

EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



The Director-General



Secretary General

## Gender Action Plan III - 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan - CLIP *[JAPAN]*

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

**Gender equality and women empowerment is one of the top priority areas set in the Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021-2024 for Japan.**

The EU Delegation Japan has been working actively to promote gender equality and women empowerment in Japan, including in cooperation with the EUMS as well as international organisations such as UN Women. We take stock of the current gender (in)equality situation in Japan by engaging with various stakeholders, including the Japanese government, parliamentarians, experts, CSOs, youth activists and international organisations.

#### *Overview of the gender equality situation in Japan*

Japan's gender gap is by far the largest among the world's advanced economies and has widened over the past year. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, Japan ranks **120 out of 156 countries in 2021** (2020: 121). It's a complex problem that has multiple repercussions, including, some experts say, contributing to the declining population of Japan.

**Gender inequality persists with low levels of political representation for women and widespread discrimination in the labour market.** 9.9% and 23.2% of members of the lower and upper houses in parliament respectively were women in 2020. Women account for about 45% of the workforce, but while **22% of male employees work as non-regular workers, the ratio for women is 54%**. The Japanese government missed its target, to have at least 30% of leadership positions occupied by women by the end of 2020, pushing the target date to 2025.

**The gender wage gap between men and women in Japan is 23.5% in 2019 and among the worst in OECD countries.** The current tax system and social security system, designed during a period of high economic growth, are based on the idea that a married woman becomes a full-time housewife and protects her family with income from her husband, who is a full-time employee. This social system is becoming non-functional amid today's diversified lifestyles and family structures. Besides, **unpaid care work** is considerably one of the most serious gender issues in Japan. Disproportional burdens are on women's shoulders. In Japan, **women's non-paid work hours are 5.5 times longer than men.**

Domestic violence and stalking behaviour have become serious social issues in Japan. According to a survey conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2020, **around 23% of women have been a victim of domestic violence.** Approximately **one woman in 14 has experienced forcible sexual intercourse.** Sexual and reproductive health options are limited and there is no comprehensive education on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health in Japan. Choices of

contraceptives and abortion methods are extremely limited. The legal age of consent is 13 years old, which is one of the lowest in the world.

Public voices are rising to improve gender equality in Japan. Especially, the younger generation has proactively spoken up and advocated for gender equality in fields such as political participation, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and choice of family name after marriage. The percentage of people who oppose existing gender role attitudes has been on a long-term upward trend for both men and women in Japan. However, **traditional gender roles remain entrenched in Japanese society and there are sociocultural and systematic barriers to realise gender equality**. Traditional values remain stronger particularly in rural areas. There is also inequality in the education system, such as gender discrimination in entrance exams for medical universities and public high schools. **Japan is the only country in the world to have a law forcing married couples to share a surname**. 96% of Japanese married couples use the husband's surname.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women economically and socially, widening the gender gap in Japan. The crisis has led to an increase in **sexual violence against women**, including **domestic violence**. It has hit them harder financially as many have lower-paid non-regular jobs in the most badly impacted sectors. Disproportional burdens on women for **non-paid work** have also widened. There has been a **surge in suicide among women**, particularly among unemployed women including housewives and pensioners, and high school girls. In 2020, 7,025 women committed suicide, a 15.3% increase over the previous year.

The Japanese government formulates **the Basic Plan for Gender Equality** every five years, based on the Basic Act for Gender Equal Society established in 1999. The current plan is **the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality**, approved by the Cabinet in December 2020, covering the period from FY2021 to FY2025.

In regards to evidence-based gender policy making, Japan recognises that in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, it is important to enhance gender statistics to keep track of the circumstances and conditions surrounding men and women. While Japan's statistics are reliable, the Study Group of the Cabinet Office Gender Equality Council points out that existing statistics are not fully utilised or analysed in measuring gender equality and establishing gender-based policies.

With regard to multilateral cooperation in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, since 2014, the Japanese government has held the World Assembly for Women ("WAW!"), at which leaders in various fields gather from countries and organisations around the world to discuss challenges in and outside of Japan relating to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Japan has completed its first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2013 to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and made the second edition for 2019-2022 in March 2019. In accordance with the NAP, Japan has implemented Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through bilateral cooperation by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and with UN agencies and other international organizations. Japan is one of top donors for UN Women, and has strengthened coordination with the organisation. Japan's priority areas of cooperation focus on the projects tackling violence against women. Japan has partnered with Sri Lanka to work on the G7 WPS Partnerships Initiative to build peace and security through the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related WPS Resolutions.

## 2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

Gender is one of the key priorities of the **new Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy for Japan 2021-2024**.

Coordination with EUMS Embassies is taking place in the framework of this Strategy.

The HRDCS contains following references to gender:

Priority	Objectives	Envisaged activities
Gender equality, women empowerment and non-discrimination for LGBTI	<p>Scale up cooperation on gender equality.</p> <p>Step up action to combat all forms of discrimination.</p> <p>Support efforts to combat domestic and gender based violence and gender stereotypes.</p> <p>Step up actions to prevent, denounce, and combat all forms of discrimination and harassment against LGBTI.</p> <p>Cooperate on WPS (Women, Peace and Security).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussions within the framework of the HR Consultations and follow-up</li><li>• Constructive engagement and exchange experiences</li><li>• Public Diplomacy events and social media campaigns</li><li>• Outreach to the general public and advocacy towards legislative and executive branches</li><li>• Engagement with civil society and other main stakeholders</li><li>• Gender mainstreaming (business &amp; human rights, environmental and digital policies)</li><li>• Support work of UN Women in Japan and other women organisations</li><li>• Support data collection</li><li>• Engage with Japan on WPS in multilateral fora</li></ul>

In order to achieve the above objectives, and by taking account of Japan's gender equality situation and issues mentioned in Section 1, we have chosen the following GAP III thematic areas of engagement and objectives:

### *(i) Thematic area of engagement - Promoting equal participation and leadership*

Specific objectives:

- Enabling conditions to allow the equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making, including in consultative bodies
- 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
- Improved systems for collecting quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on women's political participation and leadership

**For Japan, focus will be given on:**

- **Advancing equal participation in decision making, politics and labour market**
  - As one of examples in the EU's engagement with Japan on this aspect, the composition of the civil society representation in the Joint Dialogue with Civil Society established under the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is remarkably balanced in terms of gender, both on the Japanese/the European side.

- **Promoting Evidence-based gender policy making, including a target-based approach (numerical target etc...), and assessment with clear methodology**

***(ii) Thematic area of engagement - Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women***

Specific objectives:

- 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
- Improved policy, legal framework and access to care services enabling equal division of domestic and care work between women and men
- Women in all their diversity to have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economies
- Improved access for women in all their diversity to managerial and leadership roles in social and economic sectors, and for a reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys

**For Japan, focus will be given on:**

- **Promoting Work-Life Balance addressing pay and opportunity gaps between men and women**
- **Equal share of care and housework responsibility**
- **Prohibition of gender stereotyping and social norms**
- **Selective family name for married couples**
- **Career support for women**
- **Promoting female entrepreneurship**
  - Some of the success stories of SMEs exporting to Japan taking advantage of the opportunities created by the EU-Japan EPA involve women entrepreneurs, which can be referred to as anecdotal evidence that the EPA is indeed delivering for women.

***(iii) Thematic area of engagement - Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence***

Specific objectives:

- Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, to be 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
- Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, to be agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict
- The right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, free from discrimination, coercion and violence to be promoted and better protected

- Quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices to be increasingly collected and used to inform laws, policies and programmes

**For Japan focus will be given on:**

- **Addressing violence against women and girls, including domestic violence**

(iv) *In addition*, the EU and Japan are like-minded partners and will work together on the G7 commitment on gender equality and women's empowerment, and cooperate on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

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

- ☐ Constructive engagement and exchange experiences
- ☐ Public Diplomacy events and social media campaigns
- ☐ Outreach to the general public and advocacy towards legislative and executive branches
- ☐ Engagement with civil society and other main stakeholders, including in the context of the implementation of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement
- ☐ Gender mainstreaming (business & human rights, environmental and digital policies)
- ☐ Support work of UN Women in Japan and other women organisations
- ☐ Support data collection
- ☐ Engage with Japan on WPS in multilateral fora
- ☐ Develop an intersectional approach such as B&HR and gender or Parental Child abduction and gender

**Project:**

The **WE EMPOWER G7 programme** (6 million EUR multi-country project whereof 1.5 million EUR for Japan), "Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women" a **joint action between the EU, UN Women and the ILO**, aimed to promote responsible business conduct and women's economic empowerment in G7 countries. The project started in July 2018 and ended in December 2020. It supported delivery on the commitments made in the G7, and contributes to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), SDG 8 (promote inclusive and sustainable development, decent work and employment for all) and SDG 17 (revitalize global partnership for sustainable development). The Project's guiding platform is the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), designed and launched by UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in 2010.

Under the supervision of the EU Delegation, the project was led in Japan by the UN Women office and supported by 15 Advisory Group members, composed of individual experts and thought leaders who brought their knowledge and networks to advance WE EMPOWER work in Japan. The members' background ranged from academia, labour unions, labour law, to women entrepreneurs, and corporations. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office; and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare participated as observers. Key achievements in 2020 included: (i) Multi-stakeholder and action-driven policy dialogues & knowledge exchange; (ii) Private sector engagement and enhanced Women Empowerment Principles (WEP) implementation. The WE

EMPOWER Japan programme partnered with strategic partners including the Global Compact Network Japan and the 30% Club Japan. Main activities focused on awareness raising and knowledge building. The programme developed numerous advocacy materials and knowledge products such as the WEPs Handbook for Japanese Companies: a comprehensive handbook developed together with the Global Compact Network Japan was launched on 8 December 2020 at an on-line event with approximately 160 participants, followed by almost 180 downloads of the PDF file. Twitter tweets on the event and handbook also had an outreach of 20,000 tweets. For the future, further collaborations could be considered on the following themes; addressing social norms and stereotypes (particularly in rural areas), unpaid care of women, violence against women/sexual harassment, and working with youth.

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

The Delegation will continue to engage with the Japanese government, Diet members and relevant stakeholders at international, national and local levels on the issues of gender equality and women empowerment in various forms of political and policy dialogues. Together with MS, the Delegation will engage with key local actors such as CSOs, international organizations (i.e. UN institutions) and youth activists to promote the EU's experiences and best practice on gender equality.

Specific policy engagement, dialogue and events for FY2021 include:

Gender equality is discussed at the annual EU-Japan Human Rights Consultations (last one took place on 16 June 2021).

EUDEL organizing specific events on gender equality:

- EUDEL organised on 31 March a successful hybrid seminar on gender equality and the young generation with participation from Diet members, Ambassadors/Chargés d'affaires from EU/non-EU countries and Japanese youth representatives.
- EU Ambassador Patricia Flor participated as a panellist in the "Commemorating the memorable year of gender equality and women's empowerment" webinar organised by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 29 March.
- 18<sup>th</sup> EU-Japan Symposium of Labour, on the theme of "The promotion of work-life balance from the viewpoint of women's empowerment." (July 2021)

In the context of the implementation of the trade and sustainable development provisions of the Economic Partnership Agreement, Japan and the EU regularly share updates on labour-related issues, including on ILO standards on anti-discrimination, which allow for an active engagement of Japan on gender-related issues.

Some MS have been also active on gender equality issues in the country, running their own events, such as public diplomacy activities, participation in conferences and organisation of seminars and debates, publication of articles. Some MS are also very active on LGBTBIQ.

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

The EU Delegation and MS Embassies will continue to make active use of social media and will convey important messages and undertake joint social media campaigns on gender equality.

The EU and its Member States will actively build momentum for gender, through public diplomacy and by launching joint initiatives, such as joint social media campaigns for International Women's Day, and by continuing to engage in policy dialogue.

The EU Delegation will actively use its communication tools to create awareness about EU priorities in the field of human rights and democracy. The Delegation's social media audience will also aim at a younger and more diverse Japanese audience. When considering the interests of the Japanese general public, gender equality, women's empowerment, and LGBTBI rights are the best human rights-related issues to target through social media campaigns.

Gender equality will continue to be high on the agenda and will be mainstreamed in various activities. The EU Delegation and MS Embassies will organise various high-level events and launch new initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Civil society and other stakeholders will be consulted in this process.

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

EUDEL has proposed under FPI a follow-up cooperation on gender equality/women empowerment 2022 building upon the WE EMPOWER Asia project.

Since budgetary allocations are still under preparation, we don't have a timeline for a bilateral gender project yet. There is the possibility to finance some smaller-scale actions to fill in the gap, so we will finance now small activities (studies, seminars, public events) related with gender equality in the framework of GAP III until when the SPA Support Facility Project comes into the picture.

*Date:* 27/07/2021

*Signature by Head of Delegation:*

