

EU-ALC Cooperation Efforts to Achieve Millennium Development Goal 3: “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”

*Charles Berthon*¹

Abstract

Gender inequality as well as violence against women is a major problem in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is manifested in issues such as gender violence, lower political participation by women, employment and wage inequality, female illiteracy and the difficulty women have gaining access to full sexual and reproductive health. The Latin American continent has achieved progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals, including equal access to primary education between girls and boys. However women and girls continue to suffer high rates of discrimination and violence in most Latin American countries. In this specific region of the world, mentalities of both civil and political actors of the society, need to fully process the fact that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable society. Women’s economic empowerment is defined as a transformational process, in which women gain increased access to and power over economic assets and economic decisions. Through programs like EUROSocial and ALFA III financed by the European Commission, the European Union has been seeking to increase its cooperation with Latin America in this domain. Some projects like Equality, carried out within the framework of these programs, directly or indirectly aimed at providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. Achieving these goals would certainly contribute to develop more sustain-

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1. Maestría en Relaciones Económicas Internacionales y Cooperación, del Centro Universitario de Ciencias Económico Administrativas de la Universidad de Guadalajara.

nable economies and benefit societies and the population on its whole, as it partially did already. Nevertheless it has been made clear over the years, with a low financial aid dedicated to the problem, that this aspect of the cooperation was not the very first priority of the European Union in Latin America. As for today, 17 years after setting the millennium goals, one thing is sure: there is yet a lot to be done to promote gender equality and women empowerment in Latin America.

Keywords: women human rights, cooperation EU-ALC, women's empowerment, gender equality, social development, developing countries.

ESFUERZOS DE COOPERACIÓN EU-ALC PARA ALCANZAR LA META DEL MILENIO 3: "PROMOVER LA IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO Y EMPODERAMIENTO DE LA MUJER"

Resumen

La desigualdad de género y la violencia contra la mujer es un problema importante en América Latina y el Caribe. Se manifiesta en cuestiones como la violencia de género, la menor participación política de las mujeres, el empleo y la desigualdad salarial, el analfabetismo femenino y la dificultad que tiene la mujer para acceder a la salud sexual y reproductiva plena. El continente latinoamericano ha logrado progresos hacia la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres en el marco de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, incluido el acceso igualitario a la educación primaria entre niñas y niños. Sin embargo, las mujeres y las niñas siguen sufriendo altos índices de discriminación y violencia en la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos. En esta región específica del mundo, las mentalidades de los actores civiles y políticos de la sociedad necesitan procesar plenamente el hecho de que la igualdad de género no es sólo un derecho humano fundamental, sino un fundamento necesario para una sociedad pacífica, próspera y sostenible. El empoderamiento económico de las mujeres se define como un proceso de transformación, en el cual las mujeres ganan un mayor acceso y poder sobre los activos económicos y las decisiones económicas. A través de programas como EUROSOCIAL y ALFA III financiados por la Comisión Europea, la Unión Europea ha tratado de incrementar su cooperación con América Latina en este ámbito. Algunos proyectos, como Igualdad, llevados a cabo en el marco de estos programas, directa o indirectamente, tienen como objetivo proporcionar a las mujeres y niñas igualdad de acceso a la educación, la salud, el trabajo decente y la representación en los procesos políticos y económicos de toma de decisiones. El logro de estos objetivos contribuiría sin duda a desarrollar economías más sostenibles y beneficiar a las sociedades ya la población en su conjunto, como ya lo hizo en parte. Sin embargo, a lo largo de los años se ha aclarado, con una baja ayuda financiera dedicada al problema, que este aspecto de la cooperación no fue la primera prioridad de la Unión Europea en América Latina. En cuanto a hoy, 17 años después de fijar

los objetivos del milenio, una cosa es segura: todavía hay mucho por hacer para promover la igualdad de género y el empoderamiento de las mujeres en América Latina.

Palabras clave: derechos humanos de las mujeres, cooperación EU-ALC, empoderamiento de la mujer, igualdad de género, desarrollo social, países en desarrollo.

Facts and figures:

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, 28.7% of parliament seats were held by women in 2016 (World Bank, 2017).
- In 2014, women provided the biggest source of income in 32.1% of households in Latin America and the Caribbean, and as low as 24.9% in rural areas (CEPAL, 2016).
- In 2014, 29% of Latin American women did not have a single source of income of their own. In comparison with 12% for men (CEPAL, 2016).
- Worldwide, in average women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid household and care work than men (UN, 2015).
- Women represent 43.8% of total nonagricultural wage employment in Latin America and the Caribbean (World Bank, 2017).
- In Latin America urban areas in 2008, wage earner women (above 15) earned in average 79% of men salaries (CEPAL, 2010).
- In 2008, nine countries in Latin America had special legislation on femicide; now in 2017, 16 countries have one (UN Women, 2017).
- Of the 25 nations with the highest rate of violence against women, 14 are in Latin America (UN Women, 2016).
- Worldwide as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner (World Health Organization, 2016).

Introduction

If we look at the results of the millennium goals regarding gender equality and more precisely women's access to education, the developing countries as a whole have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education (United Nations, 2015). However the same report also says that worldwide, about three quarters of working-age men participate in the labor force whe-

reas only half of working-age women do. Improvements to empower women have been made in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the average proportion of women in parliament has more than doubled over the past 20 years, going from only 13.13% of parliament seats held by women in 1997 to 28.7% in 2016 (World Bank, 2017). But still, women continue to experience significant gaps in terms of poverty, labor market and wages, as well as participation in private and public decision-making. In the need to find long lasting solutions to the problems, the work of the policy makers and by extension the work of the European Union in its will to impulse development in Latin America, needs to take into account the origins of high gender inequalities on the continent. The repercussions and general acceptance of social roles attributed to men and women are determining factors that contribute to deepen the gap. In other words, due to the implicit and culturally accepted task of having to care for the young, dependent persons and the elderly, women find it harder to access gainful employment and education and, consequently, economic power. Economic power and financial autonomy directly coming from paid jobs. The paradox is that this same work of caring for others has been an invisible fight for more social cohesion and has cost Latin American women their own access to rights, resources and full exercise of citizenship. The perception of the social role of the woman in Latin American countries is one of the most obvious explanations to gender inequality. EUROSOCIAL, the European Commission founded program of cooperation for social development, contributes at removing these socially accepted roles and structures, while fomenting more social cohesion. Indeed, the European Union is partly responsible for the positive changes made so far in the domain, since gender equality is in total compliance with the values for which it stands. Beside the EU's goals in term of cooperation for development are quite similar to the ones of the Millennium stated by the United Nation: The regulation No. 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation states the need to "consolidate human rights, fundamental liberties, good governance, equality between sexes etc."

Very concretely EUROSOCIAL works to improve public policies that promote social cohesion, both in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. By doing so it aims at making structural changes in the way

society works, knowing that the lack of social cohesion in Latin countries has been identified has a priority for structural development. The European Parliament holds the conviction that the gender issue should be solved by acting on the structural mechanisms on which inequality is based. Another fundamental area to improve in order to impulse deep structural changes in the way society works is education. Improving education is the root to any implemented change contributing to long lasting development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ALFA III, another program of cooperation founded by the European Union plays an important part by promoting higher education as a means of social and economic development and struggle against social inequality. The Equality project that was part of the ALFA III program, succeeded in modernizing institutional capacities of higher education institutes to effectively foster gender equality in all spheres of higher education and the labor market. Education should indeed be considered a strategic pillar strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations between the two regions, where no structural socio-economic development can be achieved without improving the quality of national education systems.

In each case scenario, the incorporation of the gender focus is not without difficulties in the region: resistance, lack of awareness by political actors, obstructions from the church and consideration of the focus as secondary are frequent obstacles. Both in Europe and Latin American and the Caribbean, we can only persevere and be aware of how much ground still needs to be covered. Everybody, both male and female, should stand for women's rights knowing that full citizenship does not exist without full citizenship for women, and indifference to this problem fails to take into account that the gender dimension is constructed without regard for the specific needs and potential for development of over half the population represented by girls and women.

The contribution from EUROSOCIAL

"In spite of the internal diversity within Latin America and Europe, and of the differences between them, both regions share a common concern for inequality and vulnerability and both engage in dialogue on shared values such as social cohesion." In the own words of Irma Zamora, Head Director of

EUROSOCIAL, we learn that the program is dedicated to increase social cohesion in Latin America. And determined to do so by facilitating the cooperation and the exchange of experiences and practices between public institutions. In any case of cooperation oriented towards development, and even more in the case of Latin America, it is absolutely crucial for governments and public institutions to be fully involved and to become key actors on the long run, long after the outside aid has gone. Another aspect of the method followed by the program is to promote practices between peer institutions, thus exploiting the power of “peer learning”, with both European and Latin American institutions, in order to promote change and impulse a rich exchange of South-South cooperation.

Within the framework of the program EUROSOCIAL, important progress has been made with initiatives that place a special emphasis on women’s human rights. Its work has helped to promote the strengthening of state-owned systems of care (hospitals, institutes of care for elderly, etc.) thus implicitly making the assumption that part of this responsibility should be held by the government itself and not automatically by women. Moreover the program contributed in promoting specific policies aimed at women in situations of vulnerability such as victims of gender violence, migrants and incarcerated women. Along with these concrete initiatives focused on reforming the judicial system, the program encourages a multilateral approach to gender in all public policies that it supports or accompanies, most significantly in the areas of education, employment and health.

More specific targets have been hit such as combating domestic violence against women with a particularly large scale action to support and accompany the victims of gender violence in Honduras. Gender violence is a complex phenomenon and responding to it requires adopting a careful approach involving most of the public institutions like health, security, employment, justice and education. One of these domains of actions cannot be tackled alone. In order to gain maximal results, coordinated actions on both the causes and the consequences, must be taken. Acting on the judiciary system without acting on the education system for example would probably be fruitless on the long term. Gender violence has a common origin, a culture in which men are entitled to control women including through violence. Along with

a culture of sexism, socially accepted behaviors like machismo are the most difficult and challenging aspects of the problem to change.

In the particular case of Honduras, EUROSOCIAL has accompanied a process of inter-institutional, inter-sectoral linking that includes civil society organizations, that was initiated by the government and coordinated by the judicial system of the country. It marked an important step in the implementation of a national policy of access to rights, particularly for women victims of domestic and family violence. Of the 25 nations with the highest rate of violence against women, 14 are in Latin America and Honduras and Guatemala topped the head of the ranking for long according to the United Nations (UN Women 2016). Other shocking facts indicate that a woman is murdered every 13 hours in Honduras, in the majority of these cases in a domestic setting and 95% of these crimes go unpunished (EUROSOCIAL, 2014b). To respond to the urgent need for justice, in 2014 the first Center for Attention to Women and Protection of Their Rights (Caprodem) was opened as a result of the collaboration between EUROSOCIAL and the Honduran Judiciary. The Program has also supported the design and implementation of a protocol for comprehensive care to women victims of violence. This protocol sets up standardized guidelines to be followed by each institution involved (judicial, police, tax, health, social and education) to improve the prosecution and punishment of acts of violence against women, as well as provide them with a comprehensive assistance and protection, in order to prevent secondary victimization. It seeks to bring a quick response to women victims through an effective referral system. This requires a sophisticated exercise in coordination, which is supported by operating protocols. Besides here is a list of the complementary services provided by the center: Caprodem refer victims to collaborating institutions and organizations for the following services:

- Legal and judicial services.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (ADRM).
- Forensic examination and medical or clinical care.
- Temporary protection in a safe house.
- Psycho-social support.
- Fostering of economic autonomy and support for entering the job market.
- Individual and group therapy.

However we are only talking about one country here, and much more needs to be done at a larger scale. One of the main challenges in the particular case of Latin America and the Caribbean is the failure of states to create a climate of justice, a problem that leads to alarming levels of impunity. By lack of trust sometimes even fear of the police, most crimes are not reported and stay unpunished. For example, in Guatemala, of the 2,920 homicides of women registered between 2001 and 2006 (making it the highest femicide rate in the world in 2006), there have been only 184 detentions, leaving 94 percent of cases unsolved (UN, 2006).

One key explanation to the huge failure of most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (and particularly in Central America) to tackle the problem is the lack of coherence between the legislative initiatives and the culture and practices of the legal and judicial system. When the concept and laws for gender equality and the protection of the rights of women have not been incorporated into the daily practice of judicial personnel, legitimate cases of violence can often be dismissed by judges.

The continent is however showing some signs of progress: the number of Latin American countries with a special legislation on femicide has almost doubled between 2008 and 2017 with now 16 countries that count special laws on the murders of women (UN Women, 2017). Although these international and national efforts to eradicate violence against women show encouraging signs of progress in raising awareness among policymakers and communities, the next step is to address the issue at its cultural roots and across institutions and sectors. This might be the most difficult and long lasting challenge that will require a coherent response including legislation, service provision and prevention. The region is terribly lacking of the culture of prevention in this domain and more generally regarding all social issues, in comparison with Europe where prevention is a widely used tool by governments.

To sum up, many concrete actions similar as the one implemented in Honduras, have been launched by EUROSOCIAL. Like for example in the very similar case of Brazil, where the action aimed at developing and validating a protocol of inter-institutional coordination between the fiscal and police departments in the matter of violence against women in Brazil. The action of EUROSOCIAL keeps on being

mainly focused on the judicial aspect regarding the problem of gender violence. The complete list of actions carried out in the framework of the program country by country is available in Spanish on its website (EUROSOCIAL Informes de actividades, 2017).

Finally by closely impacting all the actors stated above, education appears to be the ultimate key factor. Indeed a long-term response would involve addressing the larger challenges of gender inequality and women's empowerment through education. With a more specific action focused on improving superior education in Latin America, ALFA III is a program that makes the European Union a privileged working partner in the search for solutions to the gender inequality issue.

The contribution from ALFA III through the project Equality

ALFA III is a program financed by the European Commission that aimed at the modernization of Higher Education in Latin America as a platform to promote sustainable and equitable development in the region. The EU contribution reached up to **75 million of euros**. Altogether 51 projects have been implemented from 2007 to 2013, involving **494 distinct participating institutions**: 153 coming from the EU and 341 from Latin America. A total of 14 projects (27%) were coordinated by Latin American Higher Education Institutions from eight different countries.

The project Equality is the most concrete example of the action led by the program ALFA III relative to the Millennium Development Goal number 3. From December 2011 to December 2014, the project aimed at enhancing

[...] the relevance of higher education in Latin American countries in promoting gender equality and contributing towards the increased visibility of women and their participation in science, academia and the workforce in order to generate positive economic effects by improving the use and integration of female talent in national economies in the long term (ALFA, 2014).

The Equality project impulsed by the program ALFA III mainly benefited the female population of the 18 Latin American participating countries but also the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) leaders &

managers of these same countries like rectors, vice-rectors and heads of departments.

The main positive consequence of Equality's action was first to succeed in reinforcing regional cooperation and full integration of stakeholders towards solving shared challenges. Second, to modernize institutional capacities of HEI to effectively foster gender equality in all spheres of higher education and the labor market. And third, to develop the skills and capacities of HEI staff to support women in acquiring leadership positions. Another complementary result where the project partially succeeded in is the impulse of cultural change and policy reforms by cooperating with the civil society, education managers and political leaders.

The graphic shown in *figure 1* that follow, enables us to understand the logic behind the various actions taken in the framework of the Equality project and the tools that were used to achieve the given objectives: The actions taken in an effort to enhance the regional network include: comparative studies, the creation of the network and regional conferences. Work groups, seminars and pilot projects were also organized to teach new core competencies to the students, thus helping them achieve the project's goals. Finally, linked to the objective of raising awareness, study groups and events were organized in 18 Latin American countries. Recommendations concerning political actions were also given.

Figure 1



Source: equality-network.net

Conclusions on the results obtained by the Equality project

Probably the most tangible result can be measured with the creation and modernization of 18 gender units that we could define as small teams of skilled gender equality specialists with very different but complementary fields of knowledge such as justice or medical cares for example. These gender units were created in Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Another action that was carried out is the launch of a campaign on "The Political Participation of Women in Honduras". The campaign faced strong opposition and the results were imperfect since the parity in Parliament after the 2016 elections is still to be respected. Challenging the hegemony of these political establishments should however remain a priority in these countries.

The other results concern training of students and young professionals with the launch of the first regional workshop on “Rethinking gender from the peripheries; challenges of the new millennium in society” as well as various training and awareness-raising workshops on gender and superior education. “Women’s Studies and network of women university professionals” was also created. The development of a proposal to create the “Latin American Network of Women’s Leadership and Gender Equality” was achieved but never led to the creation of such network up to this date, which can be considered more a failure than a real achievement. More of an anecdote, the book “Stories of Women, Women of History in El Salvador” was presented as part of the project Equality in El Salvador, one of the most affected countries by gender violence and gender inequality.

To summarize, the Equality project is the most concrete initiative financed by the European Union to fight for women’s rights and empowerment through education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The positive effects of its actions had a direct impact on the issue of tackling gender inequalities in the region. Aside from this project, many other initiatives impulsed by the European Union through ALFA III have had more indirect effects on the issue. The full list of education related projects is available with a link at the end of the paper. Projects like the Spring (Social responsibility through Pro-sociality based Interventions to Generate equal opportunities) can be found there. In short, Spring promotes equal access to the labor market through a pro-social intervention that boosts knowledge and appreciation of diversity among students, teachers and employers. Although its action is not limited to women, the results of its action definitely makes a difference for equal access to labor for women. More generally all the projects financed and carried out by the ALFA III program will have had an impact on women empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean, because improving education, and above all superior education, means improving the society in its all. No country in any region of the world will succeed in developing itself qualitatively without investing massively in its education system.

GAP II: New EU goals and policies to improve women's empowerment

In October 2015, the European Commission released the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II), with women's economic rights and empowerment as one of four 'pivotal areas' for action. Although it is not specific to the external help for development nor focused on the American continent, it sets a series of present and future goals as well as the measures needed to be implemented in order to achieve these same objectives.

The GAP II succeeded the 2010-2015 GAP and responded to critiques of the previous version, namely the lack of strong institutional leadership, accountability and capacity to promote and evaluate goals on gender equality. GAP II, a joint staff working document, aims at enhancing the EU's institutional capacity to delivery on the commitments made to gender equality, including in the core area of women's economic rights. Because it has been shown that official development assistance targeting women's economic empowerment specifically remains low. Figures show that the share of aid by EU institutions that targeted gender equality in economic and productive sectors was lower than 20 per cent (European Commission, 2015).

The framework of the GAP II document is narrow in focus, but broad in action and engagement. The document seeks to concentrate the efforts of all EU actors (European External Action Service (EEAS), Delegations, Commission services and Member States) on a shift in institutional culture, and three thematic areas: girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity, their economic and social rights, and voice and participation.

While the new framework offers a real opportunity to improve EU action on gender equality, its success depends in addressing the potential risk and weakness. It would indeed require sustained leadership from the Commission to make it happen, both in human capital and financial allocation to the issue.

Under the second pillar relating to women's economic empowerment, the GAP II explains that Commission services and the EEAS will continue investing in efforts to make women's economic and social empowerment central to the EU's external relations, and will seek to ensure that work to promote inclusive growth gives due consideration to gender dimensions. It also explains that the "Commission services

and the EEAS will continue to contribute in a measurable manner to girls' and women's economic and social empowerment, to their active participation in the economy and to the prevention of economic exploitation" (European Commission, 2015).

In particular, this will be achieved by contributing to:

- An increase in the number of girls and women receiving quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary level, including in science, technology and engineering, and receiving vocational, professional and/or entrepreneurial training.
- Improving access by women of all ages to decent work and to the national social protection.
- Women's equal access to financial services, and to the use of, and control over, land and other productive resources, as well as support to women entrepreneurs.
- Girls' and women's access to, use of, and control over, clean water, energy, information and communication technology and transport infrastructure.

A mid-term review of financing instruments and of programming documents is said to be scheduled for late 2017. Based on the weaknesses identified in the previous Plan, it is clear that high-level political and management leadership is needed to implement the new framework. At the same time, there is the necessity of higher financial investment to insure the EU's capacity to deliver on the established goals. When we take a closer look at how the program is financed and linked to regional plans for external development aid, especially in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, we can only note that the EU needs to urgently review its Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 in order to put gender equality at the center of external relations.

Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) 2014-2020: Multiannual Indicative Regional Program for Latin America

The goal of the document *Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) 2014-2020: Multiannual Indicative Regional Program for Latin America* is to give a framework concerning the European aid to development in Latin America. Ironically enough an increasing issue for Latin Ame-

rican countries regarding this aid is the relative well improvement of the region in its fight against poverty. Yes, because for example countries like Mexico that have changed status from medium profit earning capacity to medium high profit earning capacity, have seen their the amount of aid received decrease dramatically due to this same change of status. The document is very clear about this phenomenon as we can read here:

The Agenda for Change also foresees that eu's development cooperation with Latin America should be adapted to reflect new realities in the region. With many countries having achieved umeric status, aggregate eu bilateral cooperation programmes (i. e. those pursued at national level) with Latin America will diminish in relative importance for the next programming period 2014-2020 (Multiannual Indicative Regional Program, 2014).

And when we look at the budget allocation to women empowerment it does not quite match with the ambitions claimed in the program GAP II. In the document the goal to impulse women empowerment and reduce gender inequalities is even barely mentioned. It is made reference of it in the objective number 3.3 of the program: "Inclusive and sustainable growth for human development" with only one line that says: "*Attention should also be given to the economic empowerment of women and young people, and their participation in remunerated activities*". The estimated allocation for this goal is of EUR 215 million. Needless to see that the budget allocated to the issue (maybe a tenth of the 215 million) does not match with the ambitions of the European Union to fight gender inequality worldwide and in the Latin American and Caribbean continent.

New UN Goals set in 2015

Just as it did not with the Millennium Development Goals emitted by the United Nations, the new UN Goals made public in 2015 will not dictate the future action of the EU regarding its external aid for development. However these globally known goals give a strong line of conduct for rich develop countries around the world to help them put in place their external aid aimed at under-developed and developing countries. The United Nations is widely respect international

institution that provides a huge pool of data and information that is used by many countries across the globe, including European Union members. It provides these countries with useful information that help them identify the needs in term of cooperation and aid. Identifying these needs might be the strongest suit of the United Nations, especially when history has shown and criticisms have pointed out that its political power to act was limited. Here is the list of the up to date UN goals to hamper all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere:

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Conclusion

In 2016, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) published a report on allocations of official development assistance to women's economic empowerment, concluding that aid targeting women's economic empowerment as the principal objective remains especially low, at USD 861 million in 2013-14. This is just 2 per cent of the aid going to the economic and productive sectors. The report observed that the share of aid by EU institutions that was directed at gender equality in economic and productive sectors was less than 20 per cent and the share of aid that targeted gender equality to all sectors was near 30 per cent. As we have seen in this paper, the proportion of aid spent to hamper gender inequalities in Latin America has increased significantly since the Millennium Development Goals were set, but remains very small. As for today there is a preoccupying gap between the objectives set by the Joint Staff Work document of the GAP II and multiannual plan from the European Commission to finance the various projects in Latin America. Clearly the estimated budget does not match with the ambitions claimed by the European Union regarding the fight against gender discrimination in the region. The question is now to know if the Latin American continent will ever be considered as a priority for the European Union, both as a declared position and source of actions. These critics should however not undermine the action carried out by the EU through ambitious and successful programs like EUROSOCIAL and ALFA III. These programs are now over but the implemented projects such as Equality for ALFA III continue to live and its positive repercussions at a local and regional level as well. Part of the Millennium Development Goal number 3 has been achieved with success although the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment on the continent is far from being over. We can hope that the recent failure of Europhobic political parties to access to power in Austria, Holland and France will give a new impulse to a stronger and better functioning European Union. Because a strong Union is the guarantee for more cooperation with non member countries, including cooperation for development, cooperation will be needed to face the challenges ahead concerning gender equality both in Europe and in Latin America. Cooperation will indeed be an essential tool to impulse structural changes that affect the way society

works and the way people act and think in the countries all around the region. However we should not lose sight of the real source of the problem which is also the solution to gender inequality in Latin America: governments and its public institutions. Deep and structural reforms of the judiciary systems to bring long lasting solutions cannot come from the European Union, the United Nations or any external body, but from Latin American leaders and public servants. There is no other way around the problem.

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