

This concept note has been prepared by the EU Member States' gender experts' working group on the gender-transformative approach. Scan QR-code to access the long version of this concept note.

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.

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. **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 <u>water</u> in EU's external action (2021), the EU's renewed partnership with Least Developed Countries (2022) and the <u>Youth Action Plan (2022–2027)</u>.

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

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.**

EXPLOITATIVE	Interventions that intentionally or unintentionally reinforce, take advantage or exacerbate gender inequalities and stereotypes.
UNAWARE	Interventions that ignore gender considerations altogether.
SENSITIVE	Interventions that analyse and acknowledge that different genders are impacted differently or may have different roles, needs, vulnerabilities or capacities, but work around those differences and inequalities to achieve the objectives, without promoting systemic change.
RESPONSIVE	Interventions that reflect awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of different genders (including gender minorities) and adapt interventions to better meet the needs of marginalised gender groups, without addressing root causes of gender inequality.
TRANSFORMATIVE	Interventions that seek to transform gender relations to achieve objectives. They challenge inequitable gender norms and relations to promote equality, aiming for a structural and lasting change in how different genders (including minorities) are valued.

Figure 1: Continuum of gender integration