

ILO contribution to the targeted consultation on the EU External Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025

The ILO **fully endorses the joint UN contribution to the GAP III consultation**. With this brief note, the ILO further elaborates on priority areas that would contribute to advance gender equality in the world of work. These are **1) Promoting a world of work free from discrimination, gender stereotypes, and violence and harassment; 2) Designing and financing sustainable infrastructure, social protection and public care services and policies; 3) Engaging and supporting women through work transitions, and 4) Promoting women's voices and representation**. GAP III should adapt its interventions in these areas depending on a country's particular level of development and the structure of its economy.

1) Promoting a world of work free from discrimination, gender stereotypes, and violence and harassment

GAP III should strongly support policies and interventions that promote the respect for and enjoyment of equal rights. Actions should include promoting equality and non-discrimination in opportunities and treatment in employment and occupations in line with the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No.111). GAP III should work with partner countries to remove discriminatory legal provisions restricting women's access to certain sectors and occupations, including gender-based discrimination based on civil or marital status and family situation prior to entry into the labour market. GAP III should also promote the full application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in law and practice in line with the ILO Convention Equal Remuneration, 1951 (No.100). In this regard, GAP III should consider supporting countries to join the [Equal Pay International Coalition](#) led by ILO, UNWOMEN and OECD. Drawing from existing good practices,¹ GAP III should promote actions to prevent and address violence and harassment in the world of work and support the ratification and implementation of ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its supplementing Recommendation (No. 206). Attention should be given to women in vulnerable situations, such as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, women with disabilities and living with HIV, ethnic minorities, indigenous and tribal women and LGBTIQ. ILO standards pertaining to the abovementioned groups provide useful guidance for policy measures and actions.

2) Designing and financing sustainable infrastructure, social protection and public care services and policies

In the current organization of societies everywhere, women and girls still perform the greatest share of unpaid care work. Addressing women's time poverty is therefore a priority for any development cooperation intervention. As also highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, care infrastructure and social protection are of outmost importance for societies and economies to survive and thrive. Women paid and unpaid roles in the functioning of such systems are essential. Gap III should therefore support the **availability and access to infrastructure and services for women**. In low-income countries, basic infrastructure and services, such as clean water, safe cooking fuel, electricity, and secure transportation, day-care, schools, health facilities and ICT have an enormous impact on addressing women's time poverty and their possibility to engage in paid work, by redistributing unpaid care work. Investing in infrastructure and services is also **a source of decent jobs for women and men, and contributes to environmental sustainability**.

To further ease the care burden on women and girls and promote a fairer distribution of unpaid care work, the GAP III could draw inspiration from the ILO's "**5R Framework for Decent Care Work**".² This framework promotes a mix of possible legislative and policy measures to achieve decent work in the care economy. Its key components include **Recognizing, Reducing and Redistributing unpaid care work; Rewarding paid care work; and ensuring Representation, social dialogue and collective**

¹ See for instance ILO-IFC Better work programme in [the garment industry](#).

² [ILO, Care Work and Care Jobs](#) (2018), p.289.

bargaining for care workers. Each group of policy recommendations is matched with a set of policy measures based on ILO labour standards and intended to achieve the SDGs. Within this framework, it would be particularly crucial that GAP III **promotes gender-responsive social protection systems**, including **social protection floors** that are **universal, fair and inclusive**, in line with the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation 202. Efforts towards the development and implementation of transformative **maternity protection provisions, family leave and care leave policies**, with particular attention to children, elderly and people with disabilities and living with HIV, should be further supported both in the formal and informal economy. ILO relevant standards, such as Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, (No. 156) and Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), could provide useful guidance. Particular attention should be devoted to women in the informal economy, with a view to ensuring their inclusion in social protection provisions and in national plans towards transitioning to formal economy in line with ILO Transition from Informal to Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). In order to finance such infrastructure, social protection and public care services and policies, GAP III should promote gender-responsive macroeconomic policies that will identify and address the needs of diverse groups of women as well as care deficits. Within this framework, gender-responsive and social budgeting is an important tool for prioritizing more effectively gender equality in the overall set of national policies.

3) Engaging and supporting women through work transitions

GAP III action plan should support activities aimed at **facilitating the return to work** for women and men either after childbirth, following a period of parental leave, or as a result of long-term unemployment due to unpaid family care responsibilities or violence and harassment. Closing the **digital gender divide** should also be a focus of gender responsive **lifelong learning initiatives**. GAP III should support proactive measures encouraging young women to engage in STEM studies and related occupational trajectories. GAP III should also contribute to creating an enabling environment for **women entrepreneurs** and **support actions helping women workers moving from the informal to the formal economy**. Cooperatives and social and solidarity enterprises can provide a way forward towards formalization.

4) Promoting women's voices and representation

Given the weak participation and representation of women in decision-making processes, industrial relations, social dialogue and collective bargaining processes, it is essential for GAP III to strengthen **ways of organising women and to build their negotiation and leadership skills**. In developing countries, awareness raising has played a key role in helping women understand the benefits of unionizing. GAP III could support initiatives aimed at **leveraging the capacities of employers' and workers' organisations, as well as women's organizations and women's self-groups**, particularly those operating in the informal economy, to effectively respond to the needs of women in vulnerable situations. Workers across diverse workplaces and countries can be organized through digital means and engage in new forms of collective action. Organizing migrant workers, including through bilateral agreements, has been a means of giving migrant care workers a voice.

Reliable data is important to design policies and monitor their impact. GAP III should strengthen efforts towards **improving statistical capacity** at national level to collect and publish data, as well as towards mainstreaming gender statistics within statistical systems.

It is of outmost importance that GAP III promotes these four areas of intervention in an integrated manner to ensure policy coherence as well as effective and sustainable gender equality outcomes.

This note is based on: ILO, *A quantum leap for gender equality: for a better future of work for all* (2019); ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs* (2018).