



**Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025**  
**Updated Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP Türkiye (December 2023)**

**1. Context for EU action gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country**

Despite past progress with regard to the legislative framework, Türkiye still faces challenges with the implementation of legislation and policies related to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE). Significant gender disparities remain in the fields of economic participation and access to services, representation at decision-making and political empowerment, as well as ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence. On the latter, the Law to Protect the Family and Prevent Violence against Women (Law No 6284) provides a solid legal framework. However, the framework was weakened with Türkiye’s withdrawal in 2021 from the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

A gradual regression in the area of GEWE continuous to be observed in Türkiye. Policy documents that have been adopted<sup>2</sup> set important policy goals in critical GAP III areas, but are not implemented to a sufficient extent. This is reflected in the 2023 Gender Gap Report, where Türkiye ranks 129<sup>th</sup> among 146 countries, falling behind from 124<sup>th</sup> place in 2022.<sup>3</sup> The past few years have been lined with events such as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the February 2023 earthquakes, which worsened the situation of women and children in the affected region due to the collapse of women’s shelters, crowded temporary accommodation, and a lack of proper preventive policies. The situation is even more serious for migrant women, pregnant women, and women with disabilities. Political polarisation increased in the run-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections held in May 2023. Civic space for rights-based NGOs, including those working on gender equality, is increasingly closing as they face pressure limiting their freedoms of expression, association, and assembly.

Regarding the GAP III thematic areas, the increase in educational attainment for women has not led towards gender parity in economic life. Labour market indicators are worse for women. Roughly 34 per cent of the employed women are working in the informal economy. With only 35.1 per cent, Türkiye has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates among OECD countries.<sup>4</sup> According to ILO the gender wage gap was 15.6 per cent in 2020.<sup>5</sup> Some active labour market measures for women have been under implementation in Türkiye, but traditional gender roles that put the care burden on women and a lack of quality childcare facilities remain key obstacles.

In October 2023, Türkiye adopted its 12<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan, which stresses the need to increase women’s participation in the labour force and in decision-making processes.<sup>6</sup> It lists several important tools such as temporary special measures to increase women’s political participation (for instance quotas); the importance of sex-disaggregated data; and zero-tolerance to violence. At the same time, it explicitly mentions the central role of women in the family.

The withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021 sets the context for continued weaknesses in Türkiye’s efforts to effectively combat gender-based violence in Türkiye, in spite of the government’s expressed full commitment to a zero-tolerance approach. An increase in hate speech in the media against feminists, women’s organisations and members of the LGBTIQ community continues to be

<sup>1</sup> CEDAW Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Türkiye, 12 July 2022

<sup>2</sup> 11th National Development Plan 2019-2023, Strategy on Women’s Empowerment (2018-2023), 4<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women (2021-2025).

<sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2023>  
<https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Labour-Force-Statistics-2022-49390&dil=2>, 20231116

<sup>5</sup> See ILO, 2020, Report, Measuring the Gender Wage Gap, [https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS\\_756660/lang--en/index.html](https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_756660/lang--en/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> 2024-Yılı-Cumhurbaşkanlığı-Yıllık-Programı.pdf (sbb.gov.tr)

observed. Legislation against hate crime does not cover hate offenses on the basis of sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender identity or age. The Human Rights and Equality Institution and the Ombudsman do not accept applications on sexual orientation and identity. In the official discourse the concept of gender is excluded, and women's and LGBTIQ persons' rights and opportunities are being infringed upon with reference to protection of the family.

Violence against women and girls is thought to be widespread. While police and courts are issuing preventive protective orders, failure to ensure they are observed leaves dangerous protection gaps. According to some reports 334 women were killed in 2022 and 245 more women died in suspicious circumstances. The 12<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan foresees field studies in 2024 to update the survey on Domestic Violence, which was last conducted in 2014. Development of a comprehensive data collection system, improvement of the efficiency of court proceedings, and strengthening social protection and health services for the victims of violence remain a priority in Türkiye.

While some progress was made in past decades, attention to the issue of early marriage should be sustained. There is no national action plan to combat and prevent child, early and forced marriages. A worrying recent development is that the Religious Affairs Presidency issued a ruling (fatwa) soon after the earthquakes stating that there is no religious obstacle to a marriage between a person and their adopted child. Gender inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights persist,<sup>7</sup> despite considerable progress achieved with the Health Transformation Programme in 2012. In this regard, refugee women and girls, and women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.

Political participation of women remains weak. Women face challenges in accessing leadership roles and participating in politics at all levels. A low 20.1 per cent of the members of parliament are women, a small increase since the previous elections when women held 17% of the seats. There is only one woman in the Presidential Cabinet that assumed office in 2023. The proportion of seats held by women in local governments is 10.1 per cent.

While there is thus far only a limited inclusion of a gender equality approach towards greening the economy, Türkiye has started to introduce gender-responsive budgeting and planning processes. These however need to be rolled out and reinforced to show effect, entailing the provision of adequate budgetary allocations and monitoring.

The above summary points to persisting policy challenges to safeguard past gains and further advance gender equality as a human right in Türkiye. Deeply ingrained gender norms and stereotypes are among the prominent reasons for preventing progress in the area of GEWE.

## **2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives**

The EU and other development partners in Türkiye aim to help address the above gender inequalities through continuous policy engagement and a better coordination of cooperation and assistance programmes on GEWE, in close partnership with the Turkish government. For that purpose, this CLIP draws on the findings emanating from several consultation processes conducted by the EU Delegation with EU Member States, selected national institutions, and civil society organisations.<sup>8</sup>

The overall objective of the EU's support is to promote a society free from gender-based discrimination and violence and a world in which everyone has space to thrive. To achieve this, the EU continues to pursue the following GAP III specific thematic objectives in five thematic areas of engagement (no changes compared to 2021 CLIP):

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2019, the maternal mortality ratio was 13.1 per cent per hundred thousand live births, while the fertility rate per thousand women in the 15-19 age group was 16.7 in 2019. The proportion of women in the 20-24 age group who were married before the age of 18 was 5.1 per cent decreasing from 8.2 per cent in 2010.

<sup>8</sup> This updated CLIP was consulted with EU Member States and development partners through the donor coordination mechanism on gender. Given the limited scope of the review, the EU Delegation held focus discussions with selected CSOs, to supplement the more extensive consultation process in 2021, when the 1<sup>st</sup> CLIP was prepared.

<b>GAP III Thematic Area of Engagement</b>	<b>GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives</b>
<b>1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity are 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.</li> <li>• 3: Women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection.</li> <li>• 7: Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2: Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information, and education on sexual and reproductive rights.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Promoting economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: 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.</li> <li>• 2: Improved policy, legal framework and access to care services enabling equal division of domestic and care work between women and men.</li> <li>• 4: Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities.</li> <li>• 6: Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression, and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Advancing equal participation and leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making.</li> <li>• 2: Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights.</li> <li>• 3: Women's organisations, other CSOs and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights work more freely and are better protected by law.</li> <li>• 4: 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.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Climate change) 2: Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are gender-responsive, at local, national, regional and international level.</li> <li>• (Digitalization) 2: Women, men, girls, and boys are equally provided with and using equally public digital literacy.</li> </ul>

The achievement of these specific thematic objectives will be pursued through a dual approach of targeted actions combined with gender mainstreaming, ensuring close coordination with EU Member States and other relevant partners, including through the Gender Donor Coordination Mechanism for policy dialogue, priority setting, and planning of joint actions. CSOs will continue to be involved in the design and implementation phases of specific actions, both as key implementing partners and as members of Steering Committees and Advisory Boards.

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

To operationalise the specific thematic objectives identified a set of targeted actions in each of the priority areas are under implementation, as follows:

- **Strengthening Civil Society Capacities and Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Advance Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Turkey** (€5 million). The project with UN Women aims to reduce gender inequalities by enhancing the ability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Türkiye to be agents of transformative change towards gender equality and women's rights.
- **Gender Equality Monitoring through Rights-based CSOs (Phase III)** (€2.5 million). This project with the Gender Equality Monitoring Association (CEID) aims to facilitate sustainable networks of the Local Gender Equality Monitoring Platforms in different provinces.
- **Advancing the Rights of LGBTIQ** (€1.5 million). The project aims at supporting LGBTIQ organisations and initiatives to increase their resilience and rights and help promote a society free from prejudice and supportive of individuals pursuing their life free from discrimination.
- **Implementing Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Turkey** (€3 million). This project with UN Women aims to empower women and further strengthen gender equality in Turkey through systematic and sustainable integration of gender perspective at all stages of national and local policy-making and budgeting processes.
- **Increasing Women's Entrepreneurship and Registered Women's Employment** (approx. €25 million). This project with the Social Security Institution aims to support registered women employment through grants for new women employees who will be employed by women entrepreneurs in selected provinces.
- **Empowering Women through Cooperatives** (approx. €2.9 million). This project with the General Directorate on the Status of Women - Ministry of Family and Social Services, aims to provide enabling environment for women cooperatives to flourish and, to empower women through support to their cooperatives.
- **Fostering women's access to justice in Türkiye** (€1 million). This project with the Council of Europe aims to build capacity of legal aid lawyers, provide legal aid to women in vulnerable situations; it will support civil society organisations with grants, trainings, workshops, seminars and capacity building.
- **Promoting Gender Equality via the Network of Solidarity Academies** (€382,000). This project aims to establish a national network which will bring Solidarity Academies studying gender together with CSOs to strengthen the organisational and institutional capacity of the network.

In addition, the following five planned actions amounting to almost €37 million are in the pipeline:

- **Women Friendly Cities III**
- **Combating Gender Based Violence, promoting health and body integrity of women and girls**
- **Restoring and strengthening the preventive and protective services in response to violence against women and girls affected by the EQs in Türkiye**
- **Strengthening Rights and Conditions of Women in Prisons in Türkiye in line with International and EU Standards**
- **Advancing the rights of the LGBTIQ**

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

Türkiye's EU accession framework is one channel for political and policy dialogue on gender equality, although Türkiye's EU accession process has stagnated. The EU will continue to work with Türkiye on advancing GEWE, in line with EU policies in this area as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU will continue to raise concerns regarding the shrinking civic space. Regular policy dialogue on gender is foreseen not least within the framework of implementation of specific actions, as well as at Ambassador and Heads of Mission levels. The EU will engage in regular dialogue with Civil Society Organisations active in the area of gender equality.

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

Communication and outreach activities of the EU shall carefully consider gender, including – but not limited to – an inclusive use of language and visuals. Beyond this general approach, the EU Delegation in particular will implement major communication activities around key dates such as International Women's Day (8 March); and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and the 16 days of activism against violence against Women. The Human Rights Short Film Competition will be organised annually, and a special prize for works on gender is foreseen. Continuous promotion of gender equality in all outreach and communication activities on environment and climate change will be ensured.

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

To promote coordination among development partners, the EU Delegation co-chairs the Gender Donor Coordination Mechanism in Türkiye. A Gender Focal Point was appointed in September 2023 and the EU Delegation's internal Gender Working Group has been re-established with a new mandate. A key output for 2024 will be an updated Gender Country Profile, for which the EU Delegation foresees to mobilise external expert assistance.