



Gender-Transformative Approaches: From Theory to Impact

Gender-Transformative Approaches (GTA) focus on addressing the root causes of gender inequalities. GTA move beyond treating the symptoms of gender inequalities, to **changing discriminatory social norms, unequal political, legal, economic structures and power dynamics**, all of which can make inequalities seem normal and natural in a given context. Discriminatory social norms and structural inequalities impact people's lives and behaviour. They are obstacles to gender equality.

The intersectional approach helps to understand how gender norms and characteristics interact with other factors (such as race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, disability, and others) **and power systems** (e.g., sexism, ageism, racism, classism and others) in a given context. This approach recognizes that persons can experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Gendered social norms govern a person's behaviour in public and private spaces, due to what is commonly perceived as "proper gendered behaviour" within a social group. Not conforming often leads to social exclusion and punishment. Still today, these norms find their legitimacy in deeply held cultural beliefs. They are embedded in national legal systems and patriarchal political structures, as well as in dominant (inter)national economic systems.

The EU is committed to advancing gender-transformative approaches. EU Council Conclusions **agreed language** is "transformative approaches that address the root causes of gender inequalities". This language is included e.g., in the Council Conclusions on [water in EU's external action \(2021\)](#), the [EU's renewed partnership with Least Developed Countries \(2022\)](#) and the [Youth Action Plan \(2022–2027\)](#).

The [EU's Gender Action Plan III \(2021–2027\)](#), the [EU Gender Equality Strategy \(2020–2025\)](#), the [EU's Strategy on LGBTIQ Equality \(2020–2025\)](#) and the [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy \(2020–2027\)](#) guide member states to apply a gender-transformative, human rights-based and intersectional approach.

Women face discrimination due to patriarchal structures, and can at the same time face discrimination, for example on the basis of disability or due to racist structures.

The **human rights-based approach (HRBA)** supports individuals in demanding their rights and in holding duty bearers (governments, authorities) accountable. Universal human rights principles and standards provide a joint framework within which GTA should be applied.

A **continuum scale** helps to identify how a programme, project, or topic approaches gender equality. **Gender equality can only be achieved when aiming for transformative change.**

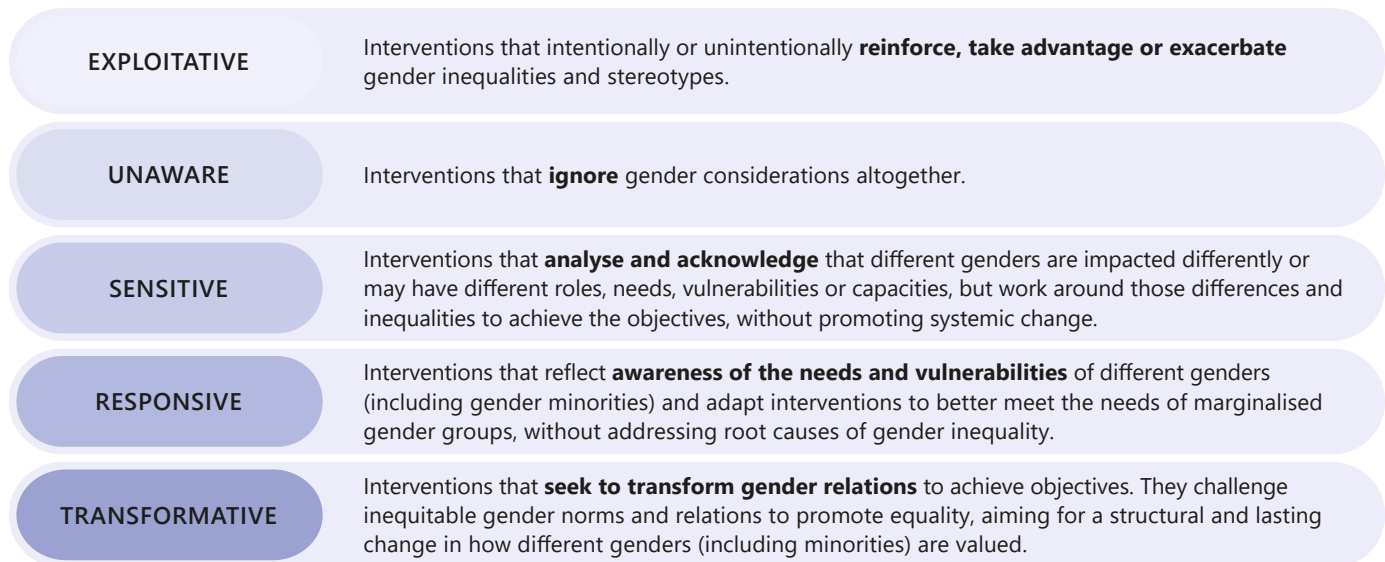


Figure 1: Continuum of gender integration