

WIDE+ position to European policymakers to promote peace in Ukraine and beyond

To: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen; Commissioner of Home Affairs Ylva Johansson; Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders; European Council President Charles Michel; EU High-Level Representative Josep Borrell; European Parliament President Roberta Metsola.

WIDE+ is a European network of feminist activists, scholars, and women's rights organisations that reaches out to 300 associations, through its national membership-based networks and organisations across Europe. It promotes women's rights by analyzing the systemic causes of inequality and advocating for transformative change.

As a feminist network that promotes gender and social justice in Europe, we strongly condemn the military invasion of the Russian regime against Ukraine. War is the most extreme form of violent patriarchy and nationalism against which we as feminists struggle. We stand in solidarity with all people suffering due to the war.

Our feminist vision is rooted in a systemic analysis of power dynamics and their impact on human rights. From this perspective, we come to a set of joint demands we collectively share, respecting divergent views on other issues.

We are concerned that Russia's war against Ukraine and the spiral of armament will lead to a mindset in which decision-makers see increased warfare as the only option forward. Measures that promote peace remain essential, as the EU needs to strategise for the long-term future. Peace must be achieved within a rights-based framework of human and ecological security, decent work and living conditions, access to democratic governance for everyone and equality from a gendered intersectional perspective.

We call you on to:

- Amplify the humanitarian response by including **women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people, in the design and decision-making of all aid programmes**, especially from ethnic minorities and indigenous groups such as Roma and Sinti, racialised women, women with disabilities, and elderly women. Such response should include access to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR).
- **Financially support local and national women-led organisations in Ukraine and neighbouring countries** to implement gender-sensitive and gender-transformative measures that acknowledge the vast diversity among women.
- **Combat conflict-related sexual violence (CRSGBV), human trafficking of girls and women, and any other form of gender-based violence**, including the risk thereof. And promote access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for displaced and to those left behind.
- Encourage a ceasefire and the rule of law, and allocate more resources to the implementation of **the Women, Peace and Security Agenda**, especially in increasing efforts to carry out the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024 and in promoting the member states' development, review and/or implementation of National Action Plans 1325.

- Prioritise human security needs instead of the massive increase in military spending. We call on you **to monitor the impact of arms delivery and trade and economic sanctions on the position of women and women-led associations** in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries, conform to Arms Trade Treaty article 7.4. Delivering weapons must not result in cuts in the funding for women's empowerment.
- **Ensure safe passage for everyone fleeing war regions**, regardless of their nationality, gender, colour of skin or ethnic/religious background, and the country they escape from. We welcome the support and open reception of refugees from Ukraine but note with concern that in general refugee policies in Europe do not offer the same kind of rights and access.

Recommendation 1: Implement gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies in humanitarian action

We call on you to **guarantee gender-responsive policies in humanitarian assistance towards Ukraine** that include transformative programmes aiming for gender equality beyond the provision of immediate needs. Programmes are needed to **prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking, and (sexual) gender-based violence**.

We call on you to:

- Encourage the International Criminal Court to **document crimes where rape and gender-based violence are used as a tactic of war** in response to implementing UN Resolution 1820, which condemns the use of sexual violence as a tool of war. We ask you to support the documenting of these war crimes in other mechanisms, such as the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), and to finance prosecution, as initiated by the Ukrainian Prosecutor General. While we welcome the extended mandate of the EUAM Ukraine to investigate CRSGBV, we notice a general gap in expertise in analysing CRSGBV. Most approaches are not based on what survivors want and need.
- **Encourage EU member states and private foundations to enable at least one action with gender equality as a principal objective**, in line with the GAP III (Gender Action Plan in EU external action 2021-2025). We call on you to ensure that peace-building, humanitarian and development funding and programming are promoted simultaneously, instead of focusing on humanitarian aid only.
- Promote allocation of additional (development and humanitarian) aid that incorporates a gender perspective into measures **addressing the challenges that come with the internal displacement of people in Ukraine**, such as enabling access to decent work, to monetary income, to health care, education and paid care in particular for women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people.
- **Target in policies and programmes specifically women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people**, from ethnic minorities and indigenous groups such as Roma and Sinti, racialised women, women with disabilities, elderly women, and women from other marginalised groups **and include them meaningfully in the policy formulation and implementation**.
- Facilitate training for (newly formed) civil society initiatives and other humanitarian actors on the **minimal service package (MISP) on sexual and reproductive health and rights**.

- **Financially support local as well as national women's led organisations in Ukraine and neighbouring countries through core funding** to promote gender-sensitive and gendertransformative measures that acknowledge the huge diversity among women and allow for flexibility for these associations to adapt their work based on the current needs and contexts. As a recent [Rapid Gender Analysis by UN Women and CARE](#) finds, women currently in Ukraine take on much more responsibilities in their households and communities, with an increased care burden. At the same time, they remain in gender unequal power relations being largely excluded from formal decision-making processes related to humanitarian efforts, peace-making, and other areas that directly impact their lives.
- Introduce a mandatory ex-ante gender assessment of humanitarian projects, making use of the many guidelines available such as the IASC. And ensure a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian interventions, including through **qualitative and quantitative indicators for gendersensitivity**, the collection of Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD) and gender budgeting tools.

Recommendation 2: Implement Gender-sensitive and anti-racist migration policies

We welcome the generous response to the refugees fleeing from Ukraine, mainly women and children. They can travel freely through the EU and receive housing, access to work and financial support. It stands in stark contrast to how other refugees have been treated for years by the EU and its member states.

We call on you to promote policies and encourage member states to adjust their policies to:

- **Ensure that the fair and timely treatment of refugees from Ukraine applies to all refugees.** This means enabling the same access to decent work, cash programmes, housing, travelling and other fundamental human rights.
- **Integrate systemically intersectional gender-responsive measures in migration (and integration) policies to address the needs and specific risks,** especially regarding gender-based violence, faced by women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people, especially from ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, racialised, with disabilities and from other marginalised groups.
- **Combat and prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking of refugees from Ukraine** according to the rules set out: "Guidance note on the entitlement of victims of trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection" (GRETA, Council of Europe, 2020). The EU should invest in programmes that provide information about rights and services against exploitation and monitor the housing of refugees by non-state actors.
- Provide refugees (from Ukraine and elsewhere) with **access to sexual and reproductive health services,** including safe, easy-accessible and affordable abortion, support and access to medication for trans persons, medical aid, and psychological care provided with the necessary translations.
- Provide sufficient psychological support and ensure emergency services that protect and support survivors of **conflict-related sexual violence** and any other type of gender-based violence.

- Establish and finance a telephone line available in each Member State and provide reliable information on prevention and assistance in human trafficking, slavery, and kidnapping emergencies.

Recommendation 3: Promote inclusive peace-building in the region

We appeal to you to invest diplomatically and financially in an enabling environment for conflict transformation and peace-building in the region, including Ukraine, through more active implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We call on you to encourage the initiatives by women, girls, LGBTQIA+ people, and (other) feminists in conflict transformation, peace-building, and reconstruction.

We call on you to:

- Allocate additional resources to the implementation of the GAP III and the EU WPS Action Plan to further promote and support the EU's Women, Peace and Security agenda in an inclusive manner, including **supporting member states in developing and implementing the 1325 national action plans in which the meaningful participation of women, girls, LGBTQIA+ people, and (other) feminist civil society is encouraged.**
- Increase the total amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian aid and encourage member states to do the same. Funding for the reception and integration of refugees and humanitarian aid should not be at the expense of needed programmes in development and peacebuilding elsewhere.
- Promote at the UN, Council of Europe and OSCE, and any other relevant political spaces for negotiation and decision-making a seat at the table for women and other marginalised groups. **Ensure that European delegations in international spaces and diplomacy are gender-balanced and diverse.**
- **Support and protect women and girls human rights defenders in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus.** In addition to being at risk of war or authoritarian oppression, our members and partners report that they face continued undermining and oppression tied to their identity as women. As an example, the Belarusian government has been known to instrumentalise children to attack women human rights defenders. Women's rights activists in Ukraine face uncertainty, humanitarian crisis, and war, and the remaining activists in Russia and Belarus face growing state oppression and increased isolation.
- Promote and support local and regional peace-building processes and initiatives that include or are led by women, girls, LGBTQIA+ people and (intersected with) ethnic minorities.
- **Provide financial support to civil society to hold European feminist dialogues** from an intersectional perspective; such dialogues should enable feminists with different perspectives and from different countries, ages, migration backgrounds, classes, etc. to exchange and strategise together; moreover, it will contribute to overcoming prejudices and nationalism within the EU and neighbouring countries. It should be cognisant of the diversity in the feminist movements in Europe, which is represented by multiple European feminist networks.

Recommendation 4: Include feminist proposals around the socio-economic impact of militarisation

We are concerned about the increased military spending across Europe, as politicians are making these decisions without developing a long-term vision of the role and impact of such aid and spending on a future peace process and on available budgets to ensure health and decent living conditions in Europe.

We call on you to:

- **Advise member states to avoid future austerity policies because of increased militarisation.** Military spending should not compete with budget allocation in the care economy and other domains, especially considering that the pandemic has derailed gender equality gains according to the study by EIGE: “Gender equality and the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic” published in 2021.
- **Initiate a pilot project** that uses gender budgeting tools to assess gender equality impacts of increased military spending.
- **Reduce the dependence on oil and gas, not only Russian oil and gas, by promoting a more ambitious EU Green Deal.** Households and industry should switch to sustainable energy sources before 2030; this also means that considerable rises in energy prices should be compensated for those unable to pay for them.
- **Prevent a new arms race, including abolishing nuclear arms** according to the recently enforced UN Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons.
- Following the example of the Dutch government, we call on you to initiate a policy that **monitors the impact of arms delivery and trade - conform to Arms Trade Treaty article 7.4- and economic sanctions on the position of women and women-led associations.**
- **Promote policy coherence between human security, climate, agricultural, industrial and trade policies through an intersectional gender-mainstreaming perspective.**
- **Stop the negotiation and continuation of neo-liberal free trade agreements** that weaken the capacity of states to provide social and ecological safety and wellbeing for all but rather support authoritarian regimes and big transnational companies.
- **Adjust the trade and agricultural policy measures to end unfair competition and ecological unsustainability within the global market for agricultural production.** EU trade policy promotes largescale export-driven agriculture that outcompetes local production in lower-income countries. This leads to increased dependency on global markets, such as the dependency on mass grain production in Ukraine, which fuels global warming even further. The EU should implement the right to food sovereignty in its trade and agricultural policy, respecting people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their food and agriculture systems.