



Advocacy Card

Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EC Development Cooperation with Russia

International Gender Policy Network

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has made commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment outside its borders. As stated in the "2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men", "Gender equality is a goal in itself, a human right and contributes to reducing poverty. The EU is a key player in international development efforts and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Development Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). It has reaffirmed gender equality as one of the five key principles of the development policy in the European Consensus on development."¹ Although the EU's different levels of commitment provide developing countries with opportunities to address gender inequalities on their domestic soil, challenges remain to bring these commitments into effect.

Civil society organizations point at the gap between policy and practice: an overview of the European Commission's annual work, legislative programmes and policy strategy documents reveals a limited integration of gender concerns.² Furthermore, the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and mainly women's groups in policy discussion and formulation lacks a clear mechanism, despite the obligation of EU institutions to support a political dialogue with them.³ As an active promoter of gender equality, the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) intends to engage in a dialogue with the Commission's Delegations in the countries of Eastern Europe, South-eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in the matter of the upcoming revision of the country and regional strategy documents (Country Strategy Papers, Regional Strategy Papers) due to take place in 2009. The IGPN has taken the opportunity of the midterm-review of the country/regional strategy documents to highlight the weaknesses of development cooperation in terms of gender concerns, and to advocate for improvements.

Within the framework of this advocacy activity, the IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries linked with IGPN, and one common Regional Advocacy Card. The aim of this advocacy work is to remind the European and national representatives of their policy commitments. The Advocacy Card for EC development cooperation with Russia firstly provides an overview of EU's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Secondly, the Country Strategy Paper for Russia is examined in the context of the EU's commitments to gender equality. Next, an assessment of major gender issues in Russia is presented. Finally, recommendations are proposed to the actors involved in various degrees in the preparation of the Country Strategy Paper: the EU officials, national government and civil society organizations.

¹ A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, *European Community*, (COM 2006) 92 final, p. 9, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0092:FIN:EN:PDF>

² Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 10
<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

³ For more information see Chapter 2 in Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007
<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ A commitment to gender equality is reflected in a number of politically and legally binding documents of the EU and EC (Treaty of Amsterdam, Maastricht Treaty, Charter for Fundamental Rights of the EU, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals).
- ❖ The promotion of gender equality outside the EU is outlined as the number 6 priority area of the **2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** (Commissions' Communication). This priority is further detailed as follows: 6.1 Enforcement of EU legislation in acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries and 6.2 Promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), external and development policies. The key actions taken by the Commission will include monitoring and promoting gender mainstreaming and specific measures in the ENP, EU external relations and development policies, at policy dialogue and programming levels (Regional/Country Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers); at implementation level, particular attention will be devoted to gender mainstreaming in the new aid modalities (budget support and sector programmes).
- ❖ In terms of the EU development cooperation policy, the crucial policy framework for promoting gender equality is the European Consensus on Development, agreed upon in 2005 by the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament, and the representatives of the member states, where gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting issue.⁴ Furthermore, the **2007 Commission Communication on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation"** is the first step towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality and empowering women through development cooperation.⁵
- ❖ Related to the 2007 Commission Communication is the document "Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States", also known as the **Council Conclusion**. One of the conclusions is the following: "The Council recognizes the Commission's and the Member States' specific responsibility to support developing country partners in eliminating discrimination and gender inequality by increasing visibility and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and to promote and engage in an enhanced political dialogue at all levels, including the highest political level, which incorporates gender equality explicitly as a central theme."⁶
- ❖ In line with these documents, the EU has supported a **twin-track approach: gender mainstreaming** (mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of development policy) and **specific measures** aimed at socioeconomic and political empowerment of women.

⁴ "EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality," *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting with the Council on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, *Council of the European Union*, 15 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09561.en07.pdf>

GENDER IN THE COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER FOR RUSSIA

Preface to the CSP

EU-Russia cooperation is conceived in terms of a strategic partnership. In May 2003, the EU and Russia agreed to create four 'common spaces': a Common Economic Space; a Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; a Space of co-operation in the field of External Security; and a Common Space for Research and Education, which included Cultural Aspects. A set of roadmaps towards the Common Spaces were agreed on in May 2005. The Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Russia is designed in view of this strategic partnership.

In general, the CSP is the EC's main programming tool which sets the policy objectives and priorities of the EC's assistance to a particular country over a given period of time. The CSPs consist of five main sections: EC cooperation objectives; the partner country's national policy agenda; assessment of the political, economic and social situation; assessment of past and ongoing EC cooperation; and the EC response strategy. Gender equality issues should be reflected in each section of the CSP.⁷

The CSPs are drafted on the basis of a dialogue between the EC Delegation and Brussels, the Member States' embassies, government ministries and civil society in the country.⁸ In relation to gender issues, each delegation has a Gender Focal Point, and assistance is also available from the gender desks in Brussels. Furthermore, there are various gender mainstreaming tools available to the European officials, such as Gender guidelines for Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and the Mid-Term Review of CSPs. The Mid-Term Review process presents an important opportunity to address the mainstreaming of gender equality in the 'first generation' of CSPs and to examine the adequacy of the treatment of gender issues section by section, as indicated in the EC's Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation.⁹

Analysis of the CSP from a Gender Perspective

In the EC Response Strategy section, reference is made to cross-cutting issues such as gender, the environment, human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities which are to be taken into account in the allocation of funds. (p. 26)

A brief remark is made on the situation of women in relation to the trafficking of human beings in Common Space II – Security (Annex II): the objective is to "promote cooperation in international and regional law enforcement operations to combat trafficking in human beings, especially in women and children" and to "implement the UN Protocol against trafficking in persons, especially women and children, including adoption of further legislation to support the fight against trafficking in human beings." Gender issues are not mentioned among other objectives of the Common Spaces.

Taken as a whole, the CSP pays minor attention to gender issues. There are no other remarks on gender equality nor are gender indicators provided. It is evident that the situation of the Russian Federation differs from other CIS countries, as Russia is no longer in the economic chaos of the 1990s, and development aid has decreased. Overall, the CSP gives an impression that its objectives are based on pragmatic cooperation, especially in the field of economy and security. Concerns over gender equality seem like something to be left or dealt with on a national level.

⁷ Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation, *European Commission*, 2005, p. 34, http://www.iiav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit_on_mainstreaming_gender_equality.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 39

DIALOGUE WITH THE EC DELEGATION¹⁰

In August 2008, IGPB made inquiries concerning the Mid-term Review of the CSP; however, no concrete information was provided either by the Delegation or desk officers in Brussels. Officials from DG RELEX replied saying that a calendar for consultation with interested groups - including civil society organizations - on the mid-term review process of the respective CSP for ENP countries will be finalized over the coming weeks and the relevant information may be posted on the ENP website during the course of September/October 2008. The officials therefore invited IGPB to send to the DG RELEX its assessment of the situation concerning gender issues in ENP countries and in the Russian Federation in the context of this exercise, adding that the IGPB contribution could also be sent to the Delegations in the countries concerned.

IGPB has been informed that the EC Delegation in Moscow cannot give answers to any consultations relating to the preparation of the CSP because the CSP and Multi-annual Indicative Programmes are prepared in their headquarters, and the Delegation only plays a supporting role in the process of drafting/revision.

According to the EC Delegation in Moscow, the situation in Russia is very different from most of the other countries where the EC operates and implements projects: "Russia is not a developing country. In fact, Russia is an emerging donor country itself. Because of these changing circumstances in Russia, the focus of EU operations in Russia has notably changed. Our target is no longer to assist Russia or to solve any social and humanitarian development issues within Russia (which was still the target in the 1990s). Because of this, the amount of EU financing available for Russia has been greatly reduced." The officials add that when the Delegation still uses some European funds in Russia, it uses them increasingly for purposes that are in the interests of both sides (the EU and Russia), and which in most cases are focused on the realisation of the four Common Spaces. The Common Spaces focus on a number of key policy issues. Gender issues are not included as a separate point anywhere in the common spaces, but of course one could say that gender issues should be taken into account in any policy or agreement the EC and Russia is developing together.

IGPB'S ASSESSMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN RUSSIA

Since 1990, about 3 thousand women's NGOs have opened in the country, and most of them have continued to operate until today. Over the past decade, much has been done by women's NGOs in Russia: violence against women has become a public issue, crisis centers have appeared in some of the country's regions, issues related to the trafficking of women are now being addressed and dealt with at the legislative level, and gender studies are becoming an inherent part of college and university curriculums" However, still not enough has been done to influence the traditional gender stereotypes in Russian society. The Russian Federation is slowly developing its own donor base; nevertheless, foreign donors still play a crucial role in supporting the civil society in Russia, particularly in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment projects.

According to the analysis of the Institute for Social Change and Gender Policy, between 2004 – 2005, only an average of 0.53% of funds invested by both Russian and foreign donors was spent on women's/ gender projects. Notably, foreign donors spent 0.48% of their total funding on such projects, whereas Russian donors spent as little as 0.05%. This study also revealed that such a theme as human rights appears to be one of the most

¹⁰ Information in this section has been obtained through email communication of IGPB with the EC Delegation and desk officers in Brussels

unpopular among Russian donors, and the most unpopular subject is women's rights and gender equality (the latter includes trafficking in women, violence, and increasing the rights and capabilities of women). Both these subjects are supported only by foreign donors within the framework of both governmental programs and mixed funds. The most popular subjects of Russian donors are problems with children (both orphans and gifted children) and senior citizens, safety nets for disadvantaged groups, and the development of sport. In other words, these projects are aimed at decreasing the consequences and implications of social problems, and not at eradicating the roots of these problems.

In Russia, approximately 99% of gender-related projects have been supported by foreign donors, among the most important ones being the Open Society Institute's Women's Network Program and the ISGP, the Ford Foundation, the J. and K. MacArthur Foundation, USAID, the Canadian Gender Equality Fund, and others.¹¹ During the last three years the situation with gender issues has really been dropped from the scenario in Russia development, as gender has been largely taken only as a cross-cutting issue, without further specific measures which would address women's issues.

With regards to gender concerns, many problematic aspects exist in Russia; however, mainly just the issues of violence against women and trafficking of women come under public scrutiny. The violation of women's human rights requires more attention especially among the following categories of women: migrant women; disabled women; HIV-positive women; women from rural areas; women with babies and infants; women engaged in the informal sector; working women; and women engaged in politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To integrate gender issues into all stages of country programming and project cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation)
- To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the CSP
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity (Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points)
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries
- To push the Russian government to address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice

Recommendations to the National Government:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations and their initiatives aimed at addressing women's issues
- To organize widespread public awareness campaigns (public TV/radio programs)

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances among women's organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their advocacy and lobbying activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegation in Russia
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments

¹¹ This indicator is for years 2004-2005

- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- To advocate for the inclusion of projects that specifically target gender issues, apart from having it as a cross-cutting issue
- To raise public awareness of gender equality and keep the public up-to-date concerning the developments in this field (to serve as a link between the government, EU and the general public)

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