

Free Press Unlimited is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and Brussels, Belgium. Our mission is to ensure that impartial news and information are available to people across the globe. We believe gender equality in and through the media is essential to achieve our long-term goal, for **journalists to function as change agents and to contribute to a diverse and professional media landscape**. Our [Gender Programme](#), aiming to support female journalists and the development of gender-inclusive media content, is implemented in 15 countries worldwide.

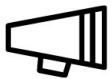


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## Achieving gender equality through the media & access to information

Free Press Unlimited recommendations on the  
EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025

March 2020



# 24%

This is the proportion of women heard, read about or seen in radio, newspaper and television news.

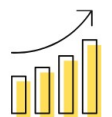
(Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015)



# 70%

of female journalists have experienced harassment, threats or attacks in the context of their work.

(International Women's Media Foundation, 2019)



# 73%

of management board positions in the media sector are held by men.

(International Women's Media Foundation, 2011)

### IN A NUTSHELL

- The GAP III should recognise and support the **role of online and offline media** in achieving gender equality, and the **right to access information** as a precondition for women's and girls' empowerment
- **Gender-based violence against female journalists, structural barriers to access information** and women's under-representation in **decision-making positions** in the media sector, must be addressed in EU external action
- Involvement of **women's rights organisations and networks of female journalists** throughout the lifespan of GAP III is key to ensure its implementation matches the on-the-ground needs

Free Press Unlimited strongly believes in the transformative role the media can play in achieving gender equality. By creating gender-sensitive content and breaking gender stereotypes. By challenging traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes. By showing women in leadership roles and as experts on a diversity of topics.

The Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) is the opportunity to make use of the EU global leverage to uphold the fundamental rights of women and girls in and through the media. To do so, it should address the **following priorities**:

### **Supporting the media and journalists in developing gender-sensitive content**

Women and girls remain largely invisible in media content and are frequently depicted [in stereotypical ways](#). News is presented largely through the perspective of men and the lack of female sources and experts is alarming. **Supporting the creation of gender-sensitive online and offline media content is key to address stereotypes** as one of the root causes of gender inequalities.

### **Safety of female journalists**

Globally, the safety of female journalists is a serious concern in the field and in the workplace. Online harassment, sexist hate speech and sexual abuse are some of the [specific forms of violence](#) faced by female journalists, leading to self-censorship or leaving the profession. **Safety of female journalists must be made a priority, both at country level and in the media sector.**

### **Equal access to information for women and girls**

Fewer educational opportunities, higher rates of poverty, unequal care responsibilities and restricted access to information and communications technologies (ICT) are some of the [specific barriers](#) women and girls face to access information. These structural obstacles must be tackled, as **the right to information is crucial for self-determination and the full enjoyment of economic, social and political rights.**

### **Decision-making in the media sector**

Journalism remains a male-dominated area. Women in the newsrooms face higher rates of precarious work and have poorer career perspectives, especially when it comes to [decision-making positions](#). **Female journalists should be supported through leadership training, and the media sector should be encouraged to implement affirmative action policies.**

## **How can the GAP III promote access to information and support the media?**

- The GAP II priority on **shifting the EU institutional culture** should be renewed in the GAP III. Providing EU institutions and EU delegations with technical training and assistance on addressing gender stereotypes and on gender equality in the media should be continued.
- Safety of female journalists, as well as lifting structural barriers to equal access to information for women and girls, must be addressed in **EU human rights and political dialogues, multilateral and regional human rights fora, and human rights and democracy country strategies.**
- **Targeted actions on gender equality in and through the media** should be implemented, such as:
  - helping media and journalists in developing gender-transformative content and gender-sensitive reporting,
  - collecting data and developing tools monitoring women (under)representation in the news,
  - supporting women-led community-based media,
  - providing female journalists with online and physical safety training,
  - working with the media sector to develop affirmative action policies,
  - supporting female journalists in taking up leadership roles and strengthening their participation in the media sector.
- **Networks of female journalists, as well as women's rights and press freedom organisations** must be closely involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GAP III.
- The GAP III should be made coherent with the **programming of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.**

### **For more information**

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