

Dear

Representatives of the European Parliament

Representatives of DG NEAR

Representatives of DG EEAS

Representatives of DG JUST

Representatives of FEMM Committee

Representatives of Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine

European Commission's Taskforce on Equality

We, the undersigned Ukrainian and international civil society organizations (CSOs), call on the European Commission and the European Parliament to support civil society engagement and incorporation of gender responsive approach and principles into the Ukraine recovery, which will go in line with the country's European path.

The cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Ukraine goes back to December 1991 when the European Union officially recognized the independence of Ukraine. As early as in 1993, the country declared the integration to the EU as one of its main foreign policy objectives. The latter provides for the implementation of the EU's legislation and *acquis communautaire*, including the regulations on the gender equality and women's rights protection and promotion.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 has forced a large number of people to flee the country. Approximately [8.1 million refugees have fled from Ukraine to the EU](#) since the beginning of the invasion, with an estimated 90% of refugees being women and children. A further [7.1 million people have been displaced internally within Ukraine](#), including women and children in need of medical and mental health care, employment possibilities, proper schooling for children, accommodation and protection against sexual and gender-based violence. The situation is aggravated by the growing conservative attitudes, reinforcement of "traditional" gender roles, exclusion of women from decision-making and negotiating processes as well as decreasing visibility and media representation of women-soldiers and women-experts.

As a reaction to the above-mentioned challenges, on 5 May 2022, the European Parliament adopted the resolution ["The impact of the war against Ukraine on women" \(2022/2633\(RSP\)\)](#). Among the other statements, it strongly condemned the illegal, unprovoked and unjustified military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, invasion of the country and war crimes being committed by Russian soldiers against the civilian population, including women and girls in all their diversity. It provided that the EU should work towards swiftly granting EU candidate status to Ukraine, in line with Article 49 TEU and based on merit, and, in the meantime, continue to work towards the integration of Ukraine into the EU single market along

the lines of the Association Agreement in order to adequately protect Ukrainian women and girls.

Thus, first of all, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support that the EU is providing to Ukraine in countering the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation. Simultaneously, it is important to highlight that by joining our efforts and taking immediate steps, we are able to ensure that a gender responsive approach is effectively included into the recovery of Ukraine and its accession to the EU.

Ukrainian CSOs have always been playing an essential role in advocating the rule of law and democratic values as the foundation of Ukraine's development path. During the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Ukrainian CSOs were among the first to respond to the challenges faced by women and children. Together with the allies, they have been actively contributing to Ukraine's resilience, taking a leading role in the humanitarian response, supporting the most vulnerable groups and strengthening democratic positions of Ukraine.

Even though the war is still going on, Ukraine shows an unprecedented strength and proactiveness in initiating and leading the recovery process. We believe that it has to be inclusive, fair and ensure gender equality and respect for human rights, including political, economic, social and cultural rights. Recovery needs to benefit all, and no part of society should be left behind: inequalities have to be properly addressed and reduced in the course of Ukraine's recovery plan development and implementation.

In order to ensure that gender responsive approach is included in Ukraine's recovery, we urge the European Commission and the European Parliament to take the following actions:

1. Enforce a visible and efficient gender responsive agenda in the country's EU accession process and documents at all stages and levels.
2. Take into account a gender responsive approach working on the *European Commission's first Annual Report on Ukraine* as a Candidate country for accession to the EU that will be published in October 2023.
3. Take into account the impact of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the challenges that women both in Ukraine and in EU Member States may face as a result of the Russian aggression preparing the [Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#).
4. Include the gender component during the formation of the EU budget for 2024, in particular with regard to issues of Ukraine's accession to the EU and recovery and reconstruction process.
5. Demand and politically support women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all stages of recovery and reconstruction processes in Ukraine in line with [National Action](#)

[Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security until 2025](#) in order to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are not excluded from the peacebuilding process.

6. Ensure the adherence to gender quotas and gender responsive principles of all national stakeholders engaged in Ukraine's accession to the EU as well as recovery and reconstruction processes.
7. Initiate and support a special funding platform for Ukrainian CSOs, especially those working with women and children, providing psychological rehabilitation of military people, and working with gender-based violence survivors – in particular, include funding of local CSOs and grassroots initiatives in the EU budget for 2024.
8. Engage actively with the Ukrainian and international CSOs working in Ukraine on gender equality and women's rights protection and promotion in the overall EU's decision-making process for Ukraine's reconstruction and in the development of the key documents (such as Ukraine's Recovery Plan).
9. Promote sustained and high-level engagement of Ukrainian authorities with civil society and experts working on gender equality and women's rights protection and promotion with regard to the development of national recovery plans, policies and politics, and ensure their participation and leadership in all aspects of peace and security and recovery and reconstruction agenda on the level of local communities as well as national level.
10. Include gender responsive approach to the reconstruction of Ukraine's destroyed social infrastructure (i.e., education and health systems and infrastructure) in order to ensure access to quality services and development opportunities for the broadest segments of society, especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups (women, LGBTQ+ people, ethnic minorities).

Thank you in advance for considering our recommendations. We are looking forward to further cooperation and collaboration on the above mentioned points and we are eager to contribute to their successful implementation.

This letter was drafted by the representatives of the following civil society organizations in Ukraine:

Heinrich Böll Foundation, office Kyiv-Ukraine

NGO Girls

NGO Women's League

Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association "JurFem"

The appeal is supported by:

Name of NGO

Please fill this form if you and/or the NGO you represent want to join the signing of the open letter from representatives of Ukrainian civil society addressed to representatives of the EP and EC.

The form must be filled out by the head of the NGO or an authorized person representing the organization: <https://bit.ly/414kWQ>