

**PRACTICING
WHAT WE PREACH:
MAKING
THE EU FOREIGN POLICY
A FEMINIST ONE**

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Why we need a feminist foreign policy for the EU

The principle of gender equality is a core value of the EU, and as such, it should be integrated into all EU policies, both internal and external. For years, a gender perspective has been absent from foreign and security policymaking, hindering an effective EU response to global challenges. Phenomena like gender based violence, a persisting gender pay gap and hostile defiance of feminist values show foreign and security policy challenges can only be addressed in an effective and comprehensive manner if we put an end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. In order to break this pattern, we need:

- Higher levels of representation and participation of women and other marginalized groups at negotiation tables, notably in high-level positions, and an overall increased possibility of shaping and contributing to foreign and security policy decisions;
- The allocation of considerable resources towards achieving gender equality;
- Opposition to the increasing backlash against gender equality and shrinking spaces for civil society, including attacks on women and feminist organisations, which both take a heavy toll on hard-fought advances for a just society free of oppression and patriarchal thinking.

Fulfilment of these actions would bring us closer towards achieving the objectives of a feminist foreign policy, and the full enjoyment of human rights for women, girls and other marginalized groups throughout the world.

1.1. DEFINITION

A feminist foreign policy puts the existing balance of power, notably male-dominated patriarchal patterns, into question. It offers a multidimensional framework that allows for inclusive and non-discriminatory interactions across the entire foreign policy spectrum such as diplomacy, climate, security and trade. In its interactions with other states, it follows a four-pronged approach by:

- Seeking to elevate gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights of women and other marginalized groups;
- Assuring an equal and fair participation of women and other marginalized groups to social, economic and political resources;
- Allocating considerable resources to effectively achieve its objective;
- Giving due attention to the experiences and voices of civil society and different

experiences and identities by acknowledging multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, such as gender, disability, race, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and age.

1.2. WHY IT IS HIGH TIME THAT THE EU ADOPTS A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

There has perhaps never been a timelier moment to push for a feminist foreign policy. Building on the momentum of historic milestones in the feminist movement, like the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325 and Beijing +25, 2021 emerges as a pivotal year to create a feminist foreign policy vision for the EU. Following Sweden's example, several Member States, including France and Luxembourg, have already adopted and implemented feminist foreign policy frameworks. As the number of countries around the world who have adopted or are developing a feminist foreign policy multiplies, the EU should not only lead efforts to put gender equality at the centre of its domestic agenda but also at the heart of its external action. The new Commission has made gender equality one of its key priorities across all policy areas and has set itself the ambitious target of mainstreaming gender actions across 85% of all EU initiatives by 2020. A thorough commitment to the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) is the perfect occasion for us to prove that we practice what we preach and to spearhead a movement that puts gender equality at the heart of our foreign policy.

2.

What makes a foreign policy a feminist one

A feminist foreign policy requires a feminist approach in all policy areas with an external dimension. Apart from foreign policy and security, this comprises human rights, including LGBTQI+ and sexual and reproductive rights, migration, trade, development aid, humanitarian assistance and climate. A feminist foreign policy in itself is not enough to eradicate all the inequalities and discrimination that women, girls and marginalized groups face, therefore it is necessary to address these policy areas in an interconnected manner. Only that way will we be able to achieve radical change and transform the existing narratives and structures of power.

2.1. REPRESENTATION: A FOREIGN POLICY THAT ENSURES EQUAL REPRESENTATION

Traditionally, foreign and security policy has been dominated by men and this is still firmly reflected in diplomatic services around the world. When it comes to the EEAS, the EU institution in charge of foreign policy and defence, men overwhelmingly hold the majority of middle and senior management positions including Heads of Delegations and Heads of CSDP missions and operations.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To set specific and measurable targets regarding diversity and the presence of women in management positions in the EU Institutions, such as the objective of reaching 50% women in management positions, including as Heads of Delegation, EU Special Representatives and Heads of CSDP missions and operations.
- To ensure that there is one full-time gender focal point in EU delegations and one gender adviser in all civil and military CSDP missions.
- To establish mechanisms to ensure women's significant participation in policy- and decision-making processes, including negotiations of agreements with third countries, and in all stages of conflict prevention and resolution.
- To introduce measures that mitigate the gendered effects of stereotypical roles in working life, such as adequate investment in parental leave, measures to achieve a better balance between private and professional life such as employee-friendly working hours, extended possibilities to work from home or do part-time work, with the aim to remove structural and institutionalized barriers for women and other marginalised groups to attain adequate levels of representation, with special attention to the field of diplomacy where women have traditionally been marginalised.
- To create a formal Council Working Group on Gender Equality
- To establish a new Council configuration bringing together EU ministers and secretaries of state responsible for gender equality in order to facilitate gender mainstreaming across all EU policies, including foreign and security policy.

2.2. RIGHTS: A FOREIGN POLICY THAT PUTS THE REALISATION OF RIGHTS AT THE CENTRE

A feminist foreign policy is rooted in a rights-based approach that prioritises protecting and expanding human rights of women and other marginalized groups. It seeks to assure the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms for all people.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To commit to advance towards a foreign and security policy that entails a gender transformative vision, putting the need to address unequal structures and power relations at its centre.
- To work towards the elimination of discriminatory rights that violate the rights of girls, women and other marginalized groups with the EU's international partners and third countries.
- To ensure that targeted actions for gender equality and women's rights are included in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.

- To ensure the full and proper implementation of the EU's LGBTIQ+ guidelines by all EU delegations
- To ensure full implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and to adopt an annex aiming to recognise and develop additional strategies and tools to better and more effectively respond and prevent the specific situation, threats and risk factors faced by women human rights defenders.

2.3. RESOURCES: A FOREIGN POLICY THAT ALLOCATES SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE A FEMINIST VISION

The effective implementation of a feminist foreign policy that seeks to transform and break outdated male-dominated and patriarchal patterns necessitates the reallocation of considerable resources to ultimately promote gender equality and equal opportunities for women and other marginalized groups.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To mainstream the crosscutting goal of gender equality through gender budgeting in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework and improve the tracking of spending on gender equality for all funds, including the external funds, with proper indicators, impact assessments and a dedicated methodology.
- To earmark funding on gender equality in the framework of the NDICI regulation and reduce administrative constraints to allow access to funding for local and small civil society organisations.
- To establish budgetary allocations to implement Member States' National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security and to develop national parliamentary supervising mechanisms as well as to introduce quotas for the participation of women in control, evaluation, and supervising mechanisms.
- To specify in the Gender Action Plan III that 85% of ODA should go to programmes having gender equality as a significant or as a principal objective and that within this broader commitment, 20% of ODA should be going to programmes having gender equality as a principal objective.
- To establish one full-time gender focal point per EU Delegation with sufficient resources, information and capacity to perform their tasks and with job descriptions detailing their responsibilities on the operational and political portfolios.
- To develop gender equality guidelines for all EU delegations and to include a new EU budget line that would finance the position of gender advisers in military CSDP missions.
- To counter the impact of the "global gag rule" by significantly supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights funding.
- To promote and support comprehensive trainings on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis for all Union staff working on EU external action, as well as mandatory training on gender equality for all mid- and high-level managers of the EEAS and Heads/Commanders of CSDP missions and operations.

2.4. REALITIES: A FOREIGN POLICY INFORMED BY ACTIVISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE GROUND

At a time when populism, nativism and an unprecedented backlash against women's rights are ever increasing, EU foreign policy should protect and promote the human rights of women and other vulnerable groups and incorporate the voices of human rights defenders and civil society, particularly when it comes to conflict resolution at decision-making levels.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To establish concrete inclusive mechanisms to make cooperation and consultation with civil society, including women's rights organisations and human rights defenders, a standard element of the work of EU institutions, including EU Delegations.
- To enhance cooperation with and support, politically and financially, women's rights defenders and feminist civil society and networks at home and abroad, who are crucial for the promotion of a feminist agenda.
- To encourage, through political and flexible, long-term financial support, annual evaluation of the EU's foreign policy by feminist civil society from within the EU Member States and in partner countries.

3.

Building blocks of an EU Feminist Foreign Policy

3.1. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

To this day, strongmen role models and images of masculine power dominate our understanding of security. This androcentric framing of security puts women, girls and other marginalized groups on the receiving end of policy measures, ultimately leaving no room to accommodate their experiences and expertise and ignoring their agency. An increasing body of evidence illustrates that meaningful participation of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction increases the sustainability, quality and durability of peace, and helps prevent all forms of gender-based violence. Even though women play such a decisive role, they made up only 13% of negotiators in major peace processes from 1992-2018, only 4% of signatories and only 3% of mediators.

Greens/ EFA Recommendations:

- To increase women's involvement in peace processes and peacebuilding.
- To ensure that all EU-deployed military and civilian personnel are sufficiently trained on gender equality and WPS, specifically on how to integrate a gender perspective into their tasks.
- To apply a zero-tolerance approach to conflict-related sexual violence which eradicates impunity with the aim to facilitate reconciliation processes and peacebuilding.
- To ensure a more restricted and effective Common Arms Exports Policy, including by establishing a sanctioning mechanism for non-compliance, as well as an independent monitoring and reporting mechanism on arms flows.
- To actively advance efforts to international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, including by endorsing an international legally binding ban treaty on fully autonomous weapons.

3.2. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

An increasing number of people on the move are seeking international protection in the EU because of ongoing conflicts, regional instability and human rights violations. Women and children account on average for one third of people who apply for asylum in the EU. Migrant women tend to be more exposed than men to human rights violations and discrimination during every stage of their migration experience.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To develop gender equality guidelines in order to integrate a gender and age perspective into all asylum policies, making sure asylum procedures and reception conditions are gender and age sensitive, including access to essential services such as trauma counselling, sexual and reproductive rights, and women translators, among others in order to address the specific vulnerabilities and needs for protection of women and girls.
- To establish safe and legal routes to the EU for those fleeing conflict and persecution.
- To consider gendered forms of violence, sexual orientation, gender identity and discrimination as valid reasons for seeking asylum in the EU.
- To grant women an independent legal status from that of their spouse to guarantee their self-determination.
- To develop EU migration policies that integrate a feminist approach to female labour migration based on the prioritization of a) women's rights related to legal migration opportunities; b) rights within the migration process; and c) rights realized through migration.

3.3. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: TRADE

It has been proven that economic development and gender equality go hand-in-hand: societies in which gender inequalities are lower also tend to grow faster. However, the EU's current trade policy and its "Trade for All" strategy lacks a gender equality perspective. Women still face gender-specific constraints resulting from traditional patriarchal gender roles, like shouldering the burden of unpaid care work, and face gender-based discrimination at the workplace, notably in terms of remuneration. They are also underrepresented in the main trading sectors and overrepresented in the informal sector and in sectors particularly impacted by trade liberalisation such as textile or agriculture.

Greens/EFA recommendations:

- To carry out ex ante⁽¹⁾ and ex post gender impact assessments and to monitor the impact of trade agreements and trade policies by providing gender-disaggregated data, especially in areas such as job creation and losses, ownership of assets, financial inclusion, the evolution of living wages, work time, the relationship of productive and reproductive work in sectors, and unpaid care work.
- To include binding investor obligations with respect to gender, human rights, labour and the environment and appoint experts on those fields in the expert-panel in case of a dispute settlement;
- To include a specific gender chapter with binding and enforceable provisions in all EU trade agreements based on the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs. To ensure the ratification by the partner countries of the Convention No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities, No. 189 on Domestic Workers and No. 190 on violence and harassment and other core ILO conventions.
- To ensure that Domestic Advisory Groups include women's rights associations and are gender balanced.
- To make use of instruments such as Aid for Trade and other sources of EU development cooperation to work on the removal of structural barriers preventing women from benefitting equally from trade, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan.
- To ensure that trade and investment treaties do not lead to the privatisation of public services; that they do not reduce the fiscal space of partner countries to invest in women's economic empowerment and to assist (financially and technically) the partner countries in building gender-responsive public services (healthcare, education, water, public transportation, etc.)
- To adopt gender-responsive EU legislation introducing a mandatory gender-responsive human rights due diligence regulatory framework based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Due Diligence Guidelines to ensure respect for human rights and adequate social and environmental standards, with effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms including civil liability, and to contribute proactively to the process of elaboration of a UN legally binding instrument on business and human rights.

(1) The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has developed a toolkit to perform gender aware ex-ante evaluations of trade policies.

3.4. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: DEVELOPMENT & HUMANITARIAN AID

The effects of conflicts and natural disasters remain deeply gendered and exacerbate intersecting forms of discrimination. Humanitarian crises expose women and other marginalized groups to heightened levels of violence and exploitation. The EU needs to move from a neo-colonialist approach based on aid dependency and extraction of resources to one focused on empowerment and realisation of rights. In EU policies, framing women and girls from impoverished countries as victims, depriving them of their agency and erasing their capacity as agents of positive change, remains a dominant narrative.

Greens/ EFA recommendations:

- To systematically support the fulfilment of the commitments under the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcomes of their review conferences, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To ensure Policy Coherence for Development through systematic gender impact assessments so that EU policies do not have a negative impact on women and girls' rights and gender equality.
- To develop a gender-responsive EU humanitarian action in order to address the specific needs and priorities of people in vulnerable situations, particularly women and girls and to support their empowerment.
- To give a high priority to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU and Member States' humanitarian aid response, as well as accountability and access to justice and redress for sexual and reproductive rights violations and gender-based violence, both in terms of training of humanitarian actors and funding.

3.5. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: CLIMATE

Women are particularly vulnerable to climate change due to their unequal socio-economic position and patriarchal cultural norms. Women in rural areas, more prone to the effects of climate change, represent 70% of the agricultural workforce and tend to have experience in other fields like forestry and fisheries. However, women should not be seen as victims but as effective agents of change in developing mitigation and adaptation strategies within their communities because of their practical knowledge across sectors.

Greens/ EFA recommendations:

- To increase women’s participation in climate change decision-making bodies at the national and international levels.
- To support the development, adoption and financing of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP) complemented by a comprehensive and multi-year work programme that includes financing, priority action areas, timelines, key indicators of achievements, responsible actors, and monitoring and review mechanisms.
- To develop a comprehensive communication at EU level with the title “Gender equality and climate change – building resilience in mitigation and adaptation strategies”.
- To push for the compulsory appointment of national gender focal points for climate negotiations, implementation and monitoring.
- To appoint a permanent EU gender and climate change focal point, with sufficient budget resources, to implement and monitor gender-responsible climate action in the EU and globally.
- To ensure access of women’s organisations to international climate funds.

3.6. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: LGBTQI+ RIGHTS

Members of the LGBTQI+ community experience other forms of vulnerability and discrimination since their lived genders and sexual orientation diverge from what is conceived as being the “norm”. To effectively integrate an intersectional LGBTQI+ perspective into foreign and security policies means that before a decision is made, their effects on the LGBTQI+ community need to be anticipated and analysed. This will avoid implementing a one-size-fits-all policy approach based on a cis-male heterosexual perspective.

Greens/ EFA Recommendations:

- To establish a clear commitment from EU Delegations’ leadership to better monitor and implement the LGBTQI+ Guidelines, that aim to support the full enjoyment of LGBTQI+ rights in the world as granted under existing international human rights law.
- To present a legislative proposal to establish European Humanitarian Visas that would grant LGBTQI+ persons, among others, access to asylum procedures and humanitarian protection in the EU.

3.7. FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ACROSS POLICY FIELDS: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Women's bodies are highly politicized and misused as battlegrounds for ideological debates and agendas. Often these debates are held to the exclusion of women and with the aim to exercise control over their bodies. SRHR, on the other hand, allows women to control their own sexuality and bodies via the means of prenatal, antenatal and postnatal care, sex education, birth control, access to safe and legal abortion and preventive health care.

In addition, women and girls run the risk of being exposed to gender-related or sexual violence or harassment in public spaces, which seriously limits their freedom of movement. In the same way, women's opportunities for influence and political participation are limited by this form of harassment. All forms of violence against women and girls affect both the individual and society at large and are a barrier to gender equality and development.

Greens/ EFA recommendations:

- To monitor the backlash against gender equality, SRHR, LGBTQI+ rights, and the shrinking space for civil society, and to take specific steps to protect and uphold them, particularly as a task for EU delegations.
- To review the 'EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them' in order to add references to specific measures to combat the increasing attacks and threats against women's human rights defenders and transgender or gender non-conforming people.
- To systematically support universal enjoyment of SRHR, including through effective access to comprehensive sexuality education, contraception, family planning, safe and legal abortion services, quality maternal health care, respect for women's bodily autonomy, and protection against any form of discrimination, coercion or violence in this regard.
- To prioritise work that strengthens accountability and combats impunity for violence against women and girls, and to politically and economically support organisations within civil society and other actors working on gender-based violence, including through support centres, helplines and legal support for vulnerable women and survivors, as well as working with perpetrators and working to gain political support.

4.

Concluding recommendations

For an EU Feminist Foreign Policy to emerge and be implemented,
the following premises need to be fulfilled:

- Declaring an intersectional feminist foreign policy as one of the fundamental principles that guide the European Union's foreign and security policy by flanking this declaration with appropriate policy documents, action plans and dedicated personal and financial resources.
- Systematically integrating gender mainstreaming and an intersectional feminist perspective as guiding principles of EU external action; ensuring that this perspective is visible and a priority when the EU participates in multilateral fora and in all political and strategic dialogues including human rights dialogues with third countries, as well as when drafting policy and programming frameworks, country level human rights strategies, public statements, and global human rights reporting.
- Ensuring political leadership from the highest level as well as ownership across all levels to achieve institutional and policy change with feminist values, which could entail the creation of an EU Special Representative for Feminist Foreign Policy.
- Changing the institutional culture, by basing policymaking on an equal and fair distribution of power in all institutions and on all levels, and adhering to gender equality and a feminist foreign policy across Commission services and within the EEAS, at headquarters as well as in EU Delegations, EUSRs and CSDP missions and operations, through guidelines, awareness campaigns and trainings.
- Using rigorous gender analysis and systematic gender impact assessments as a basis for all EU policies.

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