

# SHADOW REPORT

ON GENDER  
MAINSTREAMING  
IN SECTOR  
WORKING GROUPS

*January – December 2021*







THROUGH  
DIALOGUE TO  
**EU**

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## SHADOW REPORT ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SECTOR WORKING GROUPS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

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### For the publisher:

Fani Karanfilova Panovska, executive director

### Authors:

Irina Jolevska

### Editors:

Danche Danilovska – Bajdevska  
Nada Naumovska  
Sandra Anastasovska Kuzmanovski

### Graphic design:

KOMA

### Translation from Macedonian language:

Katerina Dimishkovska

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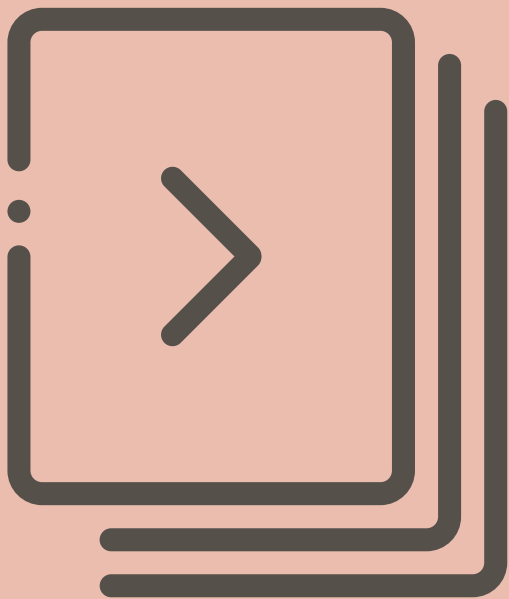
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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gender mainstreaming is a process for systemic consideration of implications on women and men from a planned action, including legislation, policy or program, in any area and at all levels.<sup>1</sup> In that, the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. Within the national legislation of the Republic of North Macedonia, gender mainstreaming is defined under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men<sup>2</sup> and represents an obligation for all state bodies and institutions. Failure to incorporate the gender perspective implies adoption of gender-neutral or gender-blind policies that are unable to address existing inequalities and could contribute to deepened gender gaps.

Gender equality is among core values of the European Union (EU).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and promotion of fundamental European values.<sup>4</sup> The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance in the period 2021-2027 (IPA III) stipulates that implementation of IPA III should be led by the principles of gender equality and enhanced rights of women and girls,<sup>5</sup> in line with and aimed at attaining the minimum standards established under the EU's new Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III) titled "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action".<sup>6</sup> GAP III is organized

- 1 European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=mk>
- 2 Article 4, paragraph (1), item 10) of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 6/12, 30/13, 166/14, 150/15 and "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 53/21.
- 3 Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at <https://bit.ly/3s4gjyR>
- 4 Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1).
- 5 Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>
- 6 EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, available at:



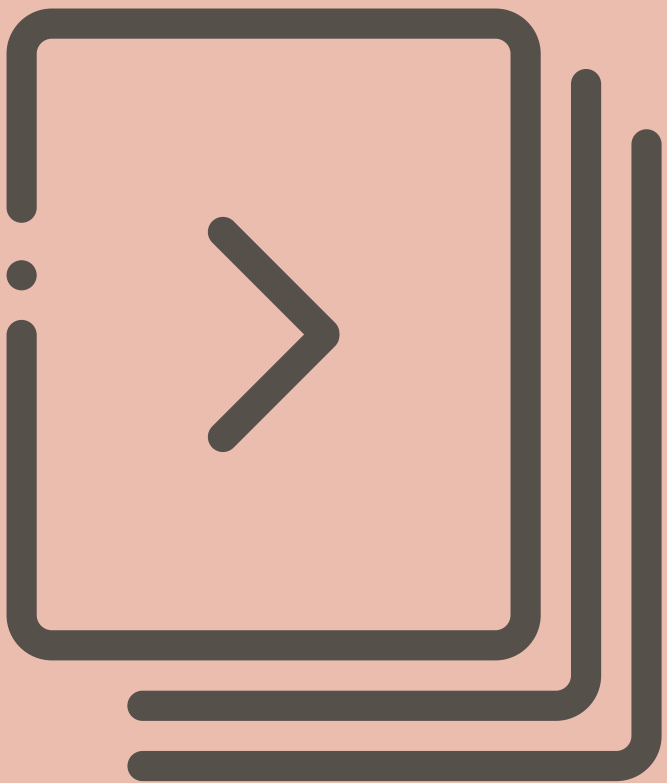
into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>8</sup> In that line, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also as thematic priority eligible for funding.<sup>9</sup> In that, it is stressed that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that should be adequately reflected and integrated in the overall implementation process.<sup>10</sup> Goals of IPA III assistance under the thematic priority for gender equality fully correspond to six areas of engagement from GAP III, which provides an additional indicator for the need for these two documents to be linked. On that account, work within sector groups – that represent forums for interdepartmental cooperation and are competent for creating and implementing national policies, and for programming, monitoring and evaluating foreign aid – should be guided by and aligned with GAP III. Finally, due consideration should be made of the EU’s commitment that, by 2025, at least 85% of all new external actions should include gender equality as specific or general objective.<sup>11</sup>

An important element of the sector approach to gender mainstreaming is building and enhancing technical competences of all stakeholders involved in implementation of sector policies.<sup>12</sup> Hence, special importance is assigned to capacity-building on gender mainstreaming among policy makers, but also among people involved in policy implementation.

[https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join\\_2020\\_17\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf)

- 7 Ibid. GAP III anticipates activities grouped into six thematic areas: ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthening economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women; advancing equal participation and leadership; implementing the women, peace and security agenda; addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation.
- 8 A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>
- 9 Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join\\_2020\\_17\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf)
- 12 EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>







# FINDINGS FROM MONITORING WORK OF SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

Some SWGs have not held any meetings in 2021 and therefore the project team is unable to assess gender mainstreaming as individual segment of their work. Despite the fact that gender equality policy impact was rarely discussed in 2021, modest progress could still be noted in respect to the number of SWGs that have discussed documents with integrated gender perspective. Based on data obtained from competent institutions by the cut-off date for this report,<sup>13</sup> four of the sector groups that have held meetings last year reviewed IPA III strategic responses or action documents with integrated gender perspective, as follows: SWG Regional and Local Development; SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy; SWG Agriculture and Rural Development; and SWG Health. For comparison, in 2019 and 2020, the gender perspective was covered by only two sector groups: SWG Agriculture and Rural Development and SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy.

In 2021, the coordinators for equal opportunities of women and men and their deputies rarely participated in work of sector working groups. Moreover, SWG work did not include external experts and civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality. Some line ministries do not perceive the need for involvement of the coordinators for equal opportunities in SWG work, while others are open to this issue.

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<sup>13</sup> By the cut-off date for this report, responses to information requests made under the instrument for free access to public information and related to gender mainstreaming were disclosed by institutions responsible for 9 sector working groups, as follows: SWG Justice; SWG Roma Integration; SWG Regional and Local Development; SWG Home Affairs; SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy; SWG Public Finance Management; SWG Public Administration Reform; SWG Transport, and SWG Agriculture and Rural Development.



There are insufficient data to establish the number of SWG members that have attended training on gender-responsible operation. Only a handful of competent ministries have organized trainings on this subject matter, while the e-learning platform that provides gender equality training for administrative officers was not functional for the entire 2021. Based on interviews with IPA coordinators, it could be concluded that majority of them are not familiar with the content of GAP III.

## SWG REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions, but minutes were not taken from discussions during said meetings. In the absence of such minutes, the project team is unable to establish whether meetings held by this sector group featured discussion of gender issues and gender mainstreaming. Nevertheless, a positive step forward in operation of this sector group concerns the fact that discussions during meetings focused on strategy documents with integrated gender perspective.

In particular, the gender perspective is integrated in the Strategy for Regional Development 2021-2031 and the Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2021-2026. It is particularly important to note that development of the Strategy for Regional Development relied on previously prepared gender analyses. While the coordinators for equal opportunities and their deputies did not directly participate in SWG work as members, it should be noted that the officer responsible for strategy development at the Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLSG) is also deputy coordinator for equal opportunities of women and men.<sup>14</sup> This could be one of reasons for gender mainstreaming in the new strategy documents. Finally, according to information from MLSG, the gender perspective is integrated in development of new cross-border cooperation programmes.

## SWG ROMA INTEGRATION

In 2021, SWG Roma Integration did not develop IPA III action documents or separate gender analyses. This sector group has not organized any plenary sessions in the last year and therefore the project team is unable to assess gender mainstreaming in its work. The Ministry of Labour and

<sup>14</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022.

Social Policy (MLSP) has submitted project-proposals for funding under IPA III 2023 and 2024 programmes, which are still working versions and are pending response from the EU. SWG members participated in review and additions to the draft text of the IPA III strategic response for the programming period 2021-2027, and they attended the plenary session held by SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy on 30.06.2021. This session included presentation of projects planned under the 2022 action document “EU for Better Health and Social Protection, and Gender Equality”. All documents compliant with gender mainstreaming and have relied on relevant administrative data and available analyses.

## SWG HOME AFFAIRS

SWG Home Affairs has not held any plenary sessions in 2021 and therefore the project team is unable to assess gender mainstreaming as part of its work. Information obtained from the Ministry of Interior (Mol) indicate that gender analyses had not been developed and used in activities related to drafting strategy documents that fall within competences of this sector group. In 2021, Mol has organized three workshops on gender-responsive operation, but no detail information was provided that would allow conclusion whether SWG members attended any of these workshops. Mol is one of key institutions involved in IPA III 2020 action document “EU for Improved Border Management and Migration” wherein gender equality is not enlisted among priority goals and objectives.<sup>15</sup>

## SWG JUSTICE

In 2021, SWG Justice did not hold any plenary sessions and, according to information from the Ministry of Justice, IPA III action document in this sector was not planned for the 2020 programme. Hence, the project team cannot assess gender mainstreaming within this sector group. MoJ has not developed gender analysis or used them in its activities for policy creation during 2021. Moreover, the ministry has not held any trainings on gender equality, indicating that the e-training on gender equality delivered by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) has not been available for longer period of time, i.e. the e-learning management system is not functional. Nevertheless, large portion of MoJ employees have already attended this training.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Secretariat for European Affairs, IPA 2021-2027, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/page/?id=1120#.Yfusd-rMJPY>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022.



As regards promotion of gender equality in the justice sector, special importance is assigned to amendments to the Criminal Code which, by the cut-off date for this report, are still in parliamentary procedure and are not adopted, but are aimed at aligning the Criminal Code with the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).<sup>17</sup>

## SWG EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

As noted in the last two shadow reports, SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy continuously integrates the gender perspective in its work. It should be noted that this sector group is managed by two lead institutions, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). In 2021, employees from both ministries attended several trainings on gender-responsive operation organized by the project “Improving Institutionalization of Gender Responsive Budgeting Through Systemic Gender Mainstreaming in Strategic Planning and Programming by Government Institutions in North Macedonia”, supported by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women). These training were attended by administrative officers at expert or management level and those involved in strategic planning policy creation at institutions, including the coordinators for equal opportunities of women and men. Moreover, SWG members include employees from MLSP's sector on equal opportunities and MES's coordinator for equal opportunities. At the same time, this sector group's composition includes civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality. Information obtained from competent ministries show that gender perspective was integrated in MES's Strategic Plan 2021-2023 and that gender analyses were used in development and formulation of certain measures under the National Strategy on Employment 2021-2023.<sup>18</sup>

Last year, upon previous consultations with members of SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy, IPA operational structure within MLSP developed the 2020 action document “EU for Better Health and Social

<sup>17</sup> Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168046253a>

<sup>18</sup> According to information from MLSP, development of the National Strategy on Employment relied on the analysis: UN Women, N.Mojsovski-Blazevski, J.De Henau. “Investing in a free universal childcare in the Republic of North Macedonia: Analysis of costs, short-term employment effects and fiscal revenue” (2019), available at: <https://bit.ly/3Gosv2w>

Protection, and Gender Equality”. Actions and projects planned under the draft action document were presented at the plenary session held by this sector working group on 30.06.2021. Gender equality is defined as primary objective in this action document. Projects planned therein are targeting the area of occupational safety and health, support to efforts for addressing gender-based and domestic violence, and improved quality of social services through support for the evaluation and monitoring system, including promotion of the licensing system. Gender desegregated indicators will be used to measure effects of proposed projects. Separate gender analyses were not used for development of this document, and instead it relied on administrative data from institutions, statistical data from the State Statistical Office and other publicly available analyses.

## **SWG PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT**

In 2021, SWG Public Finance Management held two plenary sessions. Both meetings did not include discussions on gender equality policy impact.<sup>19</sup> In the capacity of lead institution for SWG Public Finance Management, in 2021 the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has not organized any trainings on gender-responsive budgeting that would enhance capacity of its employees. Moreover, in this reporting period, the ministry has not used gender analyses in its activities for policy creation falling within its competences. Furthermore, SWG work did not include any experts or civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality, or women organizations. Finally, SWG Public Finance Management has not developed an action document for IPA III programmes with integrated gender perspective.

## **SWG HEALTH**

In the capacity of lead institution for SWG Health, the Ministry of Health (MoH) did not respond to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information. However, it should be noted that, at the meeting held on 03.06.2021, MoH’s IPA coordinator presented activities in the area of health from the last version of IPA III 2022 action document “EU for Better Health and Social Protection, and Gender Equality”. This action document falls within competences of two sector working groups: SWG Health and SWG Education,

<sup>19</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022.

Employment and Social Policy. It includes gender equality as primary objective, while effects from proposed projects will be measures against gender desegregated indicators.<sup>20</sup>



## SWG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

SWG Public Administration Reform has not held any plenary sessions in 2021 and therefore the project team is unable to assess gender mainstreaming in its work. There are no information available whether coordinators for equal opportunities and their deputies, external experts or civil society that work on promoting gender equality have been involved in SWG work during the past year. As regards development of documents and priority-setting in this sector, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) elaborated that, due to the method for assistance implementation, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), MISA and the EU Delegation have decided to define fewer indicators and targets that would allow greater coverage and integration of cross-cutting issues. On that account, as reported by MISA, participation of other SWG members was limited.

In 2021, MISA has not developed or used gender analyses in its activities for policy creation. As regards training on gender-responsive operation, MISA referred to gender equality training available on the e-learning management platform. At the same time, MISA indicated that these trainings are integrated in the platform as mandatory for public administration employees, upon initiative and in compliance with strategic priorities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. According to MISA, low participation in 2021 trainings is due to the fact that the e-learning platform was not functional on the account of formal public procurement procedures.

SWG Public Administration Reform developed IPA III action document, but the same is still not finalized and was not shared with the project. This action document identifies gender equality as important objective for support.

<sup>20</sup> Information obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in response to the request made under the instrument for free access to public information no. 14-491/3-2022 from 31.01.2022.



## SWG TRANSPORT

As the lead institution for SWG Transport, the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) has not developed or used gender analyses in its activities for policy creation. In 2021, MTC has not organized any trainings on gender-responsive operation. Thus far, meetings held by this sector group did not involve coordinators for equal opportunities and their deputies, external experts or civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality. In the opinion of this ministry, coordinators for equal opportunities and their deputies do not hold competences to be involved in work of SWG Transport. Moreover, MTC underlined that selection of priority projects in the transport sector does not contribute to gender discrimination and does not favour particular group, as well as that gender equality is covered under separate section both at the level of individual projects and at the level of operational programmes.

The section on equal opportunities within the Ministry of Transport and Communication's Draft Strategic Plan 2022-2024 anticipates measures for gender-responsive budgeting in several programs, primarily in respect to activities characterized by a social dimension, and in respect to social housing construction and eligibility. SWG Transport has not developed any action document for IPA III with integrated gender perspective.

## SWG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

For the third year in a row, shadow reports note that SWG Agriculture and Rural Development integrates gender perspective in its work. The only meeting held by this sector group on 17.02.2021 featured review of documents with integrated gender perspective, i.e. IPA III strategic response and National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2027 adopted on 20.01.2021. Moreover, gender perspective is integrated in the last action document developed by this sector group for IPA III 2021 programme, i.e. EU for Green Economy, wherein gender equality is identified as priority objective.

In 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) has not organized any trainings on gender-responsive operation. On the other hand, it should be noted that SWG Agriculture and Rural Development is among rare sector groups where the coordinator for equal opportunities at the lead institution (MAFWE) is



also member of the sector group. In this reporting period, MAFWE used several gender analyses in its activities for policy creation: “Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas: Challenge, Opportunity or Unattainable Goal”<sup>21</sup> and “Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture Policy Impact Assessment”.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, MAFWE has reviewed and integrated comments made to the draft version of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2027.

Finally, according to information obtained from MAFWE, in 2021, IPARD management body worked on developing the draft version of IPARD programme for the period 2021-2027. Priorities defined in respect to programming measures and project selection include additional eligibility points for women applicants.

## SWG ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

By the cut-off date for this report, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP), as the lead institution in SWG Environment and Climate Action, has not disclosed information requested under the instrument for free access to public information. In 2021, this sector working group held only one meeting on 17.06.2021. Based on information available, documents discussed at this meeting, i.e. IPA III strategic response for thematic priority on environment and climate change, do not integrate the gender perspective, while strategic priorities of UN agencies – also presented at the meeting – include gender mainstreaming. Nevertheless, having in mind that MESP did not disclose any information and the project team was not invited to monitor SWG meeting, it cannot be concluded whether different needs and interest of women and men had been taken into account. According to the IPA coordinator, thus far, SWG meetings have not included discussions of gender mainstreaming in sector policies and documents. Moreover, MESP is the key institution competent for IPA III 2022 action document “EU for Modern Waste Water Systems” where gender equality is not enlisted among the objectives.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Rural Coalition in partnership with the association “My Farm” (2020): Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas: Challenge, Opportunity or Unattainable Goal, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sNI54b>

<sup>22</sup> Analysis developed by the gender equality working group at MAFWE.

<sup>23</sup> Secretariat for European Affairs, IPA 2021-2027, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/page/?id=1120#.Yfusd-rMJPY>

In 2021, the coordinator for equal opportunities of women and men at MESP was changed several times and was invited, but did not attend SWG meeting. Also, employees at the ministry's IPA operational structure have not attended any trainings on gender-responsive operation.<sup>24</sup>

## SWG COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION

SWG Competitiveness and Innovation is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister Responsible for Economic Affairs, Coordination of Economic Sectors and Investment. While responses to information requests were responded after an appeal lodged before the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, no information was actually provided in respect to gender mainstreaming by this sector working group in 2021.

In 2021, SWG Competitiveness and Innovation held one plenary session on 09.03.2021. This meeting included presentation of inputs for IPA III strategic responses in the programming period 2021-2027, Window 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority: Private Sector Development, Trade, Research and Innovation. Based on relevant minutes, it cannot be concluded whether gender equality issues have been discussed at this meeting. Given that membership in SWG Competitiveness and Innovation does not include civil society representatives, civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality and women organizations are not involved in work of this sector group.



<sup>24</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022.



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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

**1.** In 2021, there is a modest increase in the number of SWGs that have discussed relevant policies in terms of gender mainstreaming. Nevertheless, all SWGs need to continue integrating the gender perspective in their work, especially by developing and using gender analyses, and involving coordinators for equal opportunities and their deputies, as well as external experts and civil society organization that work on promoting gender equality.

**2.** It is recommended for the e-learning system for administrative officers that includes the e-training on gender equality to be brought back into operation. Moreover, materials for this training need to be regularly and continuously updated in order to avoid the risk of obsolete content. Having in mind that the project team cannot establish the number of SWG members that have attended training on gender-responsive operation and that the sector approach to gender mainstreaming implies building and advancing competences of everybody involved in the process for policy creation and implementation, it is recommended to organize specially designed trainings for members of sector working groups. In that, it is important for these trainings to also cover content of GAP III as the action plan on gender equality and empowerment of women in EU external action.

**3.** In the forthcoming period, SWGs are recommended to integrate the gender perspective in their work and to reconsider opportunities for combining eligible actions under IPA III with thematic priorities from GAP III, i.e. ensure that IPA programming is guided by and contributes to attainment of objectives defined under GAP III.

