

Beijing +25 policy brief: Area L - The girl child: exposure to stereotypes and violence



Introduction

In recent years, the EU has made several commitments towards the realisation of children's rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights states that children have the right to grow up in a secure, healthy, and the rights, equality and citizenship programme (2014 to 2020) aims to promote and finance activities that foster children's rights and protect them from harm and violence. While not consistently mainstreaming the girl child perspective, they do address areas of relevance to the human rights of girls.

Since 2013, the EU has developed several important policies with relevance to the health of girls. These relate to tackling obesity and promoting safe sexual relations. The EU action plan on childhood obesity (2014) highlighted gendered aspects of obesity and called for healthier environments and restrictions on marketing to children. The European Parliament's resolution on eliminating gender stereotypes (2013) called on the EU to develop awareness-raising measures to promote zero tolerance of degrading images of girls and women in the media. However, little action has been taken to promote positive body image among girls.

Some developments since 2013 have focused on violence against girls, such as female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking and cyber-violence. To protect girls at risk of FGM, the European Commission adopted the action plan 'Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation' (2015). The upcoming ratification of the Istanbul Convention on Area L may also help to overcome the lack of specific protection measures against FGM in many Member States. The EU Anti-trafficking Directive (2011/36/EU) established additional protection measures (including for children at risk of trafficking) with dedicated implementation and funding allocated to projects addressing child trafficking. However, children of mothers who are victims of trafficking are often overlooked in terms of their special needs and identification as secondary victims. Cyber-violence is emerging as an important policy challenge — for example, the risks related to gender-based online violence, including cyberbullying and cyberstalking, were highlighted in the recent Austrian presidency's recent conclusions on gender equality.



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