.¹⁴ Building on this, in the 1970s, the European Commission proposed multiple directives to improve the status of women in the workplace and in the social sphere. This period also witnessed the rise and consolidation of the women's movement across Europe.¹⁵ It was a time of significant change and apparent progress. During the 1980s it became more difficult to pass gender equality legislation, possibly due to the costly implementation of the previously agreed-upon directives, which made Member States reluctant to develop new policies.

From the 1990s onward, gender equality issues began to move to the forefront of EU concerns. With the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the overall scope of EU policies was broadened to include an enhanced social dimension, which led to a more progressive approach to the field of gender equality.¹⁶ In 1990, the EC granted its support for the foundation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) to represent women's concerns at the EU level. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty enshrined equality between men and women among the EU's explicit objectives in all its activities, thereby entrenching the principle of gender mainstreaming in the EU Treaty.

At the global level, gender mainstreaming became a favoured tool on the path towards gender equality following the 1995 UN Beijing Conference on Women. In the Lisbon Treaty of 2009,¹⁷ it was officially adopted by the EU as a key strategy, and equality between women and men was upgraded to the status of a fundamental value. These gains were enhanced by the creation of a new tool, gender budgeting, an approach to the budgetary process which incorporates a gender perspective at all levels.

The European Commission developed a five-year strategy of equality between women and men¹⁸ for the period of 2010–2015, which was later reiterated in the 2016–2019 Strategic Engagement.¹⁹ In addition to prioritising gender mainstreaming as a horizontal issue, the strategy highlights the contribution of gender equality to both economic growth and sustainable development. It defines five priority areas:

- Equal economic independence
- Equal pay for work of equal value
- Equality in decision-making
- Dignity, integration and ending gender violence
- Promoting gender equality beyond the EU

13. Signed by the six member states at the time: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West-Germany.

14. Petra Debusscher, "Gender Equality Policies in the European Union: Economic Integration and Feminist Transnational Advocacy," *AG About Gender-Journal of Gender Studies*, 2015, Vol 4 N°8, pp. 1–19.

15. *Ibid*

16. Two particular treaty changes were important: First, the European Parliament was put forward as a full-fledged decision maker next to the Council of Ministers, which increased the chances for a more progressive EU gender policy. Second, a Social Protocol was attached to the EU Treaty which created space for a social dimension of European integration (Dr. Petra Debusscher, 2015).

17. Per Article 2 TEU of the EU and objective Article 3 of the TEU.

18. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 21 September 2010 - Strategy for equality between women and men 2010–2015 [COM(2010) 491 final].

19. See: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/strategic-engagement-gender-equality-2016-2019_en

However, despite being enshrined in numerous documents and treaties, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are not yet systematically applied in the EU general budget, according to several academic assessments.²⁰ A related but distinct challenge is that, following the adoption of Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam,²¹ the EU's approach to combating discrimination includes women with other at-risk populations. This tends to downgrade the profile of gender mainstreaming in the policy agenda.²²

The result of this uneven implementation is that gender-related data regarding European Union funding programmes is not readily available, making accurate assessments of the EU's financial efforts difficult to ascertain. It is in this fragmented and sometimes opaque context that this research was undertaken.

Financial overview: The EU budget and the multiannual financial framework 2014–2020

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The “Europe 2020 Strategy”²³ is the European Union's ten-year growth and jobs strategy, launched in 2010, which outlines how the mission and vision of the EU is rendered operational. This document is complemented by the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which translates the strategy into financial terms for a seven-year period, setting annual maximum amounts (ceilings) for expenditure as a whole, as well as for the main spending categories (headings).

Currently, the revised budget is set at EUR 1 087 billion²⁴ in commitment appropriations, or around EUR 145 billion annually.²⁵ The lion's share of this is devoted to two main areas: growth and jobs; and agriculture and development.

While the MFF is not the EU budget for the duration of seven years, it essentially defines the areas in which the EU should invest and is, therefore, a statement of political priorities as much as a budgetary planning tool. Actions and projects funded by the Commission are set yearly in the annual budget, grouped under headings, and reflect the priorities set by the EU countries at a given time and according to the “Community Method”.²⁶ The annual spending plans are negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the basis of a proposal by the Commission. The budget fixes income and expenditure for the year, lists all the activities that are to be funded, and sets out the total amounts of money and staff available for each.

20. European Parliament, Directorate General For Internal Policies, policy department, Budgetary Affairs, Gender Equality, “The EU Budget for Gender Equality,” Dr. Firat Cengiz, University of Liverpool, Prof. Fiona Beveridge, University of Liverpool, 2015, quoted in: “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women's rights and Gender Equality, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, 2016.

21. Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam (now article 19 of the TFEU) states that “the Council may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation.”

22. Petra Debusscher, “Gender Equality Policies in the European Union: Economic Integration and Feminist Transnational Advocacy,” *AG About Gender-Journal of Gender Studies*, 2015, Vol 4 N°8, pp. 1-19. See: <https://antwerp.academia.edu/PetraDebusscher>

23. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

24. See: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/figures/index_en.cfm

25. The EU budget is expressed in two different amounts: commitments, i.e. legally binding promises to spend money on specific initiatives which will not necessarily be paid out in the same year but may be disbursed over several financial years; and payments, i.e. actual amounts authorised for disbursement in a given year. For more information, see: <https://ecas.org/european-funding-guide-non-profit-sector/>

26. See: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-02-102_en.htm

European Institutions and Structures that Support Gender Mainstreaming

Source – EIGE website: <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/>



Directorate-General for Justice & Consumers - Gender Equality Unit

Structures with policy-specific, or vertical, responsibility for gender

- Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation
- Directorate-General for Research & Innovation

Structures with cross-sectorial, or horizontal, responsibility for gender

- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
- European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet)
- Network of legal experts
- European Network of Experts on Gender Equality (ENEGE)
- High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming
- Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
- Inter-Service Group on Gender Equality

Structures set up in support of other policy areas

- Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings
- European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship
- Advisory Group on Women in Rural Areas



European Parliament

Structures with a mainstreaming mandate

- Political groups
- High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity
- Gender Mainstreaming Network
- Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality



Council of the European Union

What EU funds are civil society organisations eligible for?

As part of its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019,²⁷ the European Commission earmarked an indicative amount of **EUR 6.17 billion** for EU funding programmes contributing to reaching its targets and objectives. This is equivalent to around **0,6 % of the overall MFF 2014–2020 commitments**²⁸ and is divided into seven main funding streams:

- European Structural Funds (ESF)
- Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC)
- Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation
- Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport
- Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)
- Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF)
- EU external funding instruments
 - European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)
 - European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

In terms of funding opportunities for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), EU funds are roughly divided into three categories:

- Structural and investment funds²⁹
- Programmes and initiatives
- External funding instruments (outside the EU)

CSOs are eligible for funding from both Commission-run programmes and programmes run by national and local authorities.³⁰ It is important to note that in the case of structural funds, the vast majority of funding sources are managed by Member States themselves.³¹

The criteria and procedures for applying for funding are usually set out in calls for proposals. These calls invite interested candidates to formulate, before a given deadline, a proposal for action that fits in with the outlined objectives and conditions. Specifically, two types of funding are available:

- Action grants for projects with a limited lifetime during which specific activities are implemented covering a particular area of EU public policy activity
- Operational grants providing direct financial support for a limited duration for the regular work and activities of an organisation that addresses an area of general European interest

In addition, funding is also available to CSOs in the form of public contracts for services or goods, which are secured following successful applications to calls for tender. However, this report focuses on the granting funding streams.

27. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

28. "The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States", European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS, Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women's rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

29. The EC's own thematic networks receive structural funds.

30. National and local programmes are financed through EU cohesion and structural funds. See: <https://ecas.org/european-funding-guide-non-profit-sector/>

31. This is known as shared management, as the Commission only supervises the implementation of funds, while Member States take responsibility for the management. This is the case for the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The current EU approach to gender equality: What stakeholders say

A broad range of stakeholders were interviewed for this study. They unanimously agree that women's organisations are amongst the most qualified to successfully work on gender equality. In numerous areas, such as female genital mutilation or violence against women, it is essential that the specific community concerned has a seat at the table and is involved in the process of finding solutions.

"The EU is most comfortable working with people who write bids on a regular basis. There is a tendency to go for the so called 'triple helix' – practitioners, stakeholders and academics. It is hard to get funding if you don't match this kind of profile. De facto this results in the Commission tending to favour working with those with whom they have already worked. The overall trend is to exclude smaller NGOs."

An advisor to European institutions

Several stakeholders felt that EU gender mainstreaming policy has diluted the potential role of women's funds to create impact by folding gender into other equal opportunity/non-discrimination issues. This creates supplementary challenges to accessing funds.

"I have worked with a women's fund trying to help them get EU funding. There is a problem of positioning – the women's angle has been diluted when they are competing against other minority or at-risk groups such as refugees, youth, Roma, people from economically disadvantaged areas, etc. It is a perplexing dilemma to be competing against so many other worthy groups."

An advisor to NGOs

14 Women's funds are uniquely positioned to impact on these issues due to their ability to connect with grassroots activists, amongst other advantages. Yet nearly all interviewees raised the question about whether women's funds are getting their fair share from the Commission, which, as one pointed out, is shorthand for "Europe". Interviewees noted a sense of disconnect between demonstrated needs on the ground, to which women-led organisations and women's funds can respond, and what the Commission is funding.

"The system is fundamentally broken: how long will it take to change this? The women's funds are the legitimate actors working on these themes, and yet they are not receiving the funds."

A philanthropy professional

Many feel that smaller organisations are not being taken seriously, especially at the government level. Stakeholders noted that EU funds tend to go to large consortia and seasoned practitioners who already have administrative and financial structures in place and are preferably already-known entities.

"When we look at the breakdown of where the EU funds are going it is clear that gender mainstreaming has taken the wind out of the sails of the women's funds."

A leader of a women's fund

Some interviewees stressed that they believe that people no longer perceive gender equality as a significant issue in Europe. They feel there has been a shift in focus to providing aid on gender issues to non-EU countries and the global south, rather than within the EU itself.

“It seems to me that the EU Institutions have a clear discourse on gender – it is well developed. But the funding has not necessarily increased. Why is this? Maybe people think the work has already been done?”

A leader of a women's fund

Many found it difficult to obtain accurate information about gender equality programmes. One reason for this is that there is no centralised body or tool dedicated to measuring gender equality funding data within Europe.

“It would be really interesting to try and get some tracking or embedding of a tool into some kind of official EC measurements – if you could get them to follow this unit by unit and publish results there would be a real impact.”

An advisor to EU institutions

The majority of stakeholders indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with the funding process for CSOs. Many noted that EU funding is extremely complex and information on how to successfully secure a grant is difficult to obtain. Smaller, less experienced organisations felt at a particular disadvantage.

“The contact with the EU representative was very difficult. It was hard to get information in a timely fashion. There was a lot of bureaucracy and administration.”

A leader of a women's fund

The reality of EU funding is that it is a very competitive environment for all CSOs, not only for women's funds. The barriers to entry are high. Multiple stakeholders underscored that, even when they worked with facilitators, dedicated consultants and mentors, including partnering with other women's groups in other countries, they were still unable to secure a grant.

“We need to look at this in terms of barriers to access. First and foremost, you must have at least a quarter million-euro budget to even have a chance to apply. Without this you are not financially viable. If you are on a network project you need more than 14 Member States to participate. You need to think about this on the macro scale. For grassroots associations it is just not easy to access this money.”

An advisor to NGOs

Stakeholders noted that operational grants are difficult to obtain. In the past, many NGOs received some funds to cover the core costs of running offices and employing staff for programming. The general funding context for non-governmental organisations has eroded over time and at different points across Europe. Many organisations have not survived.

Following the money: Breakdown of EU funding for gender equality

For this report, seven funding streams were identified that incorporate gender mainstreaming into their programming. Each fund was reviewed to determine how much money is available for gender equality projects and how much is going to women’s/ feminist organisations. An analysis of each of them follows, including: how the funding strand works, how much money is available, where the money is going, and, finally, an assessment of how they are doing.

Given the vast sums of money and numbers of projects undertaken, it was not possible to perform a complete analysis of where the money is being allocated for each fund. While the EU provides online data regarding recipients, these databases are not “user friendly,” making them difficult to search and sort. At present, we are not aware of any intermediary bodies dedicated to ongoing monitoring in this field. This report therefore includes several examples of projects for each funding strand, intended to offer a deeper understanding of their focus and impact.

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1. European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF is “Europe’s main tool for promoting employment and social inclusion – helping people get a job, integrating disadvantaged people into society and ensuring fairer life opportunities for all.”³² It is one of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) which together represent EUR 454 billion for 2014–2020, to be invested in more than 500 programmes.³³

ESIF regulations contain explicit references to gender equality, non-discrimination principles and accessibility which require that data be broken down by gender whenever possible. Funding recipients are required to explain how they will take into account gender equality and non-discrimination principles, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation. The regulations also introduce a general ex ante conditionality (GExAC) on gender equality which requires that Member States provide administrative capacity for the application of EU gender equality law and policy in this field.³⁴

ESF funds are managed by Member States on the basis of operational programmes (OPs) agreed upon with the Commission and developed for the duration of the MFF 2014–2020 programming cycle. ESF regulations stipulate that Member States should promote equality between men and women through gender mainstreaming, and that they should support specific targeted actions with the aim of increasing the sustainable participation and progress of women in employment. 2014–2020 priorities include:

- Tackling gender stereotypes in education and training systems
- Awareness-raising and mobilisation of economic and social partners to address gender segregation, gender pensions and pay gap
- Developing work-life balance policies, including through support for reintegration into the labour market
- Innovative ways of work organisation, including teleworking and flexible working arrangements
- Access to affordable care services, such as childcare, out of school care or care for dependent persons

As a result, Member States have a clear obligation to implement a dual-track approach which encompasses proactive interventions, such as gender mainstreaming, and reactive interventions, such as policies addressing the gender pay gap and gender discrimination. Guidelines for EC desk officers underline the importance of undertaking specific actions where programmes are focusing on people-related schemes such as training or entrepreneurship; targets should encourage the participation of women and other at-risk groups.³⁵

In the context of transnational cooperation, a network financed by the Commission has developed the European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming (GenderCoP)³⁶ which is a standard on gender mainstreaming.³⁷ Its purpose is to outline clear requirements and examples of good practices on how to achieve gender equality during the different programme cycles of the ESF.



How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 5.85 billion allocated for measures promoting gender equality.³⁸



Where is the money going?

Given the very large number of grants involved, it was not possible to undertake a systematic review. In order to gain an overview of the pattern of distribution of funds for this report,

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32. European Social Fund, <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en>

33. Website of the European commission, The European Structural and Investment Funds, https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes/european-structural-and-investment-funds_en and Cf. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States”, European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

34. “ESF support to Gender Equality in the 2014–2020 programming period”, policy paper communicated to the authors by the European commission – July 2018.

35. Cf. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS, Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

36. For more information, see: <http://standard.gendercop.com/project/index.html>

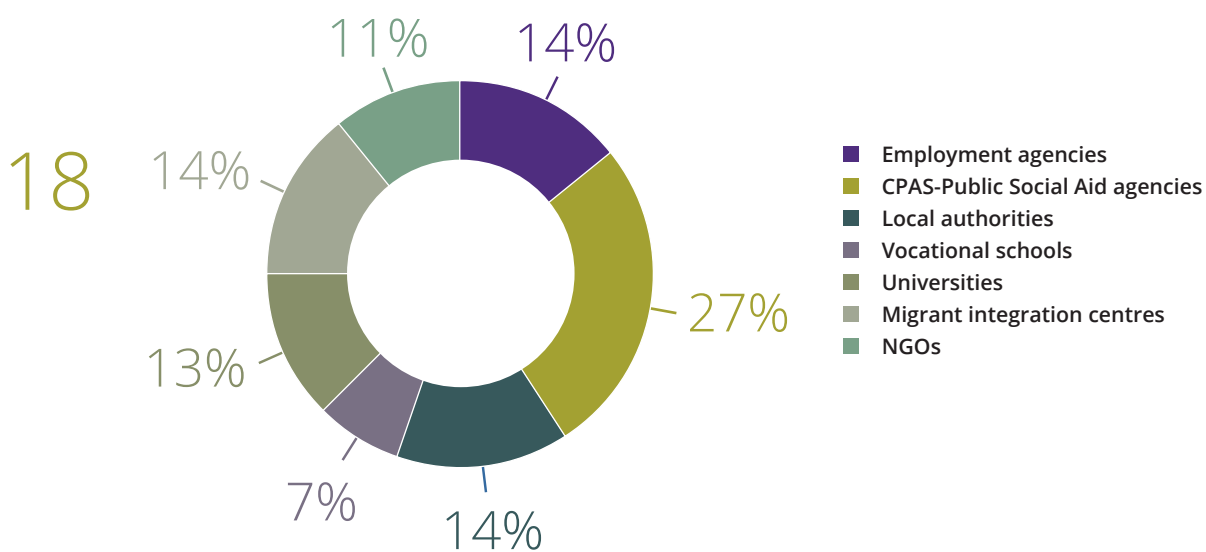
37. The standard is currently being piloted in four member states: Belgium (Flanders), Czech Republic, Finland and Sweden.

38. Cf. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS, Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

an analysis was undertaken of one area, the Wallonia region of Belgium. A screening was conducted of the first 56 out of 560 (10%) ESF beneficiaries. While these results are likely to be representative of the region and the country as a whole, and possibly reflect broader trends across Europe, this is only a working hypothesis at present. It can only be confirmed if and when full data regarding pan-European recipients has been analysed and made available.

The screening showed that ESF beneficiaries are mostly large entities, such as employment agencies, public social services, local authorities, training centres and universities. Grassroots NGOs are generally not project leaders, although they may be partners in different capacities, including as participants or thematic experts. Only one NGO³⁹ working on gender-related issues was identified as a beneficiary.

Sample ESF Beneficiaries – Wallonia Region, Belgium 2014–2020



Case-study:

STEMsters

STEMsters: A Belgian project that researches the use of gender in language to attract more female students to careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – the so-called STEM subjects. To support its work, the project team designed a website offering practical advice; provided training to human resources and communications staff; and produced a general writing style guide complete with a list of 225 adjectives in their male, female and neutral forms.

The work was undertaken by Karel de Grote University in partnership with Antwerp University; AGORIA, the technology federation; and VDAB, the public employment service.

Project Duration:
May 2014 – Sep. 2015

ESF Contribution:
EUR 99 826

Participants:
>4500

Case-study:

Senza più Paura

Senza più Paura (No More Fear): An Italian project developed by the Piedmont regional authorities to provide support to 311 women who have experienced domestic violence, human trafficking and prostitution.

Project Duration:
Jan. 2012 – Dec. 2014

ESF Contribution:
EUR 11 800

Participants:
>300

Case-study:

MATAPE

MATAPE: A project based in Holicice in the Czech Republic whose main goal is to reduce the risk of social exclusion faced by new mothers by equipping them with the skills and confidence to re-enter the labour market. This work was undertaken by Pardubice Regional Charity who offered individual coaching, group training activities and ICT-based learning options, and worked with local employers to raise awareness of work/life balance issues.

Project Duration:
Sep. 2012 – Jun. 2015

ESF Contribution:
EUR 212 370

Participants:
200+

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How are they doing?

2007–2013: An average of 3.7% of total resources for all Member States were allocated to specific gender equality actions, according to an EC evaluation conducted by GHK Consulting and the Brodolini Foundation.⁴⁰

2014–2020: An EC midterm evaluation has not yet taken place. Further data is needed to fully assess ESF interventions and impact. As there is at present no detailed mechanism for gender mainstreaming accounting, implementation of gender mainstreaming in programmes relies heavily on Member States' efforts.⁴²

40. GHK Consulting and Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini - Final synthesis report: Evaluation of the European Social Fund's Support to Gender Equality, European Commission, 2011, DGEMPL. The report compares the 2007–13 programming period with historical data from 2000–2006. Quoted in: The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States," European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS," Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women's Rights and Gender Equality, 2016

41. "The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States," European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women's rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

42. The Implementing Act No 215/2014 on the nomenclature of categories of intervention for ESIF Funds introduced for 2014–2020 the possibility of tracking ESF expenditure for transversal themes across all ESF investment priorities. One of these transversal themes is gender equality.

2. Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC)

The Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme aims to “protect the rights and freedoms granted under EU laws.”⁴³ The REC programme replaces three earlier funding programmes which expired in 2013: the “Fundamental rights and citizenship programme,” the “Daphne III programme,” and the “Progress programme: anti-discrimination and gender equality strands”.

REC’s key priorities include promoting non-discrimination; combating racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance; promoting rights of persons with disabilities; promoting equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming; and preventing violence against women, children, young people and other groups at risk (Daphne programme). Between 2014 and 2016 the bulk of funding went to action grants. Operating grants only received 20% of REC budget allocations.⁴⁴



How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 439.5 million. According to a 2016 European Parliament report, around 35% of REC funds are directed toward two objectives:⁴⁵

Gender equality:

- **2014–2016 = EUR 21 878 009**
- Aims: promoting equality between women and men, gender mainstreaming, economic independence, tackling stereotypes, tackling the gender pension gap

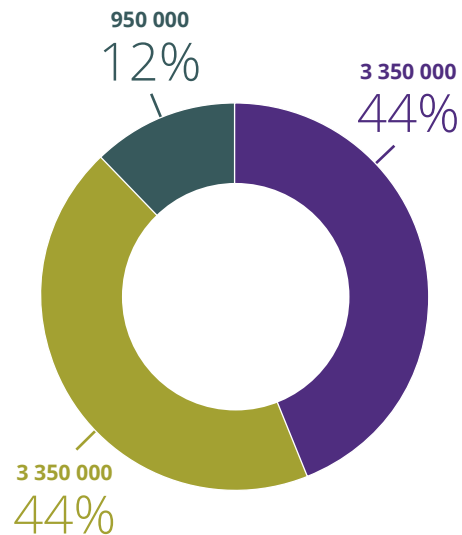
Daphne-Combating violence against women (VAW):

- **2014–2016 = EUR 35 694 157**
- Aims: preventing and combating violence against women, children, young people and other groups at risk; supporting victims of violence; training relevant professionals; and raising awareness and/or preventing violence linked to harmful practices

In keeping with a European Commission trend to increase funds for combating violence against women, the budget allocation of these two objectives shifted during the 2014–2018 period. For the gender equality objective, the yearly budget decreased slightly, while the budget increased for combating VAW.⁴⁶

Objective 1: Promoting Gender Equality 2014–2015, resources by gender issues

Source: 2016 European Parliament report, page 85 (see footnote 44)



- Equal economic independence of women and men and reconciliation
- Promoting good practices on gender roles and overcoming gender stereotypes in education, training and in the workplace
- Support of EU-level networks on gender Equality themes

43. Rights, Equality and Citizenship, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm

44. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS, Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

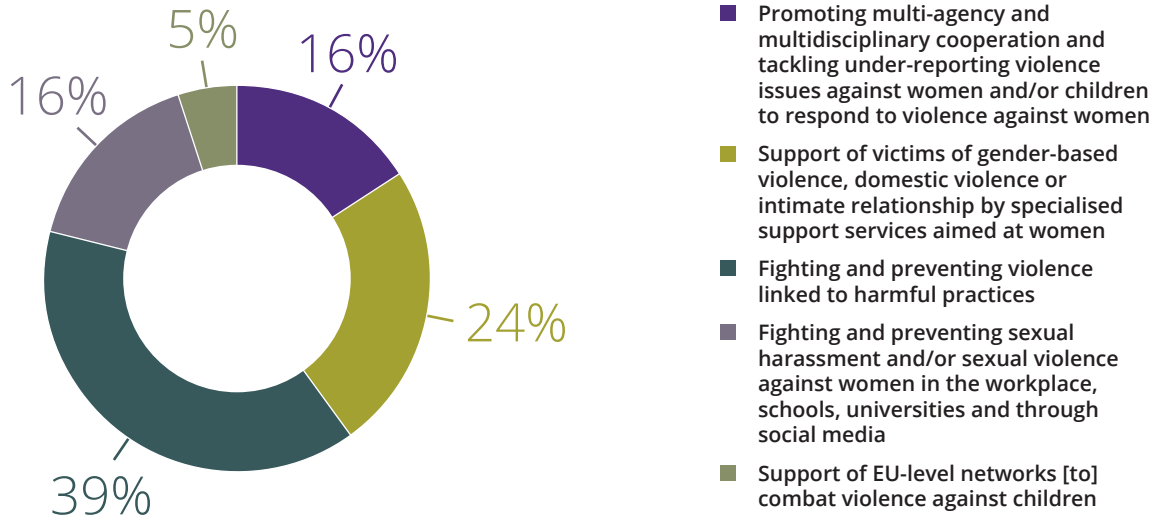
45. Ibid.

46. See: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/closed-calls/index_en.htm

Objective 2: Combating Violence Against Women (Daphne) 2014–2015, resources by gender issues

Source: 2016 European Parliament report, page 82 (see footnote 44)

*Includes only the Daphne calls on combating violence against women



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Where is the money going?

2014–2015: 66 coordinating organisations benefited from REC funds. Of these, 15 were women’s/feminist organisations or those focusing on gender equality themes.

2016: 99 coordinating and partner organisations benefited from REC funds. Of these, 16 organisations were women’s/feminist or focused on gender equality.⁴⁷

Projects funded by REC from 2014 to 2018 benefited a number of women’s organisations addressing issues such as combatting sexual violence and harassment (SVH), changing behaviours on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and developing gender equality.

47. Source: Internal documents of the European Commission transmitted to the authors (June 2018).

Case-study:

GET UP

GET UP: A project undertaken by UIL: Italian Labour Trade Union, it addresses the stereotyping of educational and career choices, and aims to promote gender equality in education, training, and career guidance in the workplace. Its specific objectives are to define a European Minimum Standard of Competences on Gender Equality (EMSC) for Human Resources departments, career guidance professionals and teachers/guidance counsellors in order to overcome discrimination and raise awareness on gender equality among partner organisations, their members, and the public, promoting at the European level the benefits of equal participation in society of men and women.

REC Contribution:
EUR 436 179

Case-study:

ESHTE

Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third Level Education (ESHTE): A project undertaken by the National Women’s Council of Ireland, aiming to understand and analyse the causes and effects of SVH in order to prevent it, and to build a culture of zero tolerance in universities throughout Europe.

REC Contribution:
EUR 366 315

Case-study:

CHANGE Plus

CHANGE Plus: A project working towards raising awareness, changing attitudes and promoting behaviour change on FGM in practising African communities. Operating in four EU Member States (Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, France) through community-based advocacy, its aims include assessment, capacity development/mutual learning, exchange of good practices and the empowerment of community members.

The project is coordinated by Terre Des Femmes - Menschenrechte Für Die Frau e.V. Germany.

REC Contribution:
EUR 275 375

*Case-study:***GECM**

Gender Equality Charter Mark (GECM): The project involves the creation of a quality standard and accreditation tool to enable schools to measure progress in tackling the effects that gender stereotyping still has on pupils aged 13–18. These effects range from the choice of subject and career to sexual harassment and gender-based violence in schools and the wider society.

REC Contribution:
EUR 275 375

**How are they doing?**

The REC programme directly funds gender issues through specific budget headings. While available data is limited, a recent European Commission report noted that the award rate in 2014 for the gender equality objective was the second highest – almost 58%.⁴⁸ However, further monitoring of this funding stream is necessary for a more accurate picture. A European Parliament report recommended enhanced support of NGOs:

“A stronger involvement of NGOs in gender equality fields should be supported in order to ensure effective implementation. The allocated resources should be maintained and increased in order notably to contrast the sharp reductions in many member states of public funds for measures promoting gender equality and fighting violence against women.”⁴⁹

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48. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and social committee and the committee of the regions on the Interim Evaluation of the implementation of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014–2020- COM(2018) 508 final.

49. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

3. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the “EU’s flagship programme” to fund research and innovation with the goals of creating jobs; fostering innovation and investments; and tackling societal challenge through science to ensure Europe’s global competitiveness.⁵⁰ The programme is divided into three pillars: “Excellent Science”, “Industrial Leadership” and “Societal Challenges”. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue and must be mainstreamed in each part of the programme. Three main objectives underpin its strategy:

- Fostering equal opportunities and gender balance in project teams in order to close the gaps in the participation of women
- Ensuring gender balance in decision-making in order to reach the target of 40% in panels and groups and 50% in advisory groups
- Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content to improve the scientific quality and societal relevance of the produced knowledge, technology and/or innovation

Horizon 2020 specifically funds gender equality through its Gender Equality in Research and Innovation (GERI) programme.⁵¹



How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 79.4 billion. GERI programme: EUR 43 million.



Where is the money going?

2014–2015: 5 GERI calls dedicated to gender equality covering the following themes:⁵²

- Innovative approaches to communication encouraging girls to study science
- Impact of gender diversity on research and innovation
- Evaluating initiatives to promote gender equality in research policy and research organisations

2014–2016: 9 GERI projects funded.⁵³ Each involved multiple partners, benefitting a total of 81 organisations. A search of the GERI database undertaken for this report indicated that only 3 were women’s/feminist organisations.

In addition to the GERI programme, as of September 2016, a total of 10 128 projects were funded under Horizon 2020. Of these, 71 addressed gender equality, which is equivalent to 0.007 % of the total. A majority of these projects were funded through the Pillar “Excellent Science.”⁵⁴

50. Horizon 2020, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/>

51. As of July 2018, new objectives for 2018-2020 were introduced under the programme “Science with and for Society (SWAF).” See:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-swafs_en.pdf

52. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

53. Projects funded by the FP7 and H2020 framework programmes, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/index.cfm?pg=policy&lib=gender>

54. “The Use of Funds for Gender Equality in Selected Member States,” European Parliament, IRS, Manuela Samek Lodovici, IRS Flavia Pesche, IRS Daniela Loi, IRS, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Women’s rights and Gender Equality, 2016.

Case-study:

Centro studi progetto donna e diversity

Centro studi progetto donna e diversity MGMT:

One of the partners of the project PLOTINA – Promoting Gender Balance and Inclusion in Research, Innovation and Training. This project aims to enable the development, implementation and assessment of self-tailored Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) with innovative and sustainable strategies for the Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) involved.

**Horizon 2020
Contribution:**
EUR 185 562

Case-study:

ASDO

The Assembly of Women for Development and the Struggle against Social Exclusion (ASDO):

Gender Expert in LIBRA project – Leading Innovative Measure to Reach Gender Balance in Research Activities, an alliance of 10 partner organisations working towards achieving gender equality in academia. This Italy-based organisation aims to implement innovative Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) that will empower women researchers to achieve successful careers in science, remove gender barriers and biases at an institutional level, and raise awareness of gender aspects in the experimental design of pre-clinical research projects.

**Horizon 2020
Contribution:**
EUR 322 579

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How are they doing?

In 2017, DG Research mandated an interim evaluation of “Gender equality as a crosscutting issue in Horizon 2020.”⁵⁵ The findings concluded that actions in favour of gender equality are integrated all along the funding process, with positive consequences. A Gender Sector within DG Research promotes gender equality and the work they are doing. Gender training and gender awareness-raising activities have been implemented and are considered driving factors towards

the expected outputs. In addition, gender balance in decision-making is close to being achieved – over 50% in advisory groups and 36.7% in evaluation panels.

However, the evaluation also highlighted some weaknesses in the programme. Gender balance in research teams is slow to improve and gender training is rarely implemented within projects. Moreover, too few projects truly develop a gender perspective in research content and project design.

55. “The Interim Evaluation of Gender Equality as a crosscutting issue in Horizon 2020,” Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Science with and for Society, European Commission, 2017.

4. Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ programme supports actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport. Its mission is to reduce the rates of early school drop outs and increase the number of college-educated people in Europe. Two of its specific objectives are:

- Supporting actions to improve the level of key competences and skills in order to address the gaps faced in the European labour market
- Fostering quality improvements, innovation excellence and internationalisation at the level of education and training

Erasmus+ focuses on three types of key actions (KA):

- Transnational and international learning mobility of students, young people, teachers and staff (KA1)
- Cooperation for innovation and good practices, with a stronger focus on strengthening innovative partnerships between educational institutions and businesses (KA2)
- Support for policy reform, strengthening the tools and impact of the EU’s Open Methods of Coordination (KA3)⁵⁶



How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 14.77 billion.

For this report, a screening of all Erasmus+ projects listing “Gender equality/Equal opportunities” as their topic was undertaken:⁵⁷

Percentage of Erasmus+ projects that mention “Gender equality/Equal opportunities” in their topics⁵⁸

Erasmus+ Programme Line	Year	Total number of projects funded	Projects mentioning “Gender equality / Equal opportunities” in their topics	Percentage
KA1 – Learning mobility of individuals	2014–2016	49 900	1 067	2.1%
KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and exchanges of good practices	2014–2016	5 993	163	2.7%
KA3 – Support for policy reform	2014–2016	753	31	4.1%

Source data from Erasmus+ website: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

56. The Open method of coordination is a process of policy coordination and exchange between EU member states.

57. Erasmus+ and former programmes projects overview, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-projects-compendium/>

58. This table is non-exhaustive. Certain Erasmus+ programmes were not taken into account as detailed descriptions of their content were not available.



Where is the money going?

2011–2012: 61% of students benefiting from Erasmus+ were women.

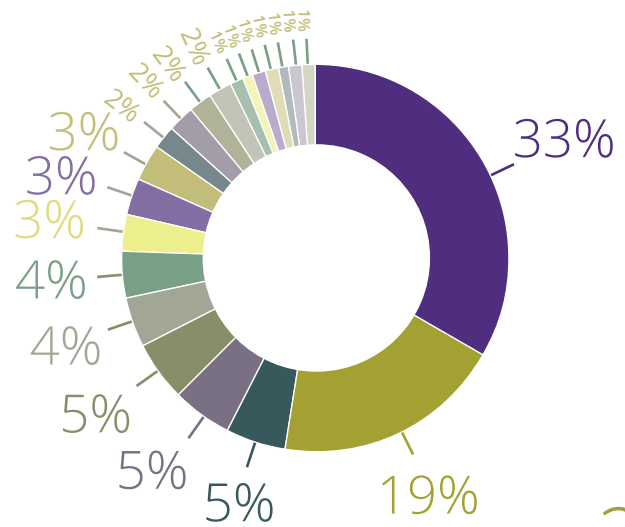
2012–2013: 51% of beneficiaries of staff mobility programmes were women.

Given the high level and complexity of Erasmus+ funding, it was not possible for this report to carry out an exhaustive search of women’s/feminist organisations benefitting from grants across Europe. Consequently, a screening was undertaken of non-profit beneficiaries working on gender equality in one country, Belgium. Data cannot be extrapolated to other EU countries, however the results are likely to be a good indicator of general trends. Analysis showed that from 2014–2016:

- 150 projects funded, 170 partners
- 4 women’s/feminist organisations were beneficiaries = 3% of total projects:
 - “Digital Leadership Institute”: an INGO promoting greater participation of girls and women in STEM (2 projects)
 - “Femma”: a feminist organisation in Flanders and Brussels
 - “Le Monde selon les femmes”: a feminist NGO working in development, research and training
 - “Plan Belgique”: an INGO working to foster equality and rights for children and girls across the world, focusing on the global south

An additional 5% of funded projects went to five LGBTQ organisations in Belgium.⁵⁹

Sample Erasmus+ Non-profit Gender Equality Beneficiaries in Belgium 2014–2016



- Youth/Sport
- Secondary education
- Social cohesion/Social Action
- Local youth group/Other
- LGBTQ
- Companies/Networks/Federations
- Training/Education
- Personal development
- University education
- Feminist/Female-led organisation
- Culture/Art

59. The Network of European LGBTIQ* Families Association (3 projects), Wel Jong Niet Hetero (2 projects), Balkan LGBTQIA, Cavarria VZW, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – Europe.

Case-study:

Young European Women United for Employment and Equality

Young European Women United for Employment and Equality:

A project focused on youth employment from a gender perspective. To combat the multiple discriminations young women suffer in accessing the labour market, the project intends to perform a comparative analysis of the effects of the “Youth Guarantee Plan” as well as other European policies to promote employment of young women.

The project is led by Fundación por la Europa de los Ciudadanos (Spain) in partnership with Gender Studies, o.p.s. (Czech Republic), Espaces Marx (France), and ALTRA MENTE - SCUOLA PER TUTTI (Italy).

Erasmus+ contribution:

EUR 31 520

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Case-study:

European Values and Being Physically Active through Games for a Better Life

European Values and Being Physically Active through Games for a Better Life:

A project aiming to prevent early school leaving (ESL) and supporting all students at every level. Studies show that people without secondary education are less involved in democratic processes and are less active citizens. The project intends to create schools, which besides being a place for learning, become institutions that foster future active citizens who possess the basic abilities for a healthy and productive lifestyle.

The project is led by Agrupamento de Escolas de Frazão, Paços de Ferreira (Portugal), in partnership with Inonu Anadolu Lisesi (Turkey), Colegiul National Calistrat Hogas (Romania), Zespol Szkol Sportowych W Tychach (Poland), Bikernieku Pamatskola (Latvia), Isma Vidusskola Premjers (Latvia), and Turkiye Herkes Icin Spor Federasyonu (Turkey).

Erasmus+ contribution:

EUR 105 475



How are they doing?

The promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination is explicitly mentioned in the programme's regulations, but not in its objectives, therefore making it only indicative.⁶⁰ A midterm evaluation report of the previous programming period⁶¹ does not provide a clear picture when it comes to assessing gender as a horizontal element. The report does not provide disaggregated data, and only refers to gender in the section relating to the social inclusion dimension.

A French agency report on the predecessor programme to Erasmus+ confirmed that projects promoting gender equality in this field have a strong positive impact.⁶² Yet despite this finding, just 1.2% of all projects carried out in France dealt in any way with gender equality.⁶³ The same study concluded this is "highly disappointing in particular because European projects can, in different ways and to different extents, contribute to progress in gender equality in Europe."⁶⁴

60. The regulations state: "Whereas : Pursuant to Articles 8 and 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), as well as Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Programme promotes inter alia equality between men and women and measures to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."

61. Combined evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes Final report - main evaluation report (Volume 1) Prepared by ICF-2017 for the European Commission -Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

62. Report on the 2007–2013 Lifelong Learning programme, predecessor to Erasmus+. See: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/erasmus-could-do-more-to-promote-gender-equality/>

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

5. Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

EaSI aims to “promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions.”⁶⁵

EaSI finances gender equality in the area of employment, social affairs and inclusion using a horizontal gender mainstreaming approach. As part of its efforts to develop a more equal and inclusive labour market and social protection system, it includes women’s entrepreneurship as an important secondary objective via access to microfinance opportunities. The programme also supports network organisations active in social inclusion where the participation of women, along with other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, is encouraged.

- **Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship Axis** – aims to support:
 - microcredit and microloans for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises
 - social entrepreneurship



Where is the money going?

Gender mainstreaming is encouraged horizontally through action grants and the structural funding of European social inclusion networks such as Caritas, Solidar and the Social Platform. In addition, over a third of Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship Axis loan beneficiaries in 2014 were women, according to an EC Performance Monitoring Report.⁶⁷

For this report, a screening was conducted of 2014–2016 Progress Axis projects. Most beneficiaries were public and regional authorities – only one women’s organisation was a co-beneficiary.



How are they doing?

In 2017, the Commission published a Performance Monitoring Report⁶⁸ highlighting the views of stakeholders which included EU and national decision-makers, civil society experts and NGO representatives. The report indicated that nearly 80% of stakeholders felt EU contributions helped promote equality between women and men. Further, gender equality appeared to be the second most integrated issue after attention to vulnerable groups such as young people. In addition, events funded in 2015–2016 took into account the promotion of equality between women and men, according to 61% of stakeholders. However, at present, it is difficult to accurately assess the extent of gender mainstreaming or the level of participation of women’s/feminist organisations in the programme.

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How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 919.47 million, organised around three strands:⁶⁶

- **Progress Axis** – aims to improve policies in:
 - employment
 - social protection, social inclusion and the reduction and prevention of poverty
 - working conditions
- **Eures Axis** – aims to strengthen:
 - transparency of job vacancies, job applications and any related information for applicants and employers
 - development of services for the recruitment and placing of workers in employment
 - cross-border partnerships

65. Employment and Social Innovation, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081>

66. Ibid.

67. European Commission Performance Monitoring Report, EASI programme, 2017, see: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc706d01-b3b0-11e7-837e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

68. Ibid.

*Case-study:***ALMIT**

Acceleration of Labour Market Integration of Immigrants through Mapping of Skills and Trainings (ALMIT): A project that aims to promote integration as an essential element to ensure the life and future of immigrants. ALMIT's approach is to perform screenings of abilities to map initial civic integration, and enable skills profiling and matching, thus facilitating entry into the local labour market. The project includes awareness-raising activities to address discriminatory practices and violence, in particular against women, as well as training courses.

The project is led by Sofia University (Bulgaria), in partnership with Council of Women Refugees in Bulgaria and other public authorities from Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria.

EaSI contribution:

EUR 979 178

*Case-study:***TSUNAMI**

TSUNAMI - A Traineeship as a Springboard out of Unemployment for those Affected by Mental Illness: A project which provides persons affected by severe mental illness hope of improving their employment situation. The main objective of the project's social policy innovation is the increase in the long-term level of employment, compared to the status quo, represented by a suitable control group. The programme offers a three-to-six-month traineeship focused on skill acquisition and supported by an external case-handler known as a "job-coach". Moreover, when the person has successfully completed the traineeship, the job coach will support him/her in a three-month intensive job search. The project is implemented by a consortium of public authorities, cooperatives and research organisations, mostly based in Torino (Piemonte – Italy).

EaSI contribution:

EUR 105 475

6. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

AMIF promotes “the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration.” Its key objectives are: asylum; legal migration and integration; return; and solidarity.⁶⁹

No specific funding relates to gender, although gender mainstreaming is addressed as a transversal objective throughout the programme. AMIF is implemented in three ways: direct management by the Commission; shared management by Member States; or management through third-party intergovernmental organisations such as the OIM⁷¹ or the UNHCR.⁷²

By the end of 2017, EUR 462 million was allocated through direct and indirect management to Union actions and the European Migration Network’s activities covering the entire programming period of 2014–2020. Projects related to the specific objectives of asylum and solidarity accounted for 24 % of this amount, whereas the remaining 76 % was allocated to projects covering the specific objectives of legal migration, integration and return.⁷³



Where is the money going?

In the context of the current migrant challenge, projects fostering the integration of migrant women and facilitating their access and integration into the workplace are receiving considerable attention. These fall under the “legal migration and integration of third country nationals” funding strand.

For this report, a screening of this strand was undertaken for the years 2014–2017. During this time, 42 multi-year projects were funded, with average budgets ranging from EUR 460 000 to EUR 820 000. Of these, 10, or almost a quarter, were focused on gender.

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How much money?

2014–2020: Initially EUR 3 137 million. However, in response to the migration crisis of 2015–2016, the budget was increased to EUR 6 888 million.⁷²

- Direct management (emergency & technical assistance): EUR 1 497 million
- Shared management (national programmes): EUR 5 391 million

69. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, see: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en - Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (OJ L 150 of 20 May 2014).

- Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 laying down general provisions on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management (OJ L 150 of 20 May 2014).

70. Established in 1951, IOM, International Organisation for Migration is the leading inter-governmental organisation in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

71. UNHCR, the UN agency for refugees leads international action to protect people forced to flee their homes, delivering life-saving assistance like shelter, food and water to help safeguard fundamental human rights and ensuring safety and dignity.

72. See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180612_com-2018-464-report_en.pdf

73. According to an EC 2018 midterm evaluation report. See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180612_com-2018-464-report_en.pdf

*Case-study:***FATIMA**

Female Active Citizenship Training Integration Migrant Accompaniment project (FATIMA): A project which aims to integrate 210 migrant women in four EU countries and develop and disseminate knowledge and influence measures targeting migrant women to reduce their isolation and barriers to their participation in civic life.

The project is led by the Wonder Foundation (UK), a charity dedicated to empowering vulnerable people through education, in partnership with Dawliffe Hall Educational Foundation; Dolnoslaskie Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Panorama; Fundacija Sursum; Drustvo Za zobrazevanje In Kulturo; and Fundacion Senara.

AMIF contribution:
EUR 657 562

*Case-study:***SIMRA**

Supporting the Integration of Migrant Women, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SIMRA): The project's objective is to foster active participation of migrant/asylum-seeking/refugee women in the "host" society by developing, implementing and evaluating a pilot intervention scheme.

The project is led by Nostos NGO (Greece) in partnership with IEKEP (Athens, Greece); the Lennox Partnership (Clydebank, UK); Double Helix Resources (London, UK); Elderberry AB (Hägersten, Sweden) Legacy WM (Birmingham, UK); KISA (Nicosia, Cyprus); Hypatia Foundation Promoting Equality (Limassol, Cyprus); and Teatr BRAMA (Goleniów, Poland).

AMIF contribution:
EUR 979 178

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**How are they doing?**

Gender-disaggregated data on target groups and beneficiaries is not yet available. A European Commission midterm evaluation⁷⁴ took place only two years after initial implementation, thus data is limited. The programme's monitoring and evaluation framework with specific indicators is relatively recent, and most projects are multiannual and still ongoing. Therefore, more time is needed before the programme can be fully assessed.

74. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Commission Interim evaluation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund- {SWD(2018) 339 final} - {SWD(2018) 340 final} - {SWD(2018) 341 final}, COM(2018) 464 final.

7. EU External Funding Instruments

The EU uses a wide range of external assistance tools to engage women and girls, including supporting the work of CSOs. There are four main pillars for external EU funding:

- European Development Fund
- Development Cooperation Instrument
- European Neighbourhood Instrument
- Instrument of Pre-accession

In addition, several transversal funding instruments cut across these pillars, including one that is specifically relevant to this study:

- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

The action plan “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016–2020)”, known as GAP II, was adopted by the EU in October 2015.⁷⁵ Further, in 2017, the EU launched a major new initiative with the UN, the “Spotlight Initiative”, to kickstart a global movement to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

GAP II intends to follow a results-driven approach that sets high standards for reporting, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, and promotes evidence-based decisions. To these aims, a tool for analysis was developed setting 20 policy objectives/commitments in the field of gender equality mainstreaming throughout external relations, including a battery of some 131 indicators designed to monitor the delivery of commitments.⁷⁶

For the purposes of this report, as requested by the coalition of women’s funds who commissioned the research, funding streams relating to Georgia and Ukraine were examined.

2014–2020: GAP II total financial commitments EUR 100 million to improve the lives of girls and women⁷⁷

Total Civil Society Commitments Georgia: EUR 65 million

Total Civil Society Commitments Ukraine: EUR 33.1 million

A. European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

The ENI funds the European Neighbourhood Policy programme,⁷⁸ which aims to “ensure the success of the democratisation process and improve economic and social development in the EU’s immediate neighbourhood.”⁷⁹ It places special emphasis on engagement with civil society.⁸⁰ An important policy document, the “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020”⁸¹ highlights a commitment to women’s empowerment and gender balance within this framework. This policy applies to Georgia and Ukraine as partner countries.



How much money?

2014–2020: EUR 15.4 billion. ENI attributes funds through:

- Bilateral programmes covering support to one partner country
- Multi-country programmes which address challenges common to some or all partner countries

75. European Commission, Joint Staff Working document “EU Gender Action Plan II, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations, 2016–2020 - SWD(2015) 182 final.

76. European Commission, Joint Staff Working document EU Gender Action Plan II, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations, 2016–2020 - SWD(2015)182 final - Monitoring & Measuring the Impact of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016–2020, Guidance Note on Indicators and Reporting Methodologies.

77. European Commission, Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019, see: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

78. Through its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), revised in November 2015, the EU aims to build on common interests with partner countries of the East and South and commitment to work jointly in key priority areas, including in the promotion of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and social cohesion. The key principles of the revised ENP are differentiation amongst partner countries, flexibility, joint ownership, greater involvement of the EU Member States, and shared responsibility. For more information, see: www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy#the-european-neighbourhood-policy-enp

79. ENI covers cooperation with a number of southern neighbourhood countries.: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Syria, Tunisia, and eastern neighbourhood countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

80. See: www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy#society

81. Joint Staff Working Document, “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on key priorities and tangible results,” 9.6.2017, SWD(2017) 300 final.



Where is the money going?

Georgia

One call was issued in the past three years for CSOs. Specific objectives included protection against discrimination and providing direct assistance to victims of domestic violence. Of nine projects funded, four were dedicated to gender and one women's organisation was a beneficiary.⁸²

Case-studies:

Stop Domestic Violence is a campaign against domestic violence in the regions of Georgia densely populated by ethnic/religious minorities. The project is led by the "Association Women of Multinational Georgia" over a period of 24 months.

ENI contribution: EUR 341 451

Kakheti Regional Development Foundation works on improving health care, education and development opportunities for vulnerable mothers and children. The grant covers a period of 30 months.

ENI Contribution: EUR 395 061

Ukraine

One call was issued in the past 3 years for CSOs. Specific objectives included empowerment of women and youth; and strengthening the role of Ukrainian civil society in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Preference was given to actions which incorporated gender perspectives in their methodology.⁸³

Case-studies:

Women as Agents of Change, Peace Building and Conflict Prevention at the Grassroots Level in Ukraine.

Beneficiary: International Charitable Foundation – Ukrainian Women's Fund.

ENI contribution: EUR 623 405

Centre of Gender Culture as a Platform for Empowerment of Women and Youth.

Beneficiary: Kharkiv Regional Organisation – Gender Resource Centre.

ENI contribution: EUR 716 966

B. European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

EIDHR aims to promote democracy and human rights in non-EU countries. Its key objectives include:

- Fighting against the death penalty, torture, children in armed conflicts, discrimination, and gender inequality
- Strengthening the role of civil society in promoting participatory and representative democracy, transparency and accountability



How much money?

2014–2020: Total financial commitments EUR 1 332 752 000

Total Commitments Georgia: EUR 4 398 484

Total Commitments Ukraine: EUR 2 486 681

82. Source: Information provided to the authors by EU delegation in Georgia who manage civil society project implementation (July 2018).

83. Source: Information provided to the authors by the EU Delegation in Ukraine (July 2018).



Where is the money going?

Georgia and Ukraine

EIDHR funds are allocated through:

- Global calls for proposals, managed by the EC
- Country calls for proposals and country-based support schemes (CBSS), managed by EU delegations

Grants focus on local CSOs and are designed to reinforce the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democracy.



How are they doing?

GAP II set ambitious goals for creating a robust evaluation framework that tracks gender mainstreaming progress across policies and programming activities globally. Despite this, it has proved difficult to access detailed financial commitments related to gender equality funding in civil society programmes outside the EU. In addition, there is a lack of information concerning how Georgia and Ukraine will comply with gender mainstreaming in their operating programmes.

A Commission evaluation of the first year of GAP II (2016) recognised that gender analysis was beginning to take a more central role in the planning and formulation of programmes and projects, but that there was still a long way to go before being fully integrated into the project and programming cycle.⁸⁴

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Case-studies:

Mobilising Displaced Women Against Domestic and Gender-based Violence.

Led by All Ukrainian Charitable Organisation Convictus Ukraine.

Promoting New Women Leaders and 'Invisible Women' Human Rights Activists in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia. A project aimed at supporting Women Rights Defenders and/or Human Rights Defenders working for women's and girl's rights where they are most at risk. Led by IREX-Europe, with the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF) as one of the project's four partners.

84. European Commission, Joint Staff Working document "EU Gender Action Plan II, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations, Annual implementation report 2016, SWD(2017) 288 final.

The role of women's funds in advancing gender equality: What stakeholders say

Looking at ways women's funds can engage with EU grantmakers in the future, stakeholders unanimously felt they should be doing more advocacy in order to shift the way funding is allocated. This would also help reinforce the value of civil society at the EU level during a critical time in the field of gender equality. Rethinking the pattern of engagement with the Commission itself would be a productive step.

"We are movement builders and we need to... position ourselves as activists. We need to try and influence the bigger agenda."

A leader of a women's fund

"You need the capacity to engage on issues with the Commission – to be seen as a fair broker. You need to develop your public organisational profile."

An advisor to multilaterals

"[Women's funds] need to make the case on the ground now. The Commission has annual work programmes – you need to be able to influence the agenda on these programmes. It helps to anticipate in advance."

An advisor to the EU

A number of interviewees underscored the low public profile of women's funds in Brussels. While organisations working in the development sector are highly visible, European women's representation lags behind. The way in which women's funds position themselves may be limiting their ability to tap into broader concerns about social cohesion. Some embraced the idea of adapting feminist language to move outside traditional feminist circles. One interviewee suggested changing the names of women's funds to Women's Funds for Gender Equality or Empowerment Funds to clarify the work they are doing. Overall, better planning, communication and branding could help women's funds stand out.

"You can't make progress on this issue unless you have representation in Brussels. You need feet on the ground here. You have to develop relationships with desk officers and these relationships need to be nurtured."

A European official

"Women's funds need to professionalise the process, using consultants experienced with the process of writing bids. But it is important for the funds to be as involved as possible, so they find that this is really a collaborative process – they cannot delegate this to an external source; they must keep up their level of involvement."

A leader of a women's fund

In this hyper-competitive environment, developing clear narratives and having a strong public presence is critical. Most interviewees believed that women's groups may need to review their communications strategy and branding to highlight the necessity and impact of their work. Ultimately this may include having staff in Brussels to promote and defend their interests or partnering with larger organisations on high-profile projects.

"The larger NGOs are receiving major funding and they understand that the European policy context is key in this process. They have developed credibility as strong partners with brand recognition. This should be a model."

An advisor to EU institutions

In this context, the way in which women's funds operate is worth noting. Women's funds place an emphasis on regranting, often to smaller NGOs. This approach itself may impede access to EU funds. While regranting is permitted, it is not a well-integrated technique, and the burdens of reporting are daunting. A major challenge is that, according to stakeholders, audits are required for any regranting over EUR 150 000. For most NGOs, this is simply prohibitive. Questions were also raised concerning whether women's funds have the capacity to mobilise specialised staff to work on the complicated concept notes, project formulation and all the administrative and reporting requirements that EU funding calls entail.

Another popular idea was the creation of a consortium of women's funds that together could possibly capture more EU funding. Along this same vein, several interviewees brought up the need to concentrate more on intersectionality, integrating women's rights programming into larger categories, such as the deinstitutionalisation of women or children, which would fit into broader calls. The key notion is to operate from a position of strength in more robust coalitions.

"The lack of diversity in our partnerships is a problem. We need to think more about intersectionality. If the lead partner is not one of us, we lose bargaining power. We need to reach out to a broader group. We need to register as a bigger network – maybe a bigger women's fund."

A leader of a women's fund.

"The Commission sees that they need to step up and support organisations due to the closing space, the shrinking space in civil society. Perhaps this will indeed lead to greater flexibility. We believe that this is the time to get the Commission to support movement-led pieces of work and we are going to engage in resource mobilisation at the EU wherever we can. It would be good to try and create a coalition of aligned movements together to work on this."

A professional running a network

A Pan-European women's fund or foundation was also brought up as a way to access more funding, both public and private. Such an entity would not compete with existing women's funds, but instead allow them to potentially multiply their impact. However, there was no consensus on this idea.

"In the longer term, it probably makes sense to create a European fund – who would organise it, how would it be structured, all of these questions are important to try and work through. We need to look at various options. We need to show private funders that there is public money out there, but we are not capturing it now."

A leader of a women's fund

"The women's funds are handicapped by thinking they are part of philanthropy rather than functioning as operational NGOs."

A philanthropy professional

"We need to think about our organisational capacity. We understand that if we don't have the policies and systems in place, we simply won't get the funds. This is all very fraught – the horizontal nature of women's funds serves as an impediment to growth in this regard."

A leader of a women's fund

For most, accountability is a key issue. Interviewees overwhelmingly recommended the creation of a permanent "Women's Watch" entity in Brussels that monitors data and shares information publicly. One organisation that was cited as a model is the "Community Living for Europe: Structural Funds Watch,"⁸⁵ which tracks support commitments to community living for persons with disabilities, children and older persons.

"The [women's] funds should also be engaged actively with the Women's Rights Committee of the European Parliament. They should begin to build contacts there. We could create a watch organisation of some kind with the Parliament. We need this badly."

A network professional

“Personally, I would not recommend creating a European fund unless there was multi-year funding available. It is a huge lift to create a women’s fund – it will be a huge amount of work.”

A leader of a woman’s fund

Stakeholders were optimistic that access to funds for gender equality can be improved with creative approaches. Some very large organisations manage structural funds and have worked on gender equality projects within this context. Other smaller funds have allied themselves with larger entities – such as relief and development agencies like Christian Aid or Bread for the World – in successful bids. One women’s fund teamed up on a youth empowerment project with IREX, a major consultancy that works in the developing world. Women’s funds should be seeking out more partnerships and looking at new strategies.

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“Partnership with other organisations is critical. I keep telling my friends in Western European chapters that perhaps the best way into projects is via existing organisations that are larger. And even better, to target other organisations that work with the Commission. I wouldn’t put energy into the really huge organisations but rather medium-sized ones that would be open to partnership.”

A leader of a women’s fund

“They should follow the example of the Roma organisations who worked together closely. [The] women’s movement needs to learn more and be more engaged with other movements that are like-minded. That includes working with other networks, such as ILGA or the Social Platform.”

A philanthropy professional

Conclusion

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Despite the current rise of populism across the continent, Europeans overwhelmingly support the promotion and protection of equality between women and men. It is recognised as one of the fundamental values and principles of the EU. According to a recent European Parliament report, more than 9 in 10 Europeans think that promoting gender equality is important to ensure a fair and democratic society.⁸⁶ But true advancement in this area “requires a change of mind-sets, solidarity and the political will to create institutional and legal frameworks that specifically address gender inequalities,” the report emphasised.⁸⁷

In this political context, the European Commission’s Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality⁸⁸ has earmarked over six billion euros for the period of 2016 to 2019 for programmes that include a gender equality objective and use gender equality indicators. These funds are devoted to a vast and varied number projects, ranging from attracting more female students to STEM subjects; easing the integration of young migrant women into the labour market; and supporting and promoting new women leaders as human rights defenders in Eastern Europe.

Gender mainstreaming aims to be a holistic strategy working towards achieving gender equality. One of its essential components is being able to demonstrate impact through data. Gender equality networks set up by the EU and others have undertaken numerous studies in this field. Nonetheless, it appears that this tool, singled out as necessary to ensure compliance and promote practical

results, is not yet being applied in a systematic way in European Union programming. It remains difficult to obtain comprehensive gender-related data on target groups, topics and beneficiaries, making a full assessment of the granting landscape complicated. Analysis for this report shows that the funding streams contributing to reaching gender mainstreaming goals are providing substantial funding but it remains fragmented and difficult to access. To continue closing the gender gap, more consistent implementation and external monitoring of gender-related data are critical.

Further, despite these financial efforts, it appears that scant resources go directly to women’s funds or women-led organisations and initiatives. That these groups are among the most qualified to work on gender equality issues seems to be uncontested. However, the fact that this has not translated into gaining substantial institutional support is problematic.

Moving forward, women’s funds can meet these challenges by developing new strategies in their engagement with European institutions. By bolstering their internal capacities to work with the Commission, as well as by seeking out new opportunities to engage – such as creating social enterprises and engaging in consulting or service provision – they can expand their reach. In exploring all possibilities to raise their profile, advocate on key issues, and creatively push for more data and funding, women’s funds can lead the way in framing the conversation and make lasting strides towards gender equality in Europe and beyond.

“More than 9 in 10 Europeans think that promoting gender equality is important to ensure a fair and democratic society.”⁸⁶

86. The 2018 European Parliament Report on Equality between Men and Women in the EU <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/950dce57-6222-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1>

87. Ibid.

88. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

Annex

Interviews and Contacts for this Report

The following EU Institutions provided detailed information for this report:

European Commission Department	Unit
DG Justice and Consumers	Unit D2 – Gender Equality
DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture	Erasmus Coordination Unit
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Unit F3 – Programming and Planning
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Unit C1 – Social Investment Strategy
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	Unit ESF and FEAD: Policy & Legislation
DG Research & Innovation	Unit B7 – Science with and for Society/ Sector Gender
DG Migration and Home Affairs – Directorate Migration, Mobility and Innovation	Unit Legal Migration and Integration
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	Unit C1 – Eastern Neighbourhood
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	Support Group for Ukraine
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	Unit C1 – Georgia, Moldova & Neighbourhood CrossBorder Cooperation
DG for International Cooperation and Development	Unit B1 – Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Delegation of the European Union to Georgia
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine
European Parliament Committee	
European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)	Secretariat of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

The following interviews were conducted by Skype or in person for this report. All participants requested anonymity.

Interviewee Type	Number of Interviews
EC Directorates-General	6
Women's Funds	7
Advisors to EU Institutions	3
Representatives of EU Agencies	1
Advisors to Multilaterals and Foundations	1
European Networks of Other Human Rights Organisations	7
Philanthropy Professionals	4
Advisors to Funds	2

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