

Opinion on the Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: “European Union Action Plan on Gender Equality III - An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action” (JOIN (2020)17).

The European Union Policies Committee of Italy’s Chamber of Deputies,

having examined, pursuant to Rule 127.1 of the Chamber’s Rules of Procedure, the Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: “European Union Action Plan on Gender Equality III - An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action” (JOIN (2020)17);

whereas:

The Action Plan aims to increase the effectiveness of the EU's engagement on gender equality as a cross-cutting priority of EU external action in its policy and programming work, and the European Commission has undertaken to ensure that by 2025 85% of all new external actions will have gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a significant or main objective;

The Action Plan is consistent with the priority objectives of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM (2020)152) presented by the European Commission on 5 March 2020, which also enumerates the actions whose execution will enable the EU to make significant progress towards gender equality by 2025;

considering that:

The new Action Plan on Gender Equality III (Gender Action Plan or ‘GAP III’) is intended as a strategic tool for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in external relations;

Empowering women economically is key to reducing poverty and to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth;

The need to address the already acute and persistent gender gaps in the world of work has been made all the more urgent by the COVID-19 pandemic, whose impact on female workers has been particularly severe;

In 2020, according to the Joint communication, less than 50% of women were in the labour market, compared to 76% of men, resulting in a gender gap of 27 percentage points globally;

The gender wage gap aggravates the disadvantaged position of women in the world of work, as already noted on 7 July 2021 by the Public and Private Sector Employment Committee of the Chamber of Deputies in its opinion on the Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (COM(2021) 93 final);

The Action Plan includes estimates suggesting that advancing gender equality could add around 11-21 trillion euros to global GDP by 2025;

Observing also that digital technologies and solutions have the potential not only to accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in the areas of education and employment, but also to prevent and combat gender-based violence;

Acknowledging that the present opinion, along with the final document of the relevant Parliamentary Committee needs to be transmitted promptly to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue, as well as to the European Parliament and the Council;

does hereby express:

A FAVOURABLE OPINION

with the following remarks :

The relevant Committee should consider raising the following points in the appropriate European institutional fora:

- a) The gender perspective needs to be systematically integrated into all EU policies relating to actions with an internal and external dimension, also so as to ensure that the Action Plan is effectively consistent with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025;*
- b) It is important that the gender analyses used for the purposes of gender mainstreaming in all external programmes funded by the EU are up to date, and, likewise, that the indicators and statistical data used for monitoring and evaluation activities both take account of and can be broken down according to gender;*
- c) To close global gender gaps in labour force participation rates, the actions that need to be taken include, in particular, supporting female entrepreneurship and promoting the employment of women in the green, blue and circular economy, while also accounting for how climate change and environmental degradation are impacting women and girls in developing countries;*
- d) Actions are urgently needed to equalise women's access to digital technologies, and gender mainstreaming must be included in policies, projects and development programmes for the digital transformation of partner countries.*