



The Director-General



Secretary General

## Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP Turkey

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

Gender equality is not yet a reality in Turkey, despite important strides made over the years. EU accession process has provided an impetus for legal reforms to remove fundamental discriminatory practices against women.<sup>1</sup> Recent policy documents (the 11th National Development Plan 2019-2023, the Strategy Paper and Action Plan on Women's Empowerment (2018-2023), and the Strategy Paper and Action Plan on Combating Early and Forced Marriages (2018-2023)<sup>2</sup>), set important policy goals in critical GAP III areas. Yet, normative progress has been marred with the recent announcement of the Turkish government to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, fearing potential negative impact on violence against women and women's human rights in general.

Positive legal and policy developments have not resulted in gender parity in critical GAP III areas. As per the 2021 Gender Gap Report,<sup>3</sup> Turkey ranks 133rd among 156 countries, falling behind from 130<sup>th</sup> in 2020, and 105<sup>th</sup> in 2005. While gender gaps in compulsory education and enrolment have almost been bridged, challenges remain related to access to quality education for refugee and girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds, lowering school drop-out rates of girls, and increasing educational attainment for women in science and technology.

The increase in educational attainment for women has not led towards gender parity in economic life. Turkey is among countries with lowest labour force participation rate for women among OECD and EU countries (35 per cent women), while the employment rate is 29.7 per cent, of which 34 per cent are working in the informal economy. The unemployment rate of women (15-24 age group) is 30.3 per cent, while the NEETs rate for women is 35.7 per cent.<sup>4</sup> According to ILO and TURKSTAT<sup>5</sup>, the gender wage gap is 15.6 per cent, with a gap between working mothers and working non-mothers of 11 per cent, and between working mothers and fathers at 19 per cent. These figures show persistent challenges for women to access employment opportunities and decent work conditions, mostly due to traditional gender roles. Similarly, women face challenges to start up and ensure sustainability of enterprises, due to barriers in accessing loans, training, and know-how opportunities to strengthen their businesses. Their share in business and management positions is lower than that of men, with only 18.10 percent of women being member of Boards versus 81.90 per cent of men.<sup>6</sup> Turkey's 11<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan, the National Employment Strategy (2014-2023), and some active labour market measures for women have been under implementation in Turkey, however, their impact remains limited. As gender-based stereotypical pre-conceptions about childcare, unpaid work, etc. further being reinforced by the COVID-

<sup>1</sup> 2002 Turkish Civil Code, 2005 Turkish Penal Code, 2003 Law on the Establishment, Duties and Adjudicatory Procedures of Family Courts, 2012 Law on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Domestic Violence against Women

<sup>2</sup> Most recently, a new national action plan for combating violence against women (2021-2025) was announced.

<sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>

<sup>4</sup> Turkstat Household Labour Survey, 2020 Annual data, 15-64 age group, Available at: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Labour-Force-Statistics-2020-37484>

<sup>5</sup> See ILO and TURKSTAT, 2020, Report, Measuring the Gender Wage Gap, available at: [https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS\\_756660/lang-en/index.html](https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_756660/lang-en/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>

19 pandemic, are the leading reason behind the low labour force participation and employment of women, it is important to engage in actions to change deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, ensure tailor-made active labour market policies and expansion of access to quality childcare services.

Reportedly, a deterioration of the country context related to gender-based violence is noted following the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021. An increase of hate speech in the media against feminists and women organisations, and members of the LGBTIQ community is observed. The potential risk for this development to hamper the effectiveness of the judicial and administrative proceedings in cases of violence against women has increased. As violence against women and girls is thought to be widespread and have increased during the pandemic,<sup>7</sup> the importance of addressing it remains utmost. Development of a comprehensive data collection system, improvement of the efficiency of court proceedings, and strengthening social protection and health services for the victims remain a priority in Turkey, as contained in relevant policy documents. Likewise, attention to the issue of early marriage should be sustained, as current national efforts seem insufficient.<sup>8</sup>

Gender inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights persist,<sup>9</sup> despite considerable progress achieved with the Health Transformation Programme in 2012. Privatization of primary health care services have diminished access to sexual and reproductive health services, which is further jeopardized by the increase in pro-natalism discourse of the current government. Refugee women and girls in Turkey are particularly vulnerable and require sustained support in realizing their rights to SRH services.

Political participation of women remains weak and significant gender gaps are present. Women face challenges in accessing leadership roles and participating in politics at all levels, despite the use of quotas by the political parties. Their representation in parliament is well beyond the average rate of 25 per cent. According to the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, only 17.3 per cent of the members of the parliament are women, whereas women occupy only 11.8 per cent of the ministerial positions, compared to 88.2 per cent of men. The proportion of seats held by women in local governments was 10.1 per cent in 2019. The above figures confirm the persistence of several barriers to their higher involvement, including traditional gender roles, lack of time due to engagement in unpaid work, influence of the politics of their parents and spouse, etc., that ought to be addressed.

There is a limited inclusion of gender equality approach in green economy discourse and efforts in Turkey. Gender responsive planning, implementation and monitoring approach has not been a regular part of the climate change and environment projects under the IPA framework, except for inclusion of the concept of equal opportunity. Hence, it is paramount that all measures must be taken to ensure that pre-existing gender inequalities are not transferred to the emerging green economy.

The above gender gaps in critical GAP III areas point to the flaws in the implementation of the national legislation and policies. A coordinated gender mainstreaming policy across different governmental institutions is absent, as is the provision of adequate budgetary allocations to implement the policies. These, in turn, are a result of lack of commitment of the current government to gender equality, weak institutional mechanism to support women's rights – the General Directorate on the Status of Women, which is currently a branch of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. And persistence of gender biased, restrictive social norms.

Overcoming the above gender gaps and changing the conditions leading to gender inequality require a coordinated and sustained support and engagement with actors at all levels by the EU and other

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<sup>7</sup> According to reporting from civil society organisations active in the We will stop women murders platform (see link below), more than 2,600 women have been murdered in Turkey since 2010, with 300 women killed in 2021 and 171 women killed in suspicious circumstances, <http://kadin-cinayetlerini-durduracagiz.net/veriler/2947/kadin-cinayetlerini-durduracagiz-platformu-2020-raporu>

<sup>8</sup> Number of policy documents address the issues: National Action Plans on Women's Empowerment and on Combating Violence Against Women, the 11th Development Plan and the Annual Plan of the Presidency for 2021. The government has promoted the development of provincial action plans on combating early and forced marriage but are not supported with adequate budget allocations. Some municipalities and NGOs have led initiatives to combat child marriage.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2019, the maternal mortality ratio was 13.1 per cent per hundred thousand live births, while the fertility rate per thousand women in the 15-19 age group was 16.7 in 2019. The proportion of women in the 20-24 age group who were married before the age of 18 was 5.1 per cent decreasing from 8.2 per cent in 2010.

development partners in Turkey. For that purpose, this CLIP draws on the findings and commitments emanating from several consultation processes conducted by the EUD with MS, select national institutions and partner civil society organizations.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The **overall objectives of the planned EU actions** aim to promote a society free from gender-based discrimination and violence, where women and men enjoy equal opportunities in the workplace, public life and at home. To achieve the above overall objectives, in the coming 5 years, the EU sets to pursue the following **GAP III specific thematic objectives** in five thematic areas of engagement:

<b>GAP III Thematic Area of Engagement</b>	<b>GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives</b>
1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence	1: Women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the workplace and online through legislation and effective enforcement. 3: Women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection. 7: Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence.
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights	2: Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information, and education on sexual and reproductive rights.
3. Promoting economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women	1: Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems. 2: Improved policy, legal framework and access to care services enabling equal division of domestic and care work between women and men. 4: Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities. 6: Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression, and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys
4. Advancing equal participation and leadership	1: Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making. 2: Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights. 3: Women's organisations, other CSOs and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights work more freely and are better protected by law. 4: Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels – through civic education, media, education, and culture at all levels.
5. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered	(Climate change) 2: Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are more gender-responsive, at local, national, regional and international level.

<sup>10</sup> During March – June 2021, consultation meetings with Member States organized by the EUD took place, and members were appointed to work on the drafting of the CLIP, with Sweden taking active part. Consultation with CSOs was undertaken through a questionnaire, distributed to 44 CSOs, including 2 GONGOs. Similarly, a questionnaire was shared with relevant government institutions, UN and bilateral donors present in Turkey were engaged in a process of establishment of a donor coordination mechanism on gender, preceded by a thorough mapping of their current and planned priorities and actions. The process identified synergies and prospects for common action in the areas of gender-based violence, economic and social rights of girls and women, and women's participation in politics and public life. Less communalities were identified with regards to Women, Peace and Security agenda, SRHR and gender and digital transformation and green economy. These findings inform this CLIP.

by the green transition and the digital transformations	(Digitalization) 2: Women, men, girls, and boys are equally provided with and using equally public digital literacy.
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The achievement of these specific thematic objectives will be pursued through a dual approach of targeted actions combined with gender mainstreaming, ensuring close coordination with EU Member States and other relevant partners, including through the newly established Donor Coordination Mechanism on Gender for policy dialogue, priority setting, and planning of joint actions. As is the current practice, CSOs will continue to be involved in the design phase of specific actions through regular consultations, as well as implementation of specific actions, both as key implementing partners and as members of Steering Committees and Advisory Boards guiding the implementation and monitoring of the specific actions.

### 3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

To operationalize the specific thematic objectives identified above, to date, a set of targeted actions (G2) in each of the priority areas is planned or is under implementation, as follows:

**1. Empowering Women and Girls:** A total of € 5 million to be implemented by either a UN agency or a MS cooperation agency is allocated to address discrimination against women and girls, combating gender-based violence and promoting equal opportunities and participation of women in leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life. The action is in line with the national Strategy and Action Plan against Discrimination. CSOs will be supported to implement and monitor initiatives in the framework of this action, and their impact will contribute towards decreasing discrimination and empowering women to reach their full potential in life.

**2. Gender Equality Monitoring through Rights-based CSOs:** A total of € 2.5 million will be implemented by the Gender Equality Monitoring Association to facilitate sustainable networks of the Local Gender Equality Monitoring Platforms in different provinces. Thematic monitoring reports on issues such as violence against women, political participation, access to health services, justice, environment, will be developed and used by CSOs for advocacy and communication, hence positioning themselves as important actor in influencing policymaking. The programme is expected to strengthen CSOs and their role in shaping public policies as well as provide a continuous evidence-based information on the status of gender equality in the country to be further used by policy makers and EU actors.

**3. Advancing the Rights of LGBTI+:** A total of € 1 million to be implemented by either a UN agency or a MS cooperation agency will be allocated to support LGBTI+ organizations and initiatives to increase their resilience and rights and help promote a society free from prejudice and supportive of individuals pursuing their life free from discrimination.

**4. Women Friendly Cities III:** A total of € 5 million will be implemented by UNFPA to improve the institutional capacity of municipalities and local women's CSOs to foster inclusive and cooperative gender-sensitive local policies and services. The action will increase the number local authorities that incorporated gender into their strategic planning, in the provision of local services, and which have established Local Equality Mechanisms and Local Equality Action Plans.

**5. Supporting Registered Employment of Women through Promoting Educated Child-Caregivers:** Approximately € 24.3 million is allocated to an ongoing action benefiting the Social Security Institution, to increase childcare facilities for women with children who are at risk of withdrawal from labour market, while promoting registered employment of educated childcare givers.

**6. Supporting Registered Employment of Women through Institutional Childcare Services:** Approximately € 25.3 million is allocated to ongoing action benefiting the Social Security Institution, aimed at retaining working mothers in registered jobs and supporting them for returning or accessing labour market through a childcare subsidy programme. Both action 5 and 6 are expected to relieve the

child-care burden from women which is hindering their chances to pursuing employment and career growth.

**7. Increasing Women's Entrepreneurship and Registered Women's Employment:** Approximately € 25 million is allocated to the upcoming action to be implemented by the Social Security Institution, to support registered women employment through grants for new women employees who will be employed by women entrepreneurs in selected provinces. The action is expected to decrease the gender gap in labour force participation as well as support strengthening of women-led businesses.

**8. Empowering Women through Cooperatives:** Approximately € 2.9 million is allocated for the upcoming action to be implemented by General Directorate on the Status of Women- Ministry of Family and Social Services, aiming to provide enabling environment for women cooperatives to flourish and, to empower women through support to their cooperatives. The action will contribute towards bridging of the gender gap in paid employment and help change the traditional gender roles related to women's work.

EU MSs, on the other hand, will continue to support number of actions targeting women. In the upcoming period, Sweden foresees continuation of support to CSOs for various GAP III areas and the UN agencies for access to legal aid, combatting child, early and forced marriage, women's leadership in politics and private sector and, enhancement of labour force participation of women. The Netherlands continues to support CSOs on issues of violence against women, as will other MSs continue with their support to actions targeting refugee girls and women, in the framework of their current portfolios in Turkey.

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

Given the current context in Turkey, a meeting of the Head of Delegation with representatives of Women's Coalition and European Women's Lobby Coordination for Turkey took place, considering the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the impact it may have on the national normative framework. Possible entry points for future policy dialogue were identified. Regular policy dialogue on gender issues is foreseen in line with European Council conclusions and within the framework of implementation of specific actions, as for example, the Employment, Education and Social Policies Sector in IPA, including at HOMs levels.

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

Communication and outreach activities of the EUD carefully consider gender, including but not limited to an inclusive use of language and visuals. Beyond this general approach, the EUD will implement major communication activities around key dates such as: International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February); International Women's Day (8 March); International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November). Like 2020, in 2021, the Human Rights Short Film Competition will be organised, and a special prize for works on gender is foreseen. Continuous promotion of gender equality in all outreach and communication activities on environment and climate change will be ensured.

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

The 2020 ATA funded study on the 'Support for the establishment of Gender Donor Coordination Mechanism (DGCM) with MSs and other donors' active in Turkey in the field of Gender Equality' indirectly contributed to the drafting of the CLIP. The overall objective was to contribute to the establishment of a donor coordination mechanism for coordination, collaboration, advocacy, learning, and access to knowledge and expertise on Gender Equality in Turkey.

Date:

16/7/2021

Signature by Head of Delegation:

