International Women's Day 2023

With this special issue, we want to commemorate International Women's Day, highlighting some of our current and recent work.

Together with over 140 organisations, WIDE+ calls for gender-responsive EU corporate sustainability legislation

WIDE+ has joined 146 undersigned organisations from around the world to call on the EU to address the alarming lack of an approach to tackle gendered intersectional discrimination in the proposed due diligence directive. The European Commission’s proposal for a directive could represent a groundbreaking step forward in minimizing the negative impacts of businesses. However, the draft text released in the first half of last year, fails to integrate a gender lens and risks leaving women behind among other shortcomings.

In December 2022, the Council further restricted women’s rights and even eliminated the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women from the directive’s scope. EU ministers ignored the fact that exploitation, violence, pollution, and other abuses have different and disproportionate effects on women and groups
facing marginalisation. Many women are further discriminated against based on intersecting identities such as age, ethnicity, migration status and/or other factors.

With key votes in the European Parliament and the negotiations between the parliament, commission and member states approaching, it is crucial for all three EU institutions to seize this opportunity and ensure that the directive is effective and gender-responsive.

The WIDE+ Gender and Trade Working Group is actively supporting this initiative and will follow up with different activities this Spring. To read the full letter: https://corporatejustice.org/news/over-140-organisations-call-for-gender-responsive-corporate-sustainability-legislation/.

Support WIDE+ in asking politicians in Europe to stop signing the EU-Mexico Global Trade agreement

WIDE+ is an active member of the EU-Mexico Civil Society alliance which is currently also working with a civil society alliance that seeks to deeply reform the EU-Mercosur trade agreement. It is likely that ratification will be on the agenda of the EU in the latter part of the year when Spain takes up the Council Presidency. On the positive side, the concerns of civil society are being heard and more politicians are reconsidering signing the agreement. The alliance is seeking support to further disseminate its concerns.

In the open letter from the network EU-Mexico the key shortcomings are listed. If the modernized agreement will be ratified new trading rules will cause additional harm. Women will bear the brunt of this. Among others, the agreement will reinforce the total impunity of foreign companies in their dealings with the environment and workers rights. Women will experience increased harm from pollution, precariousness, and gender-based violence.

Women who are poor will also be punished through the new agreement, through being pushed out of the market by unequal competition from European corporations,
especially in the dairy and meat industries. And the extended public procurement chapter or the intellectual property protection chapter promotes an economic model that undermines public services, such as health and thus will increase the unpaid care burden on women.

For further information about this agenda, kindly write to the gendertrade@wideplus.org working group.

A Feminist Approach to Peace in and around Ukraine

On International Women's Day 2022 WIDE+ co-organized its first online event initiated by Gender Concern International with Ukrainian feminists to reflect on the war by the Russian regime against Ukraine. In the past year WIDE+ has (co-)organized 7 other online events with Belarusian feminists, pacifist feminists in Russia, other feminists in Ukraine, feminist peace activists such as from Colombia and former Yugoslavia and feminist activists in the South.

Is peace possible in Ukraine? As a network we do not know what the best strategy is to bring peace and the protection of (women’s) human rights. What comes forward from
all our conversations is that we see a role for feminists to promote ongoing regional and global dialogue and to promote the alternative of peace. We should not lose our belief in peace and stop investing in it.

We are concerned that this war by Russia and other armed conflict combined with 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 wrote a letter about this to the European Parliament and European Commission.

Roberta Metsola, the president of the EU Parliament responded to WIDE+’s letter to promote peace in Ukraine and beyond. In the letter she suggests that the Parliament agrees with many of our recommendations, in particular stressing the important role of women and local civil society in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and in peacebuilding. She responds: "The European Parliament strongly agrees that there can be no promotion of peace, nor peace building, without taking gender-equality into account both in the short and long term measures to respond to conflict situations".

As feminists we also promote ongoing solidarity with feminists in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. They are doing an amazing job under very difficult circumstances. For example, last summer Ukraine also adopted the Istanbul Convention against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, something that still is a challenge for several of the EU member states. Feminists like partners in "Our House" are able to continuously provide grassroots support to refugees coming from Belarus, in the context of increased precariousness for migrant women.

Lastly it is very important for WIDE+ to enable migrant (refugee, trafficked, undocumented, etc.) women and gender nonconforming persons to speak out and analyse the systemic discrimination faced by them. The war against Ukraine stressed the importance to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services, and address (sexual) gender based violence. It also showed that it is possible for EU member states to swiftly respond to new refugee women and help them to access work, safe accommodation and financial support. We call on member states to enable all migrant women to access these basic rights.

Further information: the letter to the European Parliament on behalf of our network and the reply: