

RECLAIM

European Role Models



Resilient Women in Digital Space:
Feminist Foreign and Local Politics

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AMO.CZ



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HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN & FOREIGN POLICY



Introduction to the Project & Project Handbook

In 2023, there remains a significant journey ahead to achieve gender equality worldwide, including in Europe. Women continue to be inadequately represented in political decision-making, often highlighting the male-dominated landscape of politics, a sentiment echoed by many women who feel their trustworthiness is undervalued in the political sphere. This imbalance stems from various underlying factors, prompting the question: What would be the most effective approach to enhance this situation?

With the project "RECLAIM | European Role Models. Resilient Women in Digital Space: Feminist Foreign and Local Politics", we want to contribute to strengthening female voices in society and debates, encouraging women to participate in policy-making despite structural disadvantages. "RECLAIM" is aimed at female activists and local politicians from Europe, bringing together women from different countries to share their perspectives and learn together. Its goal is to raise awareness of gender inequalities, find ways to deal with them and empower each other.

Focusing on the digital space the project supports women by equipping them with the skills and experiences to make their voice heard! The project combines training sessions and best-case sharing on feminist European policy. It focuses on communication and leadership skills in order to participate effectively in political discourse and decision-making. Aspects of the program include tackling digital hate speech and strengthening skills to feel more confident on social media. Because despite all the challenges that women face on their way to equality, the following applies: No woman is ever alone. Because democratic processes need more than just one half of society.

The initial program implementation took place in 2023 with 32 participants from Germany, Greece, Czech Republic and Poland.

Project partners for the 2023 implementation are:

- Europäische Akademie Berlin (EAB), Germany
- Association for International Affairs (AMO), Czech Republic
- Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Greece
- Polish Robert Schuman Foundation, Poland

This handbook aims to provide a closer look at the structure and individual components of the project. Additionally, we aim to provide space for our partners, role models, and trainers to showcase their fields of work. For this purpose, we have asked them to answer a selection of questions - let yourself be inspired! Furthermore, our handbook features contributions from our participants, sharing insights, experiences, and creative products they have developed during the seminar.

We believe that cross-border collaboration in a project like RECLAIM is crucial to collectively address the challenges of our time. We also aim to encourage others to join us! The RECLAIM project will continue in 2024 and 2025, giving more women from different European countries the opportunity to participate.



Contributions of the Project Partners Europäische Akademie Berlin (EAB)

Why do you think projects and collaborations like RECLAIM are important? Which aspects of the project are especially relevant for your organisation and your field of work?

RECLAIM is a project aimed at raising awareness of gender inequalities and empowering women, both online and in physical spaces, to address and gradually diminish these disparities. Its ultimate goal is to create a world where the opinions of all genders hold equal value. Reclaim is a European initiative that targets not only women in Germany but also those in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Greece. This pan-European approach holds special importance for the European Academy Berlin. As an educational institution and a meeting place, we engage not only with the local community in Berlin and Germany, but also think and act on an international scale, particularly within Europe.

Similar to climate change, gender inequality transcends national borders and impacts women worldwide. Hence, the most effective approach becomes evident: projects like RECLAIM possess the potential to establish enduring connections among women, fostering a sustainable platform for sharing gender-specific experiences, identifying current opportunities for action, and addressing ongoing challenges. Gloria Steinem, a well-known American feminist, once said: "The women's movement was born when women started talking to each other." In essence, initiatives like RECLAIM hold significant importance as they cultivate spaces for mutual empowerment. Reclaim's objective extends beyond merely identifying problems, areas requiring action, and potential gender-specific solutions. Rather, these projects primarily showcase one crucial aspect: the creation of a safe space. Exiting this space leaves the participants with a distinct sensation: the assurance that they are not alone in combating gender inequality.

Why is a feminist approach to local and foreign policy critical to success?

The answer to this question is straightforward: it is not only unjust but also impossible in the long run to pursue a (foreign) policy that caters to only half of society. In order to understand this statement, we need to look at the term "feminism". Contrary to common misconception, feminism doesn't solely benefit women. On the contrary: alongside different marginalized groups, feminism also benefits men. The emergence of new role models grants everyone greater liberty to lead their lives authentically. Naturally, this shift also influences various political domains, including foreign policy.

Even today, characteristics that are considered "typically male" are often perceived as beneficial or necessary for foreign policy action. Apart from the fact that these gender attributions have long been outdated, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that demonstrating toughness and assertiveness has any positive impact in this domain. On the contrary, the question of whether attributes that are still considered "typically female" today (e.g. to be compassionate, in need of harmony) might offer more solution-oriented and sustainable approaches should be examined much more closely. Initial studies have initiated this exploration. For instance, the "Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325" analyzed 40 peace processes, revealing a significantly higher likelihood of reaching agreements when women wielded considerable influence in the negotiation process, in contrast to scenarios where women's groups had minimal or no influence. So, what if we started seeing this approach to foreign policy as a new opportunity for a more peaceful world?

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:



Reflect, but don't be too hard on yourself

It is important to question your own privileges, because women are not a homogeneous group either. Here, too, different prerequisites exist, and here, too, there are unequal opportunities. However, it's equally important not to be overly critical of yourself. No woman, anywhere in the world, embodies her (feminist) principles consistently and entirely. What matters most is continual

growth, allowing diverse perspectives to influence your own, and regular introspection: How can I, from my position, contribute to shaping a better world?

2

The second aspect builds upon the first: Think intersectionally

In addition to questioning privileges, it is also important to try to understand the other perspectives. This involves considering the perspectives of different social groups and acknowledging the experiences of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination. Almost every woman knows what discrimination feels like. However, comparatively few women experience what it feels like to be discriminated because of multiple attributes such as skin color, sexuality, disability or a combination of these. Start seeing these perspectives too! Actively include diverse groups and opinions! Listen, learn, and support one another.

3

Support one another and celebrate even small successes

As evident in the RECLAIM project, establishing your own support networks is crucial. This can be a group or individuals (including supportive men as allies). It could be someone willing to listen or someone actively advocating for a fairer world alongside you. Also: Creating this world will take time. It is a process that feminists around the world have been engaged in for decades. Patriarchy isn't dismantled overnight. Therefore: Celebrate even the small successes! While the focus often dwells on the bigger picture, each individual contribution adds a valuable piece to the puzzle.

Europäische Akademie Berlin e.V.

The European Academy Berlin is an interdisciplinary institution fostering international dialogue and civic education. Through a diverse range of programs and projects, the Academy actively contributes to shaping and advancing discourse on contemporary European affairs, aiming to bridge perspectives and cultivate informed dialogue.

www.eab-berlin.eu

The Association for International Affairs (AMO)

Why do you think projects and collaborations like RECLAIM are important? Which aspects of the project are especially relevant for your organisation and your field of work?

As Madeleine Albright said, there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women. In AMO, we recognize the importance of mutual support and place great emphasis on networking - and among others, our Network of Women active in the field of foreign, European, and security policy contributes to this goal.

Despite geographical differences, women in foreign policy encounter similar challenges. Observing how colleagues from other states and organizations navigate and overcome these challenges not only provides valuable insights but also fosters a sense of empowerment. Personal connections formed through these collaborations and meetings are equally crucial. Beyond professional benefits, these projects offer opportunities for creating friendship, sharing laughter, and a general sense of empowerment.

Given our foreign policy focus, building international connections is not just desirable but essential. RECLAIM provides a platform for foreign networking, enabling us to form connections that extend beyond borders. It is not only interesting and personally gratifying, but we will also gladly cooperate with the participants on other projects in the future. The exchange of best practices, shared experiences, and the cultivation of a supportive network contribute not only to personal growth but also to the effectiveness of our work in the field of foreign policy. Let's make the voice of active women heard.

Why is a feminist approach to local and foreign policy critical to success?

The absence of a feminist approach risks silencing the voices and life experiences of half the population. Without active measures to integrate diverse perspectives, policies may inadvertently neglect the needs and realities of women and

marginalized groups. It has also very practical implications - inclusive measures are not only fair, but also economically beneficial, and more resilient in the changing world. There is also a direct connection between gender equality and national security and a growing number of academic research shows that when women actively participate in economic, political, and social arenas, it paves the way for a richer and more peaceful world.

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Build Alliances

Establish and nurture a network of women in politics and activism within your country, but also across borders. Exchange experiences, strategies, and best practice to address common challenges - and also to support each other and keep motivated even during difficult days. Mutual support and inspiration are key.

2

Advocate for Inclusive Policies

Push for policies that promote gender equality both at local and international levels. Support initiatives that address gender inequalities within your community. Advocate for inclusive legislation that supports equal opportunities, representation, and protection against gender-based discrimination, and support the ratification of crucial agreements, such as the Istanbul Convention.

3

Local Empowerment and Education

Simultaneously, focus on community education to raise awareness about feminist foreign policy, building a more informed and supportive local constituency. Empower local women through targeted initiatives, ensuring they actively participate in decision-making processes. Strengthen grassroots movements to drive impactful change and advocate for gender-inclusive policies.

The Association for International Affairs (AMO)

The Association for International Affairs (AMO) is a Czech non-partisan NGO/think-tank dedicated to research and education in the field of international relations and Czech foreign policy since 1997. One of its strong priorities is support for higher representation of women in the foreign, European and security policy.

www.amo.cz

Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)

Why do you think projects and collaborations like RECLAIM are important? What aspects of the project are particularly relevant to your organization and field of work?

RECLAIM, as a multilayered project, is vital for amplifying the voices of women, particularly in spheres where they have been traditionally underrepresented or, even, marginalized. As the project emphasizes, democratic processes require active participation of all segments of society. Moreover, we are living in a crucial era, where digital platforms can both empower but also be instrumentalized for spreading misinformation and hate speech. Providing the right tools is, therefore, essential for political discourse and decision-making, but also crucial for building a confident presence in complex digital spaces.

Furthermore, RECLAIM has successfully brought people and ideas together in a safe and fruitful manner. The creation of a European support network is particularly valuable as it provides a foundation to facilitate the exchange of strategies and best practices across borders and among women with diverse backgrounds. ELIAMEP is the first research and policy institute in Greece to have developed and to be implementing a customized Gender Equality Plan. Its successful involvement in projects like GENDRHED and TARGET, which are focused on gender equality within higher education and research, demonstrates the strong commitment of raising awareness and practicing advocacy. Undoubtedly, RECLAIM broadens this scope by addressing gender inequalities in society and

political discourse. This complements ELIAMEP's work by extending its impact beyond the academic and research fields to the wider societal and political realms. Additionally, the Open European Dialogue (OED), which is cooperatively run by ELIAMEP, aims to enhance the inclusivity of European political discourse by connecting politicians from different countries and parties. In essence, collaborations like RECLAIM, can move hand in hand to achieve the goal of creating a more inclusive, diverse, and democratic European landscape, ensuring that all voices, especially those of women, are heard and valued.

How can European cooperation contribute to more equality in politics?

In most European countries, women and members of minorities are under-represented in political institutions in all levels of government. To be sure, some countries, those in Scandinavia in particular, have made great strides in promoting gender balance in politics. In most south European countries, on the other hand, women's presence among parliamentary representatives remains low, and their participation in local government structures is even lower.

European cooperation can contribute to more equality in politics in a number of ways. In the first place, EU equality law can serve as a powerful tool that governmental and civil society actors can leverage to raise awareness and to push for legal and policy change. Secondly, European cooperation can facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices across member states. For real social change to occur though, action on national-level is crucial. Above all, it requires action to raise awareness about the need for more equality within political parties, as well as to empower and motivate women and minorities to engage in politics.

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Politicians/Institutional safeguards

We have allowed traditional pro-gender balance tools, such as selection or election quotas, to be circumscribed and effectively by-passed. We need to emphasize the role and impact of women politicians in the political sphere and public

discourse in general. This requires awareness-raising activities addressed to the wider public but also to selected particular political audiences.

2

Activists/de-victimization

For a long time activists have concentrated on situations, where women are victims: femicide, family violence, etc. This emphasizes and reiterates the image of women as vulnerable, perennial victims and in essence alienates the vast majority, who would object forcefully to being identified as victims. We need to project a positive image of women, asserting the pivotal, indispensable roles women play in society, in the family and beyond the family.

3

Feminist foreign policy

We need gender-conscious policies that go beyond political correctness. There is already a UN policy on women, peace and security. It is a first step but we need to work towards a more comprehensive foreign policy, amply fueled by the increased presence of female diplomats and policy-makers in positions of power.

Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)

The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) is an independent, non-governmental, nonprofit think tank, established in Athens, Greece, in 1988. Its mission is to conduct policy-oriented research and provide policy makers, academia and the public at large with authoritative information, analysis, and policy recommendations, for the development of evidence-based responses to major European and foreign policy challenges.

www.eliamep.gr

The Polish Robert Schuman Foundation

Why do you think projects and collaborations like RECLAIM are important? Which aspects of the project are especially relevant for your organisation and your field of work?

The Foundation fosters citizens' engagement in a number of European affairs and facilitates making their voices heard by providing them with appropriate theoretical background. Furthermore, it supports them in their own initiatives and brings trans-European dimension to local initiatives. Transnational collaborations like in the RECLAIM project provide the very opportunity for facilitating intercultural learning and for gathering and discussing different opinions. As a result, such projects enable a wide group of citizens to learn more about European values, to develop a better understanding of the historical and social background of particular EU countries and its decision-making processes. It also brings participants together through joint activities and first-hand experience. Moreover, strengthening democratic competencies and attitudes is an extremely important task in times of polarization and increasing anti-democratic tendencies. Many of the recent Foundation's activities are dedicated to strengthening skills and capabilities of citizens, including youth, educators, CSOs workers at digital literacy, confronting arguments and knowing how and where to find reliable information. The identification and response to cyber-violence and hate speech, with a specific focus on gender perspectives, are issues we find extremely important.

How can European cooperation contribute to more equality in politics?

Not only women are generally underrepresented in political offices worldwide – and their underrepresentation becomes larger in more senior positions – but also their competencies are often being questioned whenever they try to seize the power. Possible change in such attitudes equires a multifaceted approach, including all aspects of social and professional life, both for men and women. As representatives of various EU countries we have different experiences and practices as well as opinions and ideas in such matters as education, pay gap, social and health security, gender quota, abortion law, political engagement etc.

and we should share it within transnational cooperation. As a result we are able to set up a strong network to strengthen our voice and our efforts referring to particular regulations or tools. This network facilitates engagement with decision makers, also at the EU level, ultimately enabling us to effect change through these channels."

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Don't act alone

Network, find allies, open up to groups and people in your local community who are involved in diverse areas and topics. Seize opportunities to participate in international projects. Keep in mind that you don't have to be visible and active from the beginning, start with observation, more casual conversations, don't be afraid of your level of English - you have the right to make mistakes, knowledge of a foreign language comes with time and practice.

2

React when your competence and knowledge are challenged

Request substantive reasoning, clarify whether facts or opinions are being presented. Don't be afraid of disagreement and discussion – it's the foundation of democracy.

3

Share your knowledge and experience

You are also perceived as a role model for girls and women in your community, as much as you can - join some grass-roots initiatives, support educational activities, check whether girls and women are sufficiently included in public life of your community.

The Polish Robert Schuman Foundation

The Polish Robert Schuman Foundation is a non-governmental, non-political organisation, founded in 1991. Its mission is to support civic participation, and to promote European integration and foster the values on which it is based by engaging citizens in discussions, formulating demands, contacting national and European institutions.

www.schuman.pl

Overview of Project Activities



In-Person Networking Local Events
Digital Products designed by Participants

The program is based on digital training sessions, which are combined with other activities. The digital trainings focus on three main topics: combating hate speech, communication strategies, and leadership skills.

Every digital event including the training sessions is joined by a role model from a different country giving a short talk on her field of work followed by a group discussion. This gives the participants the opportunity to learn more about communication challenges and strategies in different fields of work. In addition, they gain and discuss different perspectives on the issue of gender equality and build a network.

Furthermore in-person networking events take place in each participating country, aiming to connect the participants with their peers as well as politicians and activists in their region.

Based on the questions "What is your personal strategy to become more resilient and enhance female participation in local and foreign politics? What is your recommendation for other female politicians/activists?" the participants designed an individual digital project e.g. a communication campaign or strategy according to local needs. Thus they combined their insights and experiences from the program with the topics that are most relevant for them individually.

Being the Only Woman in the Room – Communication Strategies to Lead Confidently in Male-Dominated Meeting Situations

RECLAIM trainer: **Helene Banner**

As women in debates and policy-making, our powerful voices and unique perspectives need to be heard. However, we often tend to cushion our valuable contributions with words like „I am not an expert, but...“; „Sorry, I would just like to say that...“; „I hope I was clear enough...?“

Therefore, the workshop "Being the only woman in the room - communication strategies to lead confidently in male-dominated meeting situations" provided participants with communication strategies to speak with confidence even in intimidating, male-dominated rooms: how to take „more space" with our words and body language? How to avoid words and gestures that unconsciously make us „small"? How to speak with our feminine power, instead of trying to seem „tough" and „masculine"?

With her background in political communication and as a former spokesperson and speechwriter at the European Commission, Helene Banner gave participants concrete words, powerful mindset tools and public speaking strategies to help them feel confident in their own, natural way as female speakers.

Helene's message: Let us stop saying „sorry" and start feeling safe with our own, feminine power and voice. Let us remember how important and unique our contribution as women is in any political debate - and how much we are giving more women the permission to speak up as well, just by being authentic in our message. We can do this, ladies!

How can we overcome the bottleneck in gender equality in politics?

We need to stop trying to “fix” women. And start fixing power culture.

The infamous “glass ceiling” cannot be broken by women alone: it needs to be opened up “from above” - by those leaders who are currently in power. The responsibility for “diversity” needs to be taken up by the top leaders, instead of delegating it to HR departments and diversity officers.

To achieve more diversity, we need to support men as well.

It's not enough to say “Now, it's the women's turn” and to expect male managers to simply step aside in their careers. True change will only be possible if we have those on board who are currently in the majority in leadership positions: men. If men get rewarded and supported in their careers for diversity management skills, then the shift will become possible.

Your two main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Trust that there is someone in the room who needs to hear “it” from you

From somebody who looks like you, who speaks like you, who is as authentic and feminine as you. We sometimes have no idea how much we empower another person just by speaking out.

2

Trust in your feminine leadership strengths

Your empathy, your emotional intelligence and your kindness are not “soft skills”: they are hardcore leadership strengths that are much needed to re-balance our society and our economy.

Helene Banner

Keynote speaker, workshop host, mentor

www.helenebanner.com

Germany

Equal Participation, Human Rights and Elections: About Women in Politics

RECLAIM role model: Katerina Charokopou

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), as the independent advisory body to the State on matters pertaining to human rights promotion and protection, and in the framework of its broad mandate covering the whole range of human rights pays particular attention to gender equality issues. Following the GNCHR's constant recommendations to the state, a key factor to address gender discrimination at its root, including cultural and social norms that perpetuate sexist attitudes and behaviors, is to promote equal representation of women in public and political life. Despite the increasing percentage of elected women in Greece but also in Europe, still the proportion of women in parliaments and local governments is very low compared to men.

Deeply concerned about the Greece's score in the EU Gender Equality Index, especially about the issue of women's under-representation in leadership positions in both public and private sector, the GNCHR decided to organize a campaign for the equal representation of women in political life on the occasion of the national and local elections. To this end, the GNCHR prepared a television and radio spot in order to remind everyone to vote for equally able female and male candidates regardless of gender stereotypes and biases, inviting all to "Decide Equally - Vote Equally". The spot was successfully broadcast on television (public and private) and radio during the pre-election period.

The GNCHR calls upon the competent state authorities and the relevant stakeholders to take all appropriate measures with a view to enabling women to balance decision-making roles and family responsibilities. Therefore, it is important that awareness-raising actions and gender-focused training are prioritized to create more inclusive and equitable environments.

Why is a feminist approach to local and foreign policy critical to success?

Support of women's organizations, CSOs and women human rights defenders who are operating in the field of gender equality is a key factor towards the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. Consulting with and engaging diverse groups of women and girls and other marginalized and affected groups in policy discussions and dialogue is the appropriate and smart way to combat discriminations, but also to reduce inequality and poverty and build prosperity.

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Promotion of information and awareness raising

aimed at combating gender stereotypes and prejudice against women as well as removing sexist and racist speech in public through the use of media. Spots that highlight the importance of women in positions of power, as a key channel for changing attitudes, can be a useful and effective tool to this end. Further educational actions and training of girls and women in leadership roles and additional supporting measures, along with monitoring and assessment of their essential implementation, are also necessary.

2

Support of women's organizations, CSOs and women human rights defenders

who are operating in the field of gender equality with emphasis on those working with vulnerable groups of women, such as refugee and immigrant women, disabled women, Roma women, poor women, LGBTIQ+ people, who are victims of multi-discriminations – "No one left behind"

3

Support women's leadership

through capacity building and promotion of concrete commitments and actions, with particular emphasis on achieving sustainable and lasting peace and security. Empowerment of women executives of public bodies in matters related to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. These actions should also be promoted through development programs and engagement with the EU Institutions in the framework of the Agenda of Women, Peace and Security. Actions

regarding the need for gender-balanced participation and representation in public life, combating gender stereotypes and public sexist and racist speech. In this light, the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) can contribute to the engagement, empowerment, protection and support of women and girls to achieve sustainable and lasting peace and security.

Katerina Charokopou

PhD Legal Officer

Greek National Commission for Human Right

Greece

Women in Foreign Services

RECLAIM role model: Kateřina Kočí

The issue of equal opportunities is generally given quite a lot of professional attention, but the issue of equal opportunities in the foreign Service or diplomacy is neglected. At the international level, we can find only a few publications that deal in depth with issues of equal opportunities in the foreign service or diplomacy, but their number has been slowly raising (e.g., Aggestam and Towns 2017, Towns and Niklasson 2017). In addition, studies of individual cases, such as Equal Opportunities in Slovenian, Turkish or Swedish Diplomacy, have been recently published. Our project primarily concentrated on the situation in the Czech foreign services, as the number of women at the top level has been very low. The Czech Republic has only 15 % of women ambassadors. The research project was based on interviews with diplomats and a questionnaire survey of the opinions of employees of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This study pointed out the specifics of foreign service that related to equal opportunities, especially the influence of the traditional patriarchal perception of the role of women in the family and in society, problems with placing children in schools, and the problematic situation of spouses.

Two research reports (2015 and 2016) were published and presented to the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among other aspects, they introduced examples of best practices from 12 selected European countries which enabled

us to formulate proposals for measures to update the regulations and procedures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to sustainably use the capacities of male and female employees. Some of them were finally accepted by the ministry. The agenda was also later introduced in the format of several research articles published between the years 2020-2023.

How can we overcome the bottleneck that exists in gender equality in politics?

In recent years, several countries have slowly started to adopt a number of documents to support women's rights in politics and also in foreign policy, but it will now depend on how they will be put into practice and thus support women and families as a necessity of modern politics as well as diplomacy. The institutional provision is often sufficient, but in order to fulfil the internal and external dimension of the governments' gender equality strategy, the countries must use the relevant programmes (including the EU operational programmes) and thus strengthen the capacities for coordination and raising awareness of gender issues at their internal and external bodies.

Still insufficient support for reconciling family and work life, inequalities in the legal regulation of service at home and abroad, and insufficient mechanisms for dealing with discrimination in the workplace lead to insufficient use of the potential of female diplomats and an overall worse effectiveness of the institutions. The Ministries must also project the commitments of the international agendas (such as Women, Peace and Security) into specific agendas such as arms exports or other projects and generally include women's rights in the political dialogue with partners.

Your three main recommendations for women in foreign policy, but maybe used in any local institution as well:



Persuade the institutions that it is important to keep gender-relevant statistics,

some of the data could also be published regularly (e.g., with an annual interval) to employees/women on the Ministries' intranet. These data will enable you to explain and put a pressure on the decision-makers.

2

Persuade the institutions to prepare and implement a mentoring program

for junior diplomats and politicians, to select suitable mentors and to reward them appropriately for their activity. These mentors may even be from different fields which enable the diplomats or the politicians to explore new perceptions and patterns. Introduce a career advisor or coach with whom employees could consult questions about their career growth regularly or on an ad hoc basis.

3

Clarify with the institutions what forms of flexible work are available

in specific positions. The use of flexible forms of work should be considered not only in the private sector, but more and more also in the public sector. This includes, for example, the possibility of more frequent use of flexible working hours with a choice of the beginning and end of working hours (so-called sliding working hours), or the introduction of a short and a long week (according to overtime worked). The institutions should also consider supporting work from home in those positions that allow it.

Kateřina Kočí

Assistant professor

Prague University of Economics and Business

Czech Republic

Violence Against Women in Politics: Research Insights and Perspectives

RECLAIM role model: Aleksandra Niżyńska

Violence against women in politics (VAWIP) is placed in the intersection of gender-based violence, barriers against women's political participation and brutality of the political game. Various forms of violence perpetrated against women holding elected public offices, running for an office or being active politically in a public sphere. At the psychological level VAWIP is often manifested

by sexist comments; harassment or threats and mobbing. Physical VAWIP means abuse of or threats to physical integrity. It can also happen in a form of unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours, rape or other violent acts against the sexual integrity ex. putting hands on the knee, which is considered sexual violence.

Economic forms of violence against women in politics are represented by destroying political office space, destroying private property or inequality in access to party funding. In the symbolic sphere VAWIP may be exemplified as forced voting against woman's will regarding issues connected to female integrity ex. Rape persecutions; sexual health and reproductive right. Factors reinforcing VAWIP include lack of women in decision-making bodies within the political parties and beyond; acceptance of sexist culture and behaviour in the political sphere; lack of awareness about the existing mechanisms of persecuting the perpetrators and brutalization of public life, especially in social media. Therefore efforts towards monitoring and measuring the level of VAWIP shall be accelerated as well as raising awareness among party leaders and changing gender norms of intra-party democracy.

How can we overcome the bottleneck that exists in gender equality in politics?

Research shows that institutional measures, such as gender quotas work and allow the political scene to adapt to rapidly changing gender norms. Without legal requirements political parties will not make enough efforts to support female leaders in their own ranks. Introduction of gender quotas to Polish Electoral Code in 2011 has had an important influence on the presence of women in the electoral process, but also on the seriousness of the debate on women's issues during the electoral campaign. However, imposing legal requirements shall be accompanied with capacity building activities of women within political parties and providing them with necessary resources in order to bring desired results and having more women in the political sphere at the decision-making tables.

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Give yourself time and space to find your path

You can explore different activities in the non-governmental sector; public administration, business entities, international organizations and enrich your experience which will later pay off in your endeavours as a politician, activist or feminist policymaker.

2

Benefit from male allies wisely

Identify true allies and be open to their support, yet always ensure that the credit for the work you did goes to you!

3

Build networks

Spreading information and activities between several people with the same goal and aim, will definitely help you achieve your objectives in a more efficient way. Being part of a network of female politicians, gender activists or feminist policymakers can also provide you with support and care, especially when approaching burn out, which is not uncommon among women active in public sphere.

Aleksandra Niżyńska

Partner at Gender Solution, lawyer, sociologist
Poland

Ready for Equal Participation of Women and Men in Politics?

RECLAIM role model: Veronika Šprincová

My primary motivation for promoting gender equality in politics lies in the opportunity to offer support to women politicians. In the events we organize—whether it be workshops, mentoring meetings, or networking sessions—a consistently pleasant atmosphere prevails. It is truly an honor to

create a safe space for women politicians to share their experiences and inspire one another. The sense of satisfaction is immeasurable when one of the women we have supported is successfully elected, and it's even more rewarding when she reaches out to express her gratitude.

Regrettably, empowering women alone is not sufficient to bridge the existing gender gap. In the annual Global Gender Gap Report issued by the World Economic Forum, Czechia has dropped from the 76th to the 101st rank, primarily due to the low level of political empowerment of women. Despite having a well-crafted Government Strategy for the Equality of Women and Men for 2021–2030, Czechia seems to lack the political will and interest required to implement the proposed measures effectively.

On a more hopeful note, we observe gradual changes taking place. Younger generations tend to be more attuned to this issue, and young women are no longer content to linger in the shadows. Younger politicians are increasingly inclined to reshape and redefine the political landscape. I believe that the current state of affairs is unsustainable, and positive change might be closer than we can imagine. I extend my best wishes to all women politicians, hoping they find the energy and strength to pursue this transformative change.

How can we overcome the bottleneck that exists in gender equality in politics?

To overcome the gender imbalance in politics, a comprehensive approach is essential. This involves implementing gender-sensitive policies and legislation that encourage women's participation. Additionally, it's crucial to raise awareness and address societal biases through education and campaigns. Empowering women to confidently enter and engage in politics through mentoring and training programs is also vital. It's equally important for political parties and institutions to make a firm commitment to gender parity, consistently collect data on gender disparities, and actively support women's leadership. Collaboration, ongoing advocacy for robust policies promoting gender balance in politics, and unwavering commitment are key to dismantling the barriers to gender equality in politics.

Your three main recommendations for female local politicians, activists, feminist foreign policy:

1

Don't allow yourself to be pushed aside

You are not alone; the obstacles you're facing are not your fault, and you possess the capabilities to thrive.

2

Don't hesitate to seek assistance

Nobody is flawless, and women often have to work harder and excel to succeed in politics.

3

Your experiences are your competence

To succeed in politics, regardless of your age, gender or skin colour.

Veronika Šprincová

Executive Director Forum 50 %

Czech Republic



Our Participants

Personal Insights from the Project &
Individual Digital Products

Theresa Becher

Honestly, I am angry. Angry with the system. I feel like there is no way to do this right. Do they want us to be perfect in everything? But I am trying. More than that, I am trying to embrace. I find inspiration in the people that came before and that will come after us. I am not too emotional. And I will keep on demanding. To doing it our way.

Katerina Botova



Lara Brett

During the RECLAIM workshops, I've been awed by people's openness about revealing difficult experiences, comforted by the fact that I'm not alone but also frustrated and saddened by the scale of the misogyny that we face. Every day, I am exposed to the fact that some men don't take women seriously: whether it's seeing someone shouting over others, listening to friends struggle to get secure jobs despite their extensive work experience or reading about the abuse targeted towards campaigners who are simply doing their jobs, there is ample reason for pessimism.

Something is broken.

Women are already setting forth numerous solutions to such issues. We need men to come on board and help us implement them.

People of all genders need to take others seriously when they say there's a problem. Lack of solidarity isolates people. It makes them reluctant to come into work and makes them feel like their experiences doesn't matter. Building solidarity helps women to build resilience, giving us strength to continue, whether that be navigating office politics or fighting for our rights on the local and global stages.

There is strength in sharing.

Romana Jungwirth Březovská



Do not ~~them~~ ~~their~~
“Let ~~me~~ interrupt your expertise with ~~my~~ confidence.”

Source: The New Yorker, edited

What is your personal strategy to become more resilient and enhance female participation in local and foreign politics?

To

- Be kinder to myself and to others;
- Be aware that I have the same right to occupy space as others around the table;
- Stand up for myself;
- Provide positive feedback to others;
- Not overwhelm myself with an infinite to-do list;
- Gender-mainstream climate policies;
- Create a supportive network for women in climate in Czechia!

What is your recommendation for other female politicians/activists?

- ...All of the above;
- Climate mainstream your area of interest!

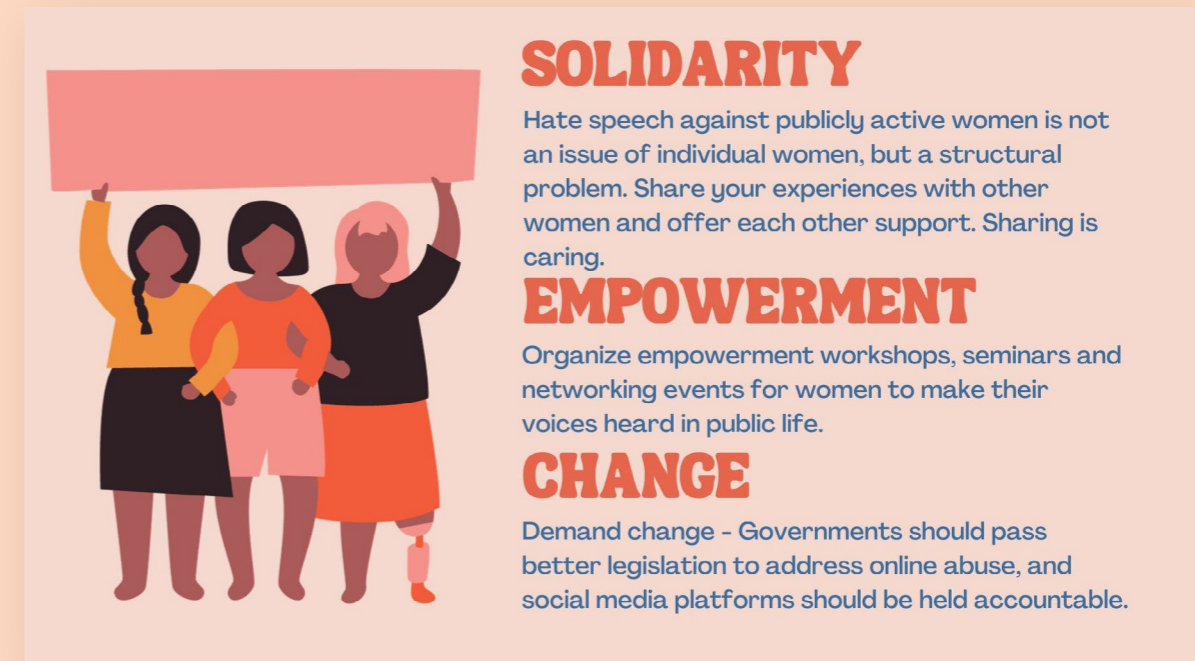
Anna Kania



Lucia Klestincova

One of my strategies is surrounding myself with like-minded leaders and hosting HerPoliticalCircle for (wannabe) political candidates (as a coach and facilitator specialized in purposeful careers, feminine leadership and burnout prevention).

Marketa Kos Mottlová



Ellen Anna Kovačiková

What is your personal strategy to become more resilient?

- I encourage every woman in politics to socialize and connect with other woman, even myself (and I am an introvert)
- Find your allies. Try local Facebook support groups, don't be afraid to ask other women.
- Share your experiences. That will create trust and safety for the environment around you.

How do we enhance female participation in local and foreign politics?

- Build trust. I want people to feel safe around me and to talk about problems as openly as I do, so we can come up with a solution together. That's why I'm not scared to bring up any subject, even uncomfortable ones.

- When a woman encounters hate speech or other situations it is highly unlikely that she will contact the ombudsman or any kind of professional support or help. Try to find different solutions where for example the person can stay anonymous and ideally a specialist will help in the situation.
- Be aware that newcomers to a situation or community might not feel safe yet. Don't just assume that your safe space idea is felt by everybody equally. Try to tell newcomers where they can find support.
- Support each other when talking. I would encourage the quieter individuals to share their opinions, and during my speeches, I'd mention their names.
- Speaking up involves addressing hateful comments or sexist jokes that may arise. If someone witnesses my reaction, they may feel safer and realize their significance within this space."

What is your recommendation for other female politicians/activists?

- If a woman is there for the first time, offer support and create a safe space. Stand by her, offer encouragement, and also introduce her to male allies.
- Strive to elevate women to higher positions in the room. For instance, when speaking, pass the floor to another female present, encouraging her participation.

Women Guide

Connect

- **find your alleys, try local Facebook support groups, don't be afraid to ask other women**
- **share your experiences, that will create trustfully and safe environment around you**



MIRROR OF SOCIETY?

Trust box

- **create trust box for your political group, try to show people their options of sharing experiences, that will encounter hate speech**
- **speak up for others, give other women, especially firstcomers, a word**



PATRIARCHY

Take a break

- **one of the biggest advice I got was to take a break, if you're feeling somewhat tired, do so, it can save you**



CERTIFIED FEMINIST



ELLEN ANNA KOVAČÍKOVÁ
ig, fb: kovacikova.art

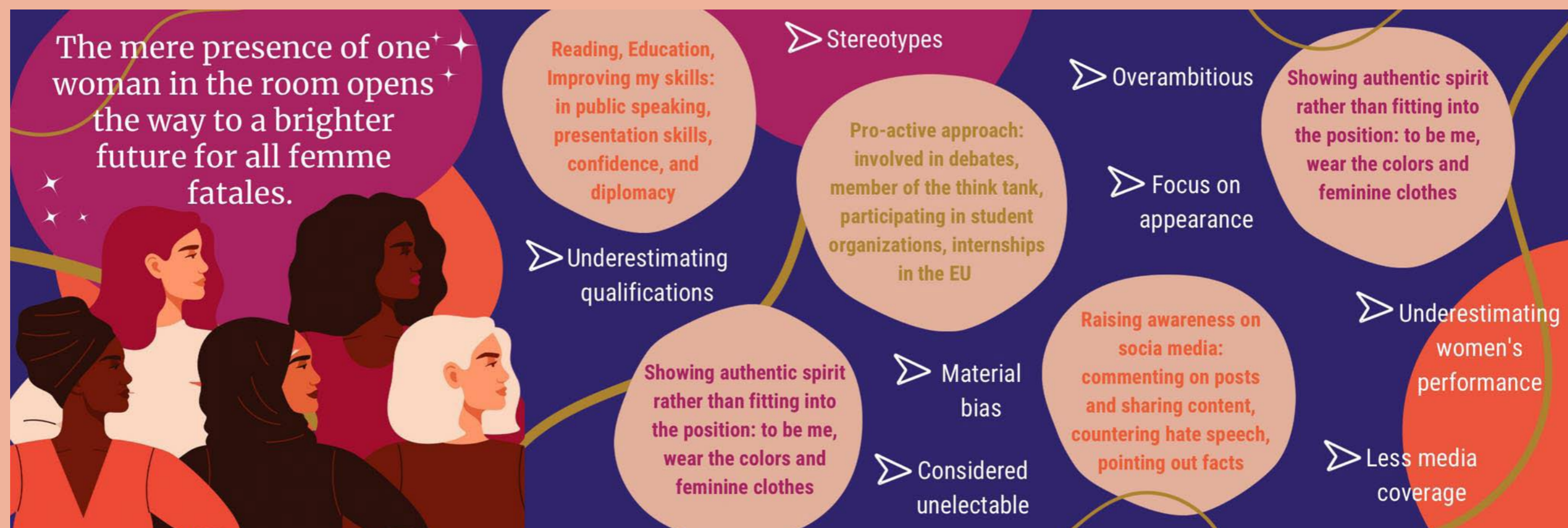
Nikola Majsniarová

What is your personal strategy to become more resilient and enhance female participation in local and foreign politics?

- Reading, Education, Improving skills: in public speaking, presentation skills, self-confidence, and diplomacy.
- Pro-active approach: involved in debates, member of the think tank, participating in student organizations, internships in the EU
- Raising awareness and challenging stereotypes: commenting on posts and sharing content on social media, countering hate speech, pointing out facts
- Being the change that I want to see: expressing opinions about wrong manners and stereotypical behavior.
- Showing authentic spirit rather than conforming to a position: to be me, wear colors and feminine clothes

What is your recommendation for other female politicians/activists?

- Don't hesitate to participate and speak up because: "The mere presence of one woman in the room opens the way to a brighter future for all femme fatales."



Timea Paulíková

LESSONS WE'VE LEARNT, WHEN CAN WE (WOMEN) STOP?

There are so many of us,
And so often **we** feel alone.

All the social requirements,
it hurts to hear men say "They're going nuts",
While **we** are swimming in deep waters,
Learning how to master their manners and language of
space, hierarchy, and titles.
We keep asking "When will it be about **us**?!"
About the well-balanced women's representation
On local, national, and international levels.

For years, **our** presence in a room,
has been seen as "a caddy" of coffee and rum.

We don't need to ask for permission to speak up,
We have **our** own brains to decide.
Our answers may not always be right,
And the chaos of this world may make **us** cry.

But many of you still don't understand that **we're** not fighting
against men,
we're fighting for equality, fairness, and acknowledgment.

Where are **women's** clubs, where have they gone?
It's Mama and two kids home alone.
Daddy needs a rehab after a day or two,
But Mama has to do what society decides for her to do.
It's not laziness that puts **us** on pause,
It's frustration that smokes **our** hope.

Where could we have been?
All laws, dogmas, and customs,
old rusty schemes.
There are dozens of them.
Different names for the same actions.
We have never left our women's rights up to you,
and **we** have never been left with **our** arms crossed.
Whatever the price.
We know what's **our** price, that's why **we** never stop.
Because **we** know, that the **one woman** in the room is there for **us** all.

It's frustration that smokes **our hope.**
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Giota Stathakou

Empowering Voices, Enriching Nations: Women in Politics Worldwide Strategies to enhance female Participation in Politics

1. Education and Awareness

Develop educational programs to inform women about political processes and opportunities.

Raise awareness about the importance of female representation in politics through campaigns and workshops.

2. Mentorship and Support

Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced female politicians with newcomers.

Create support networks and safe spaces for female politicians to share experiences and advice.

3. Policy Advocacy

Advocate for policies promoting gender equality, including quotas and equal opportunities for women in political positions.

Work towards implementing policies that facilitate a better work life balance, encouraging more women to participate in politics.

4. Leadership Development

Organize leadership training programs focusing on negotiation skills, public speaking, and confidence building.

Encourage women to take on leadership roles within political parties and community organizations.

5. Youth Engagement

Encourage young girls' involvement in politics through educational programs and mentorship.

Support initiatives that promote civic education in schools to instill a sense of political responsibility from an early age.

Linda Stucbartova

EMPOWERMENT SELF DEFENSE
THE 5 PRINCIPLES OF ESD

THINK
Use your head.
Be present. Listen to your intuition. Notice what is going on and what you want to do.

TELL
Heal and share in a safe space with someone you trust to support you.

YELL
Use your voice to speak up for yourself and others. Be calm or loud. Express your boundaries clearly.

RUN
Get away.
You decide when to leave an uncomfortable situation.

FIGHT
Physical resistance. Use the hard parts of your body against vulnerable targets.

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