

Assessment report by the Development Policy Committee: Development policy focusing on equality to be updated and promoted during the Finnish Presidency of the EU in autumn 2019

Finland should reform its development cooperation and development policy to be able to promote gender equality in developing countries more effectively than before. The Development Policy Committee, a body appointed by the Government, will publish its assessment report Finland's Development Policy in 2018: Moving from myth to reality. Setting an example in strengthening equality for women and girls in developing countries in Parliament on Wednesday 2 May.

The Committee considers that the overall picture of the current government term is inconsistent. The promotion of gender equality has been given the highest priority in development policy but, at the same time, funding for equality work has dropped by approximately 40% in connection with the unprecedented cuts in development cooperation appropriations.

The Development Policy Committee hopes that the Government would present a timeframe for raising the official development assistance to the UN's recommended level of 0.7% of GNI. In addition, a least 0.2% of GNI should be channelled to support the least developed countries.

"The significance of equality work should show in the targeting of funding. Therefore, Finland must commit to the objectives of the EU's Gender Action Plan. Equality must be either a significant element or the main objective in 85% of all new development programmes by 2020," the Committee outlines.

The Development Policy Committee considers that the Finnish value base, commitments to international agreements, and declaring women and girls as the new development policy priority of the Sipilä Government create expectations that Finland now should fulfil. This also involves commitment to the national implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). Finland should not fail to use the opportunity of becoming profiled as a promoter of sustainable development and equality during the EU Presidency in 2019.

The Development Policy Committee estimates that development policy professionals engaged in, for example, bilateral development cooperation, civil society organisations' activities, and work in the private sector, are competent and willing to address the matter. Finland is also active in the EU and in other international forums especially in matters promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

"This work should definitely be continued. Equality is a precondition for sustainable development, which Finland should stress in all of its activities. It is therefore justified that development cooperation and development policy be grounded on a stable foundation extending beyond one government term. The reforms should be started during this government term and included in the next government term's Government Report on Development Policy. Finland's EU Presidency would provide a natural opportunity to showcase the reforms."

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