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EWL reacts to proposed EU funding programmes in the field of Justice: Gender equality and the fight against violence against women require specific, predictable funding

The European Commission on 15 November proposed that, from 2014 to 2020, EU activities to promote equality between women and men and fight violence against women will be financed through a programme called 'Rights and Citizenship', one of the two new funding programmes in the field of Justice.¹ The programme will merge three current programmes: the gender equality and anti-discrimination sections of the PROGRESS programme, the DAPHNE III programme to combat violence against women, children and young people, and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme. It is foreseen to have a budget of €387 million (2011 prices),² which means an almost 16% decrease in comparison to the budgets of the current programmes.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) welcomes the fact that activities to promote gender equality and combat violence against women will after 2014 be funded through the same programme and that the proposal acknowledges the need to support European NGO networks. However, the EWL is concerned that the proposal as it stands may weaken the EU's ability to promote equality between women and men and combat violence against women in sustainable manner with predictable funding and thus undermine its long-standing commitment to this goal.

Gender equality must be an independent policy priority

The Rights and Citizenship programme foresees a general objective to "implement the principle of non-discrimination" that includes equality between women and men and the rights of persons with disabilities and the elderly. The EWL sees the proposal as a step toward the integration of the goal of equality between women and men into the framework of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, which may lead to a loss of visibility and focus.

The EWL stresses that equality between women and men is one of the objectives of the EU enshrined in the Treaties and a long term model policy of the European Union. The promotion of gender equality is also crucial for reaching the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This issue must therefore remain an independent policy priority, and the EWL calls for the European Parliament and the Member States to ensure specific funding for this policy area when they adopt the programme. The EWL also calls on decision-makers to ensure that the new programme will provide the mandate and financial means for successful gender-mainstreaming in all EU policies – including gender budgeting – and for redressing the multiple discrimination faced by, among others, migrant women, Roma women, disabled women, lesbian women, and elderly women.

Combating violence against women requires more visibility

¹ Proposal for the Rights and Citizenship Programme (COM(2011) 758); Proposal for the Justice Programme (COM(2011) 759)

² The budget in current prices that have been adjusted to take inflation into account is €439 million



The EWL welcomes the fact that after 2014 activities to promote equality between women and men and combat violence against women will be funded through the same programme. Combating violence against women is one of the priorities of EU gender equality policies, and a shared programme has the potential to increase the consistency and visibility of the EU's efforts in these fields.

However, the EWL regrets that violence against women is not mentioned among the specific objectives of the Rights and Citizenship programme, and that this programme does not explicitly build on the achievements and methods of the much-praised DAPHNE programmes. More visibility and a sustained funding for combating violence against women is necessary to respond to the strong demands of the European Parliament, Council and civil society for strengthened EU action in this field.³

Reduced budget and flexibility threaten the predictability of funding

The EWL regrets that the proposed budget of the Programme cuts the funding for fundamental rights, equality and combating violence⁴: when calculated based on the year 2011 prices, the cut is as high as 15.9%.⁵ At the same time, the total funding for EU activities in the field of Justice is foreseen to increase. This implies a shift in priorities from equality, rights and citizenship to criminal and civil justice⁶. The Rights and Citizenship Programme must have a larger financial envelope, owing to the strong EU commitments to the policy objectives that it covers, for example, the recent entry into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Whereas currently shares of EU funding are permanently reserved for promoting gender equality and combating discrimination and violence, it is proposed that the new Programme will allocate funding for its different policy objectives on a yearly basis based on changing priorities. The EWL is concerned that this approach threatens the predictability of funding for promoting equality between women and men, fighting violence against women, as well as for combating discrimination on various grounds.

Guarantee access to funding of NGOs at all levels

The EWL welcomes the proposal that the Rights and Citizenship Programme should support European NGO networks. European women's rights and equality networks are uniquely placed to support the developing and monitoring EU law and policies through their direct involvement with groups and individuals concerned.

The EWL also welcomes the fact that the participation to the programme is open to all kinds of legal entities in all Member States and stresses that NGOs at European, national, and local levels should be seen important partners to implement the programme. It must be ensured that the Programme, in a similar manner to DAPHNE, is practically accessible for women's NGOs of all sizes both as project promoters and recipients of operation funding.

³ The European Parliament Resolution of 6 April 2011 calls for an EU Strategy on violence against women; violence against women is one of the priorities of the EU Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, and one of the three priorities of the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 adopted by the EPSCO Council on 7 March 2011.

⁴ Funding for these policies in the 2007-2013 period is €460 million: DAPHNE III €121,43 million, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship €97,4 million, Progress €241,5 million. (http://ec.europa.eu/justice/news/consulting_public/0010/background_questionnaire_en.pdf).

⁵ When counted based on current prices that have been adjusted to take inflation into account the cut is 4.8%. However, the real difference between 439 million foreseen for in 2014-2020 and the 460 million invested in 2007-2013 is more than this.

⁶ The overall funding for activities in the field of Justice will increase from the €791.5 million in 2007-2013 to €803 million in 2011 prices and or €911 million in current prices in 2014-2020.