

Putting Sustainability at the Core of EU-Arab Cooperation on Gender Equality

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Introduction

Despite the joint efforts and several years of collaboration between Arab countries and the European Union on gender equality promotion, sustainability remains a blind spot in programme planning and implementation. Often, the short-term gains and fruitful achievements of this bilateral cooperation, that translates in women empowerment and improved involvement in the socio-economic sphere, are followed by a noticeable decline once the donor funding ends. This pattern unveils deeper and more subtle issues and structural weaknesses in how both the EU and the Arab region approach gender cooperation, especially in relation to how different actors work together to ensure long-term funding, institutional mainstreaming, and local ownership.

This research employs the EU-funded “Moussawat” programme in Tunisia as a key example to examine the sustainability criterion of gender cooperation between the two regions. It complements it with some of the prominent findings and comparative insights from similar initiatives in Egypt and Jordan to identify recurring patterns and common bottlenecks in an attempt to offer improved approaches to build and guarantee more durable and systemic shifts in gender equality initiatives.

In this context, this policy paper sheds light on the main sustainability, institutional, financial, political, and social dimensions; as outlined by OECD-DAC standards. It examines the potential mismatch between regional priorities



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and local realities, depicting how donor projects often fail to embed themselves into the local contexts or national systems. Subsequently, this research attempts to offer some key lessons learned, mainly from the Tunisia's experience, with bilateral initiatives such as "Moussawat" and "Parfait". Finally, the paper presents some policy implications intended to help EU and Arab stakeholders, from state and non-state sectors, build long-term programmes that are more rooted in local contexts, moving from punctual and short-term results to lasting and sustainable impact for women in both regions.

Addressing the Sustainability Gap in EU-Arab Gender Cooperation

While cooperation between the EU and Arab countries on gender equality has yielded substantial short-term gains, the lack of a long-term sustainability framework continues to undermine its effectiveness and palpable impact. By dint of elaboration, many EU-funded programmes focus on short-term results such as training programmes, capacity building, and job creation, yet often fail to establish structural mechanisms that can guarantee and ensure long-term impact.

Employing the OECD - DAC Evaluation Framework, this policy paper examines the weaknesses and blind spots of the European Union's gender equality approach in the ASWAT¹ region, focusing on Tunisia's "Moussawat" Programme as a case study and first-hand data from other Arab countries like Egypt and Jordan. It offers implications and insights with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of future gender collaboration actions beyond the lifespan of any given project or programme.

This paper contends that EU gender equality partnership with the ASWAT region should shift strategically, from projects-based to institutionally embedded and policy-driven. Research on EU gender policy diffusion in the ASWAT region provides evidence that institutionally mainstreaming gender initiatives translates to higher rates of success². The paper also argues that by incorporating sustainability into gender programmes from the outset and by adopting a context-sensitive approach that integrates local dynamics and specificities into programme strategies, the EU and Arab partners can establish gender partnership as a long-term, locally-led initiative that survives donor funding cycles.

Understanding the various dimensions of the sustainability criterion and its relevance for EU-Arab Gender Cooperation

The OECD defines sustainability as the ability to "sustain gains beyond donor funding horizons", so that development work continues to be effective even if donor funding is cut off. Seen from this angle, sustainability should not only be an evaluation criterion but should be a guiding principle that is embedded in programme design, delivery, and long-term policy systems³. Without a formal sustainability framework, gender equity initiatives in the ASWAT region cannot have lasting effects, and they quickly return to "pre-intervention phases" as soon as donor funding is halted⁴.

One of the key dimensions of gender programme sustainability is institutional mainstreaming, or the embedding of gender policies in national, legal, and policy frameworks⁵. To be successful, gender equality initiatives should aim to "graduate from stand-alone projects" and become embedded in government systems, so they are sustained through political change⁶. Institutional sustainability is attained through policy coherence, legislative support, and government

¹ ASWAT is an acronym we have developed for Africa, South-West Asia, and Türkiye. We deliberately chose this acronym for its powerful symbolic nature: "Aswat" (أصوات) is the Arabic word for "voices." This makes it the perfectly suited new title for our department at ALDA (replacing our old title, MEA), as it reflects our deep commitment to providing a platform for the voices of local communities, civil society, and change agents. Through the ASWAT department, we aim to facilitate inclusive dialogue, enhance democratic engagement, and ensure the rich voices of the area are not only heard but also valued. In this paper, I will deliberately replace terms like MENA/MEA with ASWAT to support this mission-driven perspective.

² Cebeci, Münevver. *European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered: Constructing an 'Ideal Power Europe' through Theory?* *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012): 563–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829812442235>

³ OECD. *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>.

⁴ Isabelle Engeli and Amy G. Mazur, "Taking Implementation Seriously in Assessing Success: The Politics of Gender Equality Policy," *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1, no. 1–2 (July 2018): 111–29. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510818X15282097548558>.

⁵ Sara Canali, "The Thin Veil of Change: The EU's Promotion of Gender Equality in Egypt and Tunisia," *EU Diplomacy Paper* 02/2018 (2018).

⁶ Münevver Cebeci, "European Foreign Policy Research Reconsidered: Constructing an 'Ideal Power Europe' through Theory?" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012): 563–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829812442235>.



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commitment. However, the main challenge to achieving institutional mainstreaming is that most EU-funded gender initiatives in the ASWAT region are susceptible to political instability and “shifting government priorities”⁷.

Financial sustainability is just as important to ensure that gender programmes do not constantly depend on external funding but rather achieve domestic resource mobilisation and long-term investment strategies. Under OECD - DAC standards, development projects should have self-financing mechanisms that can sustain the projects without ad hoc donor funding. In EU-Arab relations, there is a long-standing issue with financial sustainability, as gender projects hardly have local financing, state budget allocations, or private sector involvement. Programmes lacking domestic resource mobilisation, namely the inclusion of gender financing in national budgets, risk being “reduced to short-term initiatives” with minimal lasting impact⁸.

Furthermore, political sustainability is another key dimension to consider in the ASWAT region. By means of elaboration, EU-funded gender projects in the region are usually exposed to policy discontinuity due to political leadership change, policy priorities, or regional instability⁹. To be sustainable, gender programmes must be grounded in national political systems and receive political institution commitments to ensure that reforms are not only donor-driven but also “championed by domestic stakeholders” with an interest in long-term gender equity¹⁰. Without alignment, gender policies can be easily reversed or de-prioritised by new governments, again contributing further to the instability of donor-driven reforms.

The fourth dimension is social sustainability which focuses on cultural legitimacy and local ownership in gender cooperation initiatives. EU gender initiatives in the Arab region are usually confronted by cultural scepticism and resistance, particularly if they are perceived as imposed systems that do not align with local values, specificities, and practices¹¹. Locally-led approaches must be employed by sustainable gender equality initiatives to ensure that initiatives are accepted by local communities and grounded in cultural contexts. Evidence from EU-Arab cooperation on gender-related development projects indicates that gender initiatives led by local civil society organisations and community leaders tend to be more sustainable compared to donor-driven, top-down initiatives. Failure to engage grassroots and culturally-sensitive policy responses has been a major blind spot and a key factor in undermining the efficacy of most donor-backed gender initiatives in the region.

In this light, sustainability must be the basis of EU-Arab gender partnership if gender programmes are to have a long-term vision that is based on institutional, economic, political, and social sustainability and not just on short-term outputs. This paradigm shift requires gender initiatives to be deeply embedded in governance systems, financially sustainable, politically secure, and socially endorsed¹². Otherwise, gender equality initiatives in the region will remain weak, donor-dependent, and ultimately have limited potential to bring transformative and lasting change.

Matching Principles and Priorities with Local Needs: Overcoming Contextual Discrepancies in EU-Arab Gender Cooperation

Despite decades of EU involvement in gender projects across the Arab world, projects struggle to have a lasting impact due to a gap between donor priorities and local, political, and social realities. There is an emerging literature that identifies how gender projects fail to convert donor values into locally relevant and sustainable initiatives. This is particularly so in EU projects that focus on diffusing policy in the short term without supporting deeper institutionalisation in national political and legal systems. Gender projects are mostly perceived as “imposed from outside” rather than led domestically, and consequently, local stakeholders become resistant to them¹³. Lack of national ownership is most typically found to result in policy reversals, particularly in fragile states where gender reforms are politicised and contested at the domestic level.

⁷ Stefania Bianchini, *The EU's Promotion of Gender Equality in Egypt: Towards a New Strategy?* E-International Relations, 2016.

⁸ Yasmine Falfoul, *EU Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Rights Promotion in Tunisia after the Arab Spring: Examining Principles, Practices, and Prospects via the Assessment of the EU-funded "Moussawat" Programme* (Master's thesis, College of Europe, 2022).

⁹ Stefania Bianchini, *The EU's Promotion of Gender Equality in Egypt: Towards a New Strategy?* E-International Relations, 2016.

¹⁰ Joanna Modrzejewska, "The Need for Dialogue between the European Union and the Arab League," *The Review of European Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2020): 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.51149/ROEA.1.2020.6>.

¹¹ Zeynep Kaya, *Feminist Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2020).

¹² OECD, *DAC Recommendation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance* (Paris, 2024), <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5022>.

¹³ Canali, op. cit.



One of the biggest challenges to sustainability is the financial dependence that is common to most EU gender initiatives in the Arab world. While donor projects may have commendable progress in the short term, their reliance on external funding usually translates to stagnation when funding is cut. The EU's approach to gender cooperation in the Arab region has been extensively focalised on measurable outputs and punctual results like offering training opportunities and funding capacity-building actions rather than establishing long-term funding mechanisms to make interventions financially sustainable regardless of the funding cycle.

One other major issue is the mismatch between EU policy transfer strategies and local systems of governance. EU gender equality initiatives assume that EU gender norms and universal policy designs could be directly transferred to other Arab states. However, research shows that most initiatives do not account for local norms of Arab countries that are rooted in specific legal, domestic, and religious factors that affect the incorporation of gender policies in the region. This “blind spot” translates into social backlash, as policies that are not grounded in local realities struggle to gain legitimacy and grassroots support¹⁴. Even though Tunisia, for instance, has been generally more welcoming to gender-progressive policies, other countries like Egypt and Jordan have encountered cultural and institutional resistance, which has rendered EU-supported gender reforms less enduring and sustainable. This reiterates the need to move away from the one size fits all approach when navigating these local gender equality needs in the Arab region.

Furthermore, deeply ingrained labour market disparities present another significant hindrance to sustainability. EU-funded gender initiatives are primarily entrepreneurship and labour market-oriented but do not sufficiently address the economic and legal barriers to full labour market integration by women. Economic empowerment programmes, for example, focus on short-term vocational training without addressing deeper structural issues, such as discriminatory labour law, poor childcare facilities, or restrictions on credit to women-owned businesses¹⁵. Consequently, these programmes have a minimal long-term impact once the initial phase is over.

The local civil society is an under-leveraged resource in EU gender initiatives. International development institutions get priority in funding systems, while local women's organisations are left out, despite the fact that there is proof that locally led initiatives have higher chances of succeeding and achieving more sustainable results¹⁶. EU-Arab partnership studies have concluded that gender programme sustainability is best attained when feminist movements in countries lead advocacy and policy application. By not involving local expertise and inputs, gender initiatives are more prone to being perceived as externally driven rather than locally-led reforms. As such, the long-term sustainability of EU-Arab gender partnership is ultimately based on reconciling donor-driven policy with local realities¹⁷. Unless EU gender initiatives break out of the cycle of short-term projects and adopt a more context-specific strategy, one that gives priority to institutional alignment, budget sustainability, and inclusive, bottom-up delivery models, they will remain vulnerable to political volatility, budget uncertainty, and cultural backlash and risk even aggravating existing inequalities and producing the opposite effect.

Beyond the Blueprint: EU-Tunisia Cooperation through the "Moussawat" Programme: Lessons Learned

The EU-funded “Moussawat” Programme, which was aimed at advancing gender equality in Tunisia, is a model and a cautionary example about the sustainability challenges in international cooperation programmes. With an initial budget of €7 million from the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the programme was aimed at addressing gender inequalities in six target areas in Tunisia. While “Moussawat” achieved successes in areas such as increased women's political engagement, economic involvement, and legal protection against discrimination, long-term sustainability was undermined by structural, financial, and political hurdles¹⁸.

A central component of the “Moussawat” Programme was the “Parfait” project, whose objective was mainstreaming gender in government in Tunisia. “Parfait” evaluations indicated that, while there was early progress, sustainability was a key shortcoming. While over 200 local stakeholders were trained in gender-responsive governance, “fewer

¹⁴ Bianchini, op. cit.

¹⁵ Bichara Khader, *The European Union and the Arab World: From the Rome Treaty to the Arab Spring* (University of Malta, 2013).

¹⁶ Rym Ayadi and Carlo Sessa, *Scenarios Assessment and Transitions Towards a Sustainable Euro-Mediterranean in 2030*, MedPro Policy Paper (2013).

¹⁷ Larbi Sadiki and Layla Saleh, *On EU-Arab Democratisation: Towards a Democratic “Learning Loop”*, in *Routledge Handbook of EU–Middle East Relations*, ed. Dimitris Bouris, Daniela Huber, and Michelle Pace (London: Routledge, 2021), 130.

¹⁸ Falfoul, op. cit., 47.



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than 1% held leadership positions after the programme ended” because there was insufficient systematic institutional support¹⁹.

The “Parfait” final assessment report indicated that although 29 women from the training cycles ran in municipal elections in 2018, just 9 were elected, and their tenure in government was fragile as there were inadequate mechanisms for follow-up²⁰. This demonstrates that although the programme enhanced women's presence in local government, it did not have sufficient long-term retention mechanisms, making it vulnerable to political and social changes.

Moreover, interviews conducted in the framework of the “Moussawat” assessment also illustrated that EU funding reliance made institutions vulnerable once donor funding was withdrawn, in contrast with EU assumptions that “national stakeholders would take over long-term implementation”²¹. Grassroots organisations complained that, despite the EU's stated priority for sustainability, there were no formal financial mechanisms in place that would enable continuation of the programme. Core services implemented through “Moussawat”, such as gender-based violence survivor shelters, were also shut down for lack of financial sustainability. One interviewee from our previous research described “Moussawat” as having created “false hope among desperate people,” as many vulnerable women expected long-term change but experienced the gradual withdrawal of the programme once donor funding was withdrawn²².

Sustainability in this respect embodies the ‘Achilles’ Heel’ of EU-Arab Gender Cooperation: the failure to transition from donor-dependent projects to self-sustaining policy institutions²³. Hence, the 3Ps Concept, Principles, Practices, and Prospects²⁴ serves as a useful framework for exploring the reasons for such gaps and how they can be bridged. While the EU gender equality principles are progressive and well-intended, they often do not translate well into context-specific, locally owned practices. As a result, the long-term prospects for such reforms become uncertain, as gender policies lack the institutional and financial mechanisms that would enable them to survive EU funding cycles, and this has been the case with our case study.

By the same token, a “Parfait” focus group interview established that women completing training did not possess clear mechanisms for continued leadership involvement, and most reverted back to pre-programme status after two years due to funding discontinuities and political instability.

All this evidence further reiterate that these challenges necessitate a strategic response where sustainability is put at the centre of cooperation strategies and vision for women empowerment and gender equality in the region.

Key Takeaways from Tunisia's experience with the “Moussawat” programme:

The Tunisian experience with the “Moussawat” programme offers key insights into the gaps and bottlenecks that are hindering sustainability in EU-Arab cooperation on the gender dossier. A key lesson is that institutionalisation is essential for ensuring continuity. While “Moussawat” assisted in ensuring the enactment of progressive gender policies, such as gender-based violence prevention and socio-economic empowerment policies, their execution was flawed due to the lack of political will from the local government and the shifting political priorities. In this regard, future cooperation programmes should make legal integration a precondition for financing and cooperation to prevent reversals in policies.

Local ownership and community involvement are equally vital. Gender programmes function most effectively when government institutions and local civil society organisations work hand in hand and when they become actively involved in design and implementation phases. The most effective results in Tunisia were reported in the areas that were jointly led by local actors, demonstrating that imposed outside structures bear little long-term impact. In EU-

¹⁹ Euresna S.p.A., *Évaluation finale du projet PARFAIT* (2020).

²⁰ Euresna, *Évaluation finale*, op. cit.

²¹ *Annexe IV – Rapport Narratif Final du projet PARFAIT*, ALDA – Association des Agences de la Démocratie Locale, 2020, 15.

²² Falfoul, Ibid.

²³ Daniela Huber, Asma Nouira, and Maria Cristina Paciello, *The Mediterranean: A Space of Division, Disparity and Separation*, MEDRESET Policy Papers No. 3 (European Union's Horizon 2020 Programme for Research and Innovation, November 2018).

²⁴ We designated this conceptual framework in our previous MT in order to achieve the aims of our study by specifying the connection between the Gender principles promoted by the EU, the actual Practice that was implemented in order to advance women's rights in Tunisia, and the long-term prospects for these actions and practices.



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Arab relations, in order for more sustainable approaches to be supported, community-based models that incorporate local institutions from the onset must be the focus²⁵.

Another critical takeaway is the need for sustainable financial solutions that go beyond donor reliance in the short term. Future programmes like “Moussawat” should look for alternative funding instruments, such as co-financing with local governments, private sector alliances, and long-term EU budgetary allocations in place of short-term grants. The “Parfait” assessment revealed that when EU funding was halted, local governments lacked the financial tools in place to sustain gender-related programmes, demonstrating the need for planned financial transition that should normally be discussed and designed before starting the implementation process.

In addition, long-term monitoring and evaluation are essential to deliver long-term impact once the initial funding phase is over. A criticism against the “Moussawat” Programme was that there were no tools for post-project assessment, so long-term progress was difficult to measure. While the OECD assessment framework does incorporate sustainability as a primary indicator, most EU-funded gender programmes do not have long-term follow-up tools to fully comply with this criterion. In this regard, mandatory post-programme evaluations with a minimum duration of five years would provide policymakers and stakeholders with critical information regarding the level of success of programmes implemented, allowing them to refine gender programmes and make changes according to shifting socio-political contexts²⁶.

Based on these findings, subsequent EU-Arab gender initiatives must be built around four pillars: institutional integration, local ownership, financial sustainability, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusions

Sustainability remains a major blind spot in programme design and implementation despite decades of cooperation on the gender dossier between the EU and Arab regions. Key studies of EU-Arab relations focus attention on pithy findings of the basic difficulties of such donor-driven gender agenda items, identifying at least four barriers to sustainability. Various EU-funded programmes focus on punctual outputs (training sessions, capacity-building workshops, subgranting projects) instead of working towards a future vision and strategy for capitalisation and sustainability. The lack of long-term plans for financial sustainability limits the resilience of these interventions even further. The fact that gender initiatives are mostly implemented as stand-alone projects rather than being institutionally integrated into the national legal framework reduces its resilience to political transitions and may even produce counter effects and social frustration. Furthermore, despite ambitious goals of EU gender initiatives, they are often implemented with very limited involvement of local actors, leading to discrepancies between aspirations and local reality on the ground.

Key Implications: Rethinking EU-Arab Cooperation for Sustainable and Impactful Gender Equality Initiatives

The sustainability of gender equality cooperation between Arab states and the EU relies on a paradigm shift away from short-term interventions led by donors, toward policies that are deeply embedded and locally owned. The lessons learned from previous EU-funded programmes, including “Moussawat” and one of its projects, “Parfait”, highlight the importance of institutionalisation, financial independence, and local ownership, as well as long-term follow-up and monitoring, as key determinants of durable impact. Without such structural changes, there is very little guarantee that progress on gender equality will be immune from political upheaval, economic downturn, or implementation discontinuity.

Institutionalising Gender Reform: Moving from Ad Hoc Responses to Structural Solutions

An important lesson from past gender equality programmes is the need to embed gender reforms into national legal and governance structures. Gender policies cannot be externally imposed; they must be domestically institutionalised to weather any potential political transitions and instability. In its engagement with Tunisia, the EU has tended to favour short-term project-based involvement rather than long-term progressive incorporation of gender into law and

²⁵ Sinem Bal, “Clash of Norms: The Limits of EU’s Normative Power in Gender Equality,” *Marmara Üniversitesi Avrupa Topluluğu Enstitüsü Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 27, no. 1 (2019): 123–44, <https://doi.org/10.29228/mjes.27>.

²⁶ Gabriele Abels, “Policies within the EU Multi-Level System,” in *Instruments and Strategies of European Governance*, ed. Hubert Heinelt and Michèle Knodt, 1st ed. (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011).



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policy. In order to develop a sustainable approach, mechanisms must be put in place, such as the establishment of an EU-Arab Gender Sustainability Index, which would track longer-term adoption of policies across Arab states to ensure that gender reforms outlive cycles in funding. In addition, by conditioning EU financial assistance on the formal legal adoption of gender equality measures, governments would be implicitly encouraged to integrate these measures into national frameworks rather than treating them as donor-driven projects with externally imposed gender norms²⁷.

Financial Sustainability: Reducing Reliance on External Donors

A major obstacle to EU-Arab gender cooperation has been the extreme reliance on donor funding, where, without a renewal of external financial contributions, initiatives and actions often close or wither completely. In response, gender equality programmes need to evolve beyond short-term funding into long-term financing models, including co-financing with local governments, partnerships with the private sector, and allocations in national budgets. Furthermore, supporting women entrepreneurs through ongoing investment rather than one-off funding rounds can help promote gender-inclusive economic growth and avoid any potential reversals²⁸.

Long-Term Tracking: Keeping all Stakeholders Accountable and Emphasising the Shared Responsibility

Previous gender initiatives have generally not been systematically and effectively evaluated post-implementation, creating a problem in tracing long-term impact. Current EU-funded programmes are largely appreciated in terms of short-term deliverables instead of long-term transformation. To address this, the EU together with its counterparts in the Arab region should incorporate mandatory sustainability assessments at least five years after project completion, using gender-responsive impact measurement frameworks built by the OECD - DAC²⁹. Additionally, establishing EU-Arab Gender Monitoring & Evaluation Networks, in which local organisations take the lead, would ensure that gender equality initiatives are monitored through the lens of the communities they aim to serve.

Increasing Local Ownership of Gender Actions and Norms

Local ownership has a large impact on the long-term sustainability of gender programmes. Numerous EU-funded projects and programmes have faced allegations of being overly top-down, marginalising grassroots bodies and civil society actors. Hence, mobilising local women's organisations and active CSOs is key to building sustainable gender equality cooperation, ensuring those most affected by gender policies are leading the implementation process rather than being sole recipients or observants. Joint EU-Arab gender training centres could play an active role in facilitating knowledge transfer and building local expertise for gender policy implementation.

If EU-Arab gender equality cooperation is to evolve from short-term interventions to long-term policy frameworks, sustainability needs to be at its core, not an afterthought. Institutionalisation, financial independence, long-term monitoring, and local leadership are not merely suggestions but pillars for redefining the architecture of future gender programmes. The inclusion of women and girls via EU-Arab cooperation cannot be postponed for future progress and optimal conditions; it should become an embedded and resilient aspect of governance and society in both regions.

Only by prioritising systemic change and ensuring that investments in gender equality do not vanish with the conclusion of funding cycles can the EU and Arab states drive a sustainable transformation in social, economic, and political structures that successfully support women empowerment and gender equality promotion.

²⁷ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* (Brussels, 2020), accessed January 14, 2025, EUR-Lex - 52020DC0152 - EN - EUR-Lex.

²⁸ Falfoul, op. cit.

²⁹ Insights from our previous interview results from both state and non-state actors cooperating on "Moussawat" revealed that optimal timeframe for a successful sustainability-assessment would be 7 to 10 years post-implementation.



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El Hiwar project

El Hiwar III is an EU-funded project implemented by the College of Europe (Bruges, Belgium). It designs, organises and facilitates a series of activities with the aim of building capacity, contributing to information exchange and interactions between the EU and the LAS. These activities take various formats, such as policy dialogues, summer schools, training programmes, policy briefs, etc.

The League of Arab States is a central partner in the stabilisation of the region and the main institutional interlocutor with the Arab world. At the first EU-LAS summit in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt) on 24-25 February 2019, the leaders agreed to deepen Arab-European ties to enhance the stability, prosperity, and well-being of the two regions. Both sides agreed to boost cooperation towards security, conflict resolution and socio-economic development throughout the region. Leaders also reaffirmed the need to strengthen economic cooperation between the two regions to spur investment and sustainable growth. The summit in Egypt marked the start of a new dialogue between the EU and the LAS. Leaders committed to hold EU-LAS summits regularly.

This project is designed to reinforce the dialogue and cooperation with the League of Arab States.

El Hiwar III aims to contribute to the implementation of the EU-LAS Joint Work Programme on information and training, complementing the formal EU-LAS activities taking place outside of El Hiwar (e.g. Ministerial and PSC meetings, other political exchanges with EU-LAS counterparts, EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue).

Whenever relevant, El Hiwar III can provide inputs for the preparation of formal EU-LAS relations meetings (e.g. preparation of policy briefs) or for the implementation of decisions made during Ministerial meetings, summits, etc. Likewise, El Hiwar III can provide inputs in the framework of relevant multilateral events.

El Hiwar III also aims to contribute to enhancing the partnership between the EU and Arab countries by sharing knowledge and expertise to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Arab countries.

More information: coleurope.eu/elhiwar
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About the HiwarBrief

HiwarBrief: New Voices, New Ideas from the El Hiwar Summer School is a publication featuring policy briefs produced by participants of the Summer School on Euro-Arab Relations.

This initiative translates the knowledge gained during the Summer School into practical recommendations, contributing to ongoing Euro-Arab cooperation efforts.

Guided by Eduard Soler i Lecha, an El Hiwar expert, participants draft policy briefs on key issues explored during each edition of the programme. In 2024, these focused on women's empowerment in peace and security, conflict resolution, post-conflict governance, and economic empowerment, reflecting the urgent priority of increasing women's participation in peace-making efforts.

HiwarBrief fosters the exchange of ideas among emerging experts while strengthening the El Hiwar network, offering participants a channel to reach policymakers and advocate for impactful change.



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