GENDER
ACTION

A SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH TO HORIZON EUROPE CLUSTER 3

Horizon Europe
PILLAR II: Global Challenges & Industrial Competitiveness
Gender and Sustainability Dimensions of Horizon Europe Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society

This policy brief by GENDERACTION highlights the importance of integrating a gender dimension in the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as in Cluster 3. This is needed in order to achieve economic, social and ecological sustainability. **The overall aim is to strengthen the capacity of Horizon Europe to contribute to gender equality and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.** Further, integrating a gender dimension in the SDGs will enhance ERA development as well as strengthen policy development in R&I within national contexts. The aim of integrating a gender dimension in SDGs is also highly relevant, both as a response to the current design of the Work Programme in Cluster 3 and for developing the Second Strategic Plan 2025-2027.

Horizon Europe sets gender equality as a crosscutting principle and aims to eliminate gender inequality and intersecting socioeconomic inequalities throughout research and innovation systems (European Union, 2021). GENDERACTION acknowledges this as an important development. In particular, this is stressed in relation to Pillar II Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society. This is also a development GENDERACTION welcomes. However, it is important to acknowledge the importance of including a gender dimension in all clusters. In the Second Strategic Plan 2025-2027, **Horizon Europe Pillar II should add the SDGs as a cross-cutting issue for all Clusters and Areas of Intervention. In order to ensure inclusiveness, an intersectional approach towards integrating a gender dimension in SDGs is crucial, in line with the overall gender equality strategy for EU (EC, 2020).**

Horizon Europe Pillar II mainly targets the impact of research and innovation, supports the uptake of innovative solutions to address global challenges, and thus fostering change in order to achieve the SDGs. Also, moving the 2030 Agenda forward, interdisciplinary research on sustainability is crucial. Addressing the gender dimension in relation to the SDGs in Pillar II, both as a specific Area of Intervention and as a cross-cutting issue, will especially enhance EU and global policies for attaining SDG 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment). It will help to boost EU's innovation, competitiveness, security and inclusiveness, as it increases the scholarly quality and societal relevance of scientific knowledge. Further, strengthening knowledge on gender and SDGs are at the core of achieving the objectives of the Commission's plan for a new ERA, based on quality of research, especially fostering a green transition and recovery, as well as promoting gender and diversity in science more generally

Structural change through integrating a gender dimension will be crucial for achieving the SDGs, and this entails several aspects in terms of analysis and policy coordination. Research shows how SDG outcomes are contextual, interdependent, and complex, coupling human, technical and natural systems in multiple ways (Sachs et al., 2019). It is therefore necessary to treat the SDGs as interlinked, rather than isolated, goals. The way SDGs interact is a key question in the implementation of Agenda 2030 itself. Identifying synergies, clashing interests or goals counteracting each other, is therefore highly relevant. The SDG interactions should be analysed with respect to their systemic and contextual character (Weitz et al., 2018). Therefore, the interactions between the goals and their targets, as well as interactions within the Clusters in Pillar II, are in need of an intersectional gender analysis in order to foster structural change (Widegren & Sand, forthcoming).

- A *gender dimension* in research involves a shift in perspective, away from normative and non-reflective notions on gender, e.g. asking new and different questions, collecting data differently and starting out with different theoretical perspectives. Sex and gender are separate, but interrelated, concepts. *Sex* generally refers to biological characteristics in humans or animals. *Gender* refers to socio-cultural processes that shape behaviours, values, norms, knowledges etc. An *intersectional approach* concerns how categories such as gender, race, sexual orientation, functionality, geography, class etc. interact and create inequalities and oppression. One category cannot be understood in isolation from others.

- Sustainability is another central concept to explore further. The three-pillar conception of sustainability – social, economic and environmental – can be understood in a somewhat similar way as intersectionality, with several dimensions interacting with each other. In order to move forward with the 2030 Agenda, there is an urgent need for more interdisciplinary research on sustainability with intersectional gender analysis that takes power structures into account. The fact that the word 'power' is mentioned only once in the 2030 Agenda, while the more individual-oriented 'empowerment' occurs abundantly, indicates a lack of awareness and knowledge on these important issues. This has consequences for the agenda's account of gender (as well as gender equality) as SDG 5 lacks analysis of the origin and nature of the gender inequality that should – ideally – be remedied by gender equality. The importance of keeping track of different understandings of gender cannot be stressed enough (Widegren & Sand, forthcoming).

Environmental

Sustainability

Social   Economic
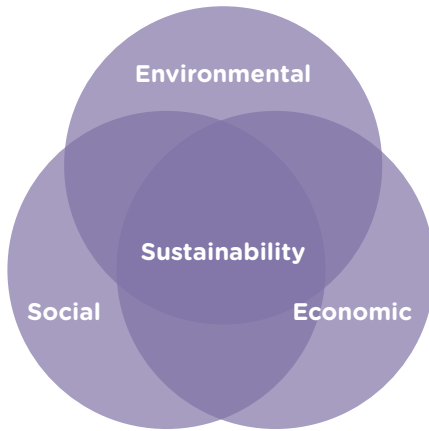
Examples of how sex and gender interact in relation to cluster 3

Cluster 3 has clear links to several of the SDGs, in particular 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). **In order to achieve lasting sustainability and security, the Areas of Intervention in Cluster 3 as well as the targets in the different SDGs, a people-centered human security approach is needed**. The gender dimension in security R&I is crucial to ensure sustainable security and protection for all.

Intersectional dimensions needed to ensure disaster-resilient societies

Disasters and crises, whether natural, accidental and human-made, are affecting people differently based on gender and other life conditions. In times of crisis, already marginalised groups carry the heaviest burden of the consequences, which the COVID pandemic has shown clearly. One of the most obvious examples of an effect is the increased rates of domestic violence when communities go into lockdowns to reduce the spread of infection. Lockdowns also made it more difficult for domestic violence victims to find help. Also, when it comes to working life and the economy, men and women have been affected differently. People with a migrant or minority background and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable. To reduce disaster risks and increase EU's resilience and societal preparedness, preventive actions and crisis management must adopt an intersectional gender dimension.

Sexual crimes against children have increased during COVID

During the COVID-19 outbreak there has been an increase in sexual crimes against children, including trafficking. Sexual crimes against children are increasingly taking place online, and increased risks occur when children and offenders spend more time at home and online. During the pandemic, EU countries have reported an increase in the number of attempts to access illegal websites featuring child sexual exploitation material blocked in their filters (Europol, 2020). Marginalised children living in poverty are at an enlarged risk for sexual exploitation (ECPAT, 2020). This group has grown during the pandemic due to increased financial suffering.

Need for more knowledge to stop trafficking in human beings

Human trafficking is a serious crime that abuses people's fundamental rights and dignity. It involves the criminal exploitation of vulnerable people for the purpose of economic gain. Trafficking can take various forms and may involve: sexual exploitation, including prostitution; forced labour or services; slavery, servitude and related practices; the removal of vital organs and forced criminality (Europol, 2021). In order to achieve human security, as well as fulfil

the targets in Cluster 3 and the SDGs (specifically the before mentioned 5, 8, and 16), trafficking in human beings must stop.

Human trafficking has acquired a new dimension in the context of globalisation. It is facilitated by increased mobility and the development of digital technologies. It also involves low risks and brings in high profits. Victims seldom report abuse or hand over themselves to authorities, due to fear, lack of trust in institutions or shame, and traffickers are rarely prosecuted (European Parliament, 2016). Human trafficking in the EU happens largely within its borders. For the overall period of 2017-2018, 14 145 victims were registered in the EU-27. Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the main form of human trafficking in the EU. Women and girls are the majority of victims. For the period 2017-2018, nearly three quarters (72 %) of all registered victims were women and girls and 23 % were men and boys. Children accounted for nearly a quarter of all registered victims (European Commission, 2020). Due to the hidden nature of human trafficking, these statistics are most likely only the tip of the iceberg. In order to eliminate human trafficking, the root causes and related factors must be addressed.

Contributing aspects can be categorised as 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors include poverty, unemployment, gender inequalities, lack of social security, conflicts and violence. Pull factors consist of promises of steady employment, better living conditions and demand for cheap unskilled labour (European Parliament, 2016). Women and men are often, but not solely, trafficked for different purposes, and assistance, support measures and R&I should pay close attention to gender. There is a need for more knowledge on factors that can prevent as well as detect human trafficking. Increasingly, research suggests that women also can be perpetrators in the chains of human trafficking and that men and boys are victims more frequently than previously thought (McCarthy, 2020). These cases are more likely to go under the radar due to a lack of knowledge and awareness, masculinity norms and stigma. In order to tackle trafficking in human beings and ensure human security, more R&I with a gender dimension on the matter is needed.

The gender dimension in terrorism and violent radicalisation

Fighting crime and terrorism is an important part of EU's security agenda. This includes how to counteract cybercrime and violent radicalisation into extremism. Gender analysis of radicalisation and extremism has important implications for strategies to counter and prevent violent radicalisation. Men are the main perpetrators in terrorist violence worldwide and young men is by far the group with the highest risk of being drawn or recruited to violent extremism. Violent extremists tend to be young men, generally born in the country where they live and, in the case of far-right extremism, white (Gruenewald et al., 2011; Freilich et al., 2015; Vergani et al., 2020). Gender, power, and masculinity norms play an important – and similar – role in all violent extremist groups, regardless of which ideology they are based on. Most terrorist groups are explicit in their misogyny and appeal to armed masculinity and domesticated femininity (Johnston et al., 2020). In order to prevent violent radicalisation, the gender dimension must be addressed by R&I. Known factors for an increased risk of violent radicalisation also need to be addressed. Such a push factor is the relative deprivation of a social group, which can be framed also in terms of inequality, marginalisation, frustration, and stigmatisation. Pull factors include consumption of extremist propaganda, but also group dynamics, where peer pressure, the formation of strong bonds with like-minded people, the fulfillment of belonging and identity

needs, and the total identification of the individual with the group and the influence of family and kinship ties (Vergani et al., 2020). There is also a need for more research on women in extremist groups and at risk of radicalisation. "Women terrorists" are often stereotyped as either men's dupes or "internet warriors" (Johnston et al., 2020). The gender dimension of violent extremism is under-studied and more knowledge on the matter is needed in order to better prevent, detect and counter terrorism and violent radicalisation.

Recommendations

It is highly recommended that Horizon Europe Pillar II **add the SDGs as a cross-cutting issue for all Clusters and Areas of Intervention** in the forthcoming Strategic Plan 2025-2027. In the first strategic plan, the SDGs are not mentioned in relation to Cluster 3, although the links between the Areas of Interventions and several SDGs are many. However, the gender dimension of the SDGs is not mentioned. A thorough gender dimension is needed to bring into consideration the different baselines in the socioeconomic situation of women and men as well as gender drivers and gender impacts of the innovative solutions for those SDGs. In order to take these aspects into account, it is also highly recommended that Cluster 3 and all Areas of Intervention in it is cross-read with SDG 5.

All Clusters and Areas of Intervention in Pillar II of Horizon Europe

- Include the SDGs as a cross-cutting issue for all Clusters and Areas of Intervention.
- Include gender factors as cross-cutting issues in relation to all the SDGs by cross-reading all the SDGs with SDG 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment).

- Include an intersectional approach and make sure women and men are not addressed as homogeneous groups but their heterogeneity is systematically included.
- Interdisciplinary research on sustainability, integrating the economic, social and ecological dimensions, is crucial for moving the 2030 Agenda forward. Encourage interdisciplinary research through dedicated calls, in order to increase, deepen and broaden the knowledge needed for efficient sustainable development.
- Include a power analysis of the origin and nature of the gender inequality that should be remedied by policies and measures for gender equality.
- Keep track of different understandings of gender and gender equality and foster competence to make distinctions between different accounts of the concepts.
- Include gender scholars in the relevant research domain in the research team where relevant.
- Include gender experts among project evaluators.
- Ensure gender balance and gender training among project evaluators.
- Strive for gender balance at all levels and in all areas of knowledge in research teams and in decision-making in the Commission.
- As deep structural changes are required in order to reach the SDGs and since current research funding structures might disadvantage radical ideas with potential to systemic change, alternative ways of reviewing research proposals should be investigated.
- The transformative claim of the 2030 Agenda requires knowledge interactions between relevant stakeholders, involving a wider range of actors than those traditionally involved in knowledge production and decision-making. Collabora-

tive research processes, such as the SDG Synergies Approach or *citizen science* (see Kullenberg et al., 2016) need to be promoted in future calls.

- RPOs/HEIs need to recognize how sustainable conditions for researchers/teachers and students are linked to how knowledge production can contribute to the transition to a sustainable world, given the negative effects of unsustainable working conditions on the quality of R&I. This calls for structural change with an intersectional approach, as developed in previous GENDERACTION Policy Briefs.

- Work programmes promoting the development of gender knowledge on SDGs should encourage analysis of interactions between targets. Efforts for sustainability more thorough than a superficial box-checking require not only in-depth knowledge based on various indicators, but also a systemic understanding of trade-offs and co-benefits between the goals. This needs to be acknowledged in future calls. The assessment of SDG Relevance should be integrated in the evaluation of applications.

Cluster 3

- Incorporate SDGs in Cluster 3, especially the Areas of Intervention in the forthcoming Strategic Plan 2025-2027. SDGs 5, 10, and 16 are especially relevant for the cluster.
- Include SDG 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) as a cross-cutting issue in Cluster 3 and all areas of intervention in it. Cross-read Cluster 3 and all its Areas of Interventions with SDG 5.
- Encourage human security research by prioritising calls on research focusing gendered and intersectional dimensions of trafficking, violence and abuse among women, men and children, with special attention to vulnerable groups, in upcoming Work programmes.

- To reduce disaster risks and increase EU's resilience and societal preparedness, encourage a gender dimension in all R&I on disaster risk and crisis management.
- Monitor and analyse funded projects that produce and cross-analyse sex-disaggregated data and encourage a thorough gender analysis of it.
- Encourage multidisciplinary security research through dedicated calls. More multidisciplinary security research is required, and in order to identify and understand intersecting security issues, data and research with gender and intersectional perspectives need to be strengthened.
- The gender dimension is under-examined in many security areas, such as R&I on violent extremism and cybercrime. Encourage multidisciplinary R&I with a gender dimension on these issues, in order to better understand and tackle them.

References

European Commission. 2020. Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU. *European Commission*.

European Commission. 2020. *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. European Commission.

European Commission. 2020. *Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024*. European Commission.

European Parliament. 2016. The gender dimension of human trafficking. *EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service*
Europol. 2020. Catching the virus cybercrime, disinformation and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Europol*.

ECPAT. 2020. Why children are at risk for sexual abuse and exploitation during COVID-19

Johnston, M. F., Iqbal, M., & True, J. 2020. The Lure of (Violent) Extremism: Gender Constructs in Online Recruitment and Messaging in Indonesia. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1–19.

Gruenewald J. 2011. A Comparative Examination of Homicides Perpetrated by Far-Right Extremists. *Homicide Studies*. 15(2):177-203.

Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak & Jeff Gruenewald. 2015. The future of terrorism research: a review essay, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 39:4, 353-369.

Kullenberg, C., and Kasperowski, D. 2016. What is Citizen Science? - A Scientrometric Meta-Analysis, Ed Pablo Dorta-González, *PLOS ONE* 11(1).

Lauren A. McCarthy. 2020. A Gendered Perspective on Human Trafficking Perpetrators: Evidence from Russia, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 6:1, 79-94.

Matteo Vergani, Muhammad Iqbal, Ekin Ilbahar & Greg Barton. 2020. The Three Ps of Radicalization: Push, Pull and Personal. A Systematic Scoping Review of the Scientific Evidence about Radicalization Into Violent Extremism, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43:10, 854.

Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N. and Rockström, J. 2019. Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Sustainability*, 2(9), pp.805-814.

Weitz, N., Carlsen, H., Nilsson, M. and Skånberg, K. 2017. Towards systemic and contextual priority setting for implementing the 2030 Agenda. *Sustainability Science*, 13(2), pp.531-548.

Widegren, K., Sand, J. 2021. *Gender and Sustainability: An International Research Review [forthcoming]*

Get in touch with us:

www.genderaction.eu
info@genderaction.eu
@GENDERACTION_EU