

PEACE AND SECURITY

# IS UKRAINE READY FOR A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

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The understanding of the concept of a feminist foreign policy remains quite limited in Ukraine today. It is mostly narrowed down to gender equality in the diplomatic service.



Studying the experience of those foreign partners who have introduced feminist approaches in foreign policy is important for Ukraine.



Gender-balanced and anti-discrimination policy in various spheres should become one of the preconditions for cooperation with international partners in the context of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, promotion of Ukraine's image and a tool of war diplomacy and restoration of justice.



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. The basis of feminist foreign policy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Are perspectives on feminist foreign policy uniform in Europe?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Contours of the EU's feminist foreign policy</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Feminist diplomacy and the foreign policy of Ukraine: where we are and where we want to move to</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Internal policies and procedures of the MFA.....	15
4.2 External aspect of foreign policy and Ukraine.....	18
<b>5. Recommendations: what Ukraine should take into account</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1 Internal processes .....	22
5.2 Interaction with international partners .....	22
<b>Annex 1. Respondents interviewed for this research:</b>	<b>24</b>

# Is Ukraine ready for a feminist foreign policy?



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## INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the concept of a feminist foreign policy remains quite limited in Ukraine today. It is mostly narrowed down to gender equality in the diplomatic service. Meanwhile, an increasing number of European countries approve their own versions of feminist foreign policy. This allows us to speak of a trend that is expanding in the world. Moreover, different countries — especially NATO members — are ever more conditioning the supply of aid to third countries according to their gender policies and issues. This covers both humanitarian assistance and development aid, as well as conflict resolution and impact management, and even trade in arms. For example, the European Parliament planned in 2020 that 85% of official development aid should go to programmes that include the gender equality component as one of their key goals.<sup>1</sup>

Sweden was the first country to announce a feminist foreign policy in 2014. Gradually, Canada (2017), France (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Luxembourg (2021), Germany (2021), Chile (2022), Colombia (2022) and Liberia (2022), as well as the European Union joined them

and began to design their concepts and strategies in line with a feminist foreign policy<sup>2</sup>. While this policy is still not mainstream, more and more countries, in addition to those listed above, have made gender equality and feminist approaches to public and state governance priorities in their foreign policy, and aid and development programmes. For example, Norway and Australia have adopted foreign policy gender strategies. In 2021, seven countries adopted the Global Partner Network for Feminist Foreign Policy to promote these approaches around the world.<sup>3</sup>

More initiatives emerge that were previously not included in the gender discourse. For example, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the UK founded Women in Cybersecurity to support female diplomats in cybersecurity, primarily in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on ICTs in international security.<sup>4</sup> Disarmament is another

<sup>1</sup> Fostering gender equality in the EU's foreign and security policy, 23.10.2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201016IPR89563/fostering-gender-equality-in-the-eu-s-foreign-and-security-policy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/feminist-foreign-policy>

<sup>3</sup> More Than 30 Governments and Organizations Now Working to Advance Feminist Foreign Policy Around the World, 01.07.2021, <https://www.icrw.org/press-releases/more-than-30-governments-and-organizations-now-working-to-advance-feminist-foreign-policy-around-the-world/>

<sup>4</sup> Renata H. Dalaqua, Lifting each other up: Feminist foreign policies and gendered approaches to arms control, 13.10.2022, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/?p=18751>

sphere where experts call on countries to increase the participation of women in fora and talks on conventions banning anti-personnel mines, cluster bombs, nuclear weapons and more. The consideration is that this is necessary for the evaluation of various consequences following the use of these types of weapons in conflicts, among other purposes.<sup>5</sup>

Hard security issues and feminist approaches increasingly coincide in a single context. In some countries, the supporters of a feminist foreign policy condition military assistance or the authorisation of the arms trade according to compliance with gender standards and proper respect for women's rights in the recipient countries.<sup>6</sup>

Gender-balanced and anti-discrimination policy in various spheres should become a precondition for cooperation with international partners in the context of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. Introducing such standards in entrepreneurship and socio-economic development programmes, the integration of gender issues in sectoral policies, monitoring, evaluation and reporting should all be an important part of the process.<sup>7</sup>

As an active participant in European projects, and a recipient — now and potentially in the future — of significant European assistance, Ukraine should thus understand clearly what this concept includes, what options exist for feminist foreign policy, and which best practices it can implement. While international development has focused on the rights and services for girls and women as a pathway to social and economic development for some time, foreign policy is just catching up.<sup>8</sup>

Ukraine already has some mechanisms that are aspects of feminist foreign policy. They were designed as part of the effort to implement UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the Istanbul Convention, and cooperation with the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe. But the consequences of the Russian aggression, the greater urgency of humanitarian and technical assistance, and Ukraine's EU integration have made this issue more pressing. On the one hand, studying the experience of those European partners who have introduced feminist approaches in foreign policy, and taking into account these aspects in Ukraine's own policy is important. On the other hand, Ukraine's leadership in defending democratic rights and freedoms by holding back the aggression of Russia, "one of the most anti-feminist world powers ... with colonial,

patriarchal and sexist underpinnings,"<sup>9</sup> creates new opportunities for the Ukrainian state to positively rebrand itself and develop international partnerships that merit more detailed analysis.

In 2019–2020, together with the UN Women, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a gender audit<sup>10</sup> of the equality of rights and opportunities for women and men, to implement gender equality in ministries, including policies, processes and structures. While the results of this audit were not disclosed fully, the available reports highlight that the main accent was on gender equality, which is only a part of the concept of a feminist foreign policy. Back then, Minister Dmytro Kuleba signed a decree to establish the Gender Equality Commission. Minister Kuleba is chair, and MFA department employees are members of the commission. It was tasked with designing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to overcome inequality in Ukrainian diplomacy.<sup>11</sup> It developed the Strategy to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men in Diplomatic Service of Ukraine by 2025.

Also, the MFA Action Plan was adopted to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the bodies of Ukraine's diplomatic service that included several key sections: legislative (amendment of laws, introduction of feminine words in internal documents, etc); staff (ensuring gender equality, increasing the number of women, including in leadership roles); communications (information and PR campaigns to raise awareness); educational (workshops, thematic education events); and technical (implementation of accessibility, a children's room at the MFA, etc).<sup>12</sup>

Further steps included launching the Association of Women Diplomats under the MFA, setting up the mentorship institution, developing women's leadership, including gender approaches in hiring and career promotion, and awareness raising on gender equality<sup>13</sup> — still a major problem on the path towards feminist diplomacy in Ukraine.

The 2019 audit revealed the perception of the gender equality issue among the staff of Ukraine's MFA, whereby 90% of women and 71% of men who worked at the MFA thought that the implementation of gender policy is an important element of the diplomatic service. Only 38% of women believed that they had experienced equal rights

<sup>5</sup> Renata H. Dalaqua, Lifting each other up: Feminist foreign policies and gendered approaches to arms control, 13.10.2022, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/?p=18751>

<sup>6</sup> Claudia Zilla, Feminist Foreign Policy, SWP, 18.08.2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/feminist-foreign-policy>

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Kateryna Levchenko

<sup>8</sup> Marissa Conway, Eve of a foreign policy revolution, Chatham House, 04.02.2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-02/eve-foreign-policy-revolution>

<sup>9</sup> Serhiy Kyslytsia. Online discussion "Responding to the Invasion of Ukraine: the Impact of Feminist Foreign Policies", 26.04.2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9SkQ6J9W8>

<sup>10</sup> Dmytro Kuleba: Men and women in diplomatic service should have equal rights and opportunities, 10.06.2020, <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-choloviki-ta-zhinki-na-diplomatschnij-sluzhbi-povinni-mati-rivni-prava-ta-mozhlivosti>

<sup>11</sup> Dmytro Kuleba: Men and women in diplomatic service should have equal rights and opportunities, 10.06.2020, <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-choloviki-ta-zhinki-na-diplomatschnij-sluzhbi-povinni-mati-rivni-prava-ta-mozhlivosti>

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Kateryna Bilotil

<sup>13</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine: MFA discusses the state of ensuring gender equality, 14.07.2020, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/u-mzs-obgovorili-stan-zabespechennya-rivnosti-zhinok-i-cholovikov>

in their career. A total of 39% of women aged 40+ and none of the men mentioned gender-related limitations.<sup>14</sup>

The aim of this research is to look at the practices and principles of feminist foreign policy in Europe, outline the elements that can affect Ukraine's interaction with donors and partners, and examine the key elements of feminist foreign policy from the perspective of Ukrainian women diplomats and civil servants. The authors of this research

held a series of in-depth interviews with women diplomats and civil servants relevant to this research in December 2022.<sup>15</sup> While the sample is not representative, it reveals the opinions of different generations of female Ukrainian representatives about their experiences in the diplomatic service, their understanding of feminist foreign policy and Ukraine's priorities in this spheres, as well as the best practices in the countries where they were assigned as diplomats or on a work trip.

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**14** Gender audit at the MFA: Only 38% of women believe that they have equal career opportunities with men, 12,06,2020, <https://50vidsotkiv.org.ua/ministerstvo-zakordonnyh-sprav-zavershylo-provedennya-gendernogo-audytu>

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**15** The list of respondents is in Annex 1.

## 1

## THE BASIS OF FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

There are important distinctions between ‘gender equality’ and ‘feminism’. Feminism refers to a set of values tied to rebalancing unequal power dynamics, which include gender but also race, class, and sexuality, among others.<sup>16</sup> Among other things, feminist foreign policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states, as well as non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes peace, gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures, and allocates significant resources to achieve that vision.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from that, confusion between the concepts of foreign policy feminisation and feminist foreign policy or feminist diplomacy is a problem. The latter is a concept that promotes values and good practices where gender equality, guaranteeing women’s rights and creating conditions for exercising opportunities through diplomatic tools become the basis for foreign policy and development aid. Feminist foreign policy focuses both on increasing the presence of women in top diplomatic positions (reaching gender equality within the system) and on determining priorities for funding various projects and aid programmes (external aspect).

In its widest sense, feminist foreign policy highlights the need to struggle against all systemic inequalities and structural barriers in international relations, in all their manifestations — sometimes unrelated to gender issues. The key accent in this is on a values-based foreign policy that relies on normative approaches and the transformative power of diplomacy.

Based on their definition of a feminist foreign policy, some countries, such as France and Spain, focus on “internal feminising” of their diplomatic service, while others, such as Sweden and Canada, speak of the need to systemically integrate feminist approaches to foreign policy, including security policy, development cooperation, trade, healthcare, climate change, and more.

The following points, even if not exhaustive, are often referred to as feminist foreign policy goals:

- struggle against sexual violence and sexism;
- education for women and girls, as well as men and boys;
- economic emancipation of women across the world;
- inclusion of women in politics and decision-making;
- inclusion of women in peace talks and signing of treaties;
- coherence of domestic policy, implementation of the same principles within the state as in the case of foreign policy;
- promotion of human rights, including the rights of minorities, and inclusion of civil society;
- anti-militaristic policy that prioritises peace and security over expansion of military power;
- priority of cooperation over domination in bilateral cooperation and within multilateral fora.<sup>18</sup>

Essentially, the following elements constitute feminist foreign policy today:

1. achieving gender equality in the diplomatic service, including leadership roles within the central apparatus of the ministry and in terms of heads of diplomatic missions abroad;
2. inclusion of women in talks, including peace talks and conflict resolution, and equal representation in decision-making processes, advisory groups and top-level public events;
3. social and economic rights of women, development of women’s entrepreneurship and struggle against sexual violence;
4. inclusive governance and strengthening of capacities for women in the public sector;
5. prioritising gender equality issues, inclusivity, sustainable development, and protection of human rights — including the rights of women, discriminated groups and religious, racial and religious, and racial and national minorities;
6. justice, holding to account those guilty of committing war crimes, including gender violence; assistance to women in armed conflicts.

<sup>16</sup> Marissa Conway, *Eve of a foreign policy revolution*, Chatham House, 04.02.2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-02/eve-foreign-policy-revolution>

<sup>17</sup> L. Thompson, *Feminist Foreign Policy: A Framework*, Washington, D. C.: ICRW, 2020, [https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FFP\\_Framework\\_EN\\_June2021update.pdf](https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FFP_Framework_EN_June2021update.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Make Foreign Policy Feminist. *A Feminist Foreign Policy Manifesto for Germany*, The Centre For Feminist Foreign Policy, 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cd7cd9d482e9784e4ccc34/t/61432508e0c62f33f0a54cea/1631790357163/CFFP-Manifesto-EN-Final4.pdf>

Foreign policy is a field whose structures are particularly strongly male-dominated, and therefore privileges the perspectives, ideas and experiences of men. A “gender-neutral” foreign policy consequently reproduces gender inequality, because it fails to take adequate account of the different gender-specific perspectives.<sup>19</sup>

A feminist foreign policy partly overlaps with longstanding commitments countries have undertaken under various pro-

grammes on women, peace and security, or gender equality, especially in humanitarian or development aid. However, it can also provide a unifying political framework for the disparate strands of gender-related strategies being implemented by governments, improve coordination and effectiveness and the involvement of various state and non-state actors. It will essentially cover not just human rights and diplomacy, diplomacy, defence and security cooperation, aid, trade, climate security, and even immigration policies.<sup>20</sup>

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**19** Claudia Zilla, Feminist Foreign Policy, SWP, 18.08.2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/feminist-foreign-policy>

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**20** Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction, UN Women, 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en.pdf>



## 2

## ARE PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY UNIFORM IN EUROPE?

### Sweden

Sweden was the first country in the world to present its feminist foreign policy concept in 2014. Other countries borrowed its soft approach model in the following years. On the one hand, this approach was based on respect for human rights and sustainable development. On the other hand, it relied on the harmony between domestic reforms and approaches to foreign policy. Having declared itself feminist, the then Swedish government pledged to systematically integrate gender approaches into its foreign policy agenda. This approach covered foreign and security policy, trade, aid cooperation, and more. In a wider sense, it was supposed to pursue the “transformative goal of changing structures.”<sup>21</sup>

The adoption of this strategy significantly increased Sweden’s spending on aid to other countries within the framework of support for gender equality — for example, from USD 2bn in 2016 to USD 2.7bn in 2019. Among other things, this money was spent on funding large gender-focused development programmes and gender-sensitive humanitarian aid to the countries in need.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, the new Swedish government led by Ulf Kristersson announced in October 2022 that “gender equality is a core value for Sweden and this government, but we will not conduct a feminist foreign policy.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, after becoming a pioneer in promoting feminist approaches to security, development and diplomacy, Sweden also became the first country to limit that approach. Paradoxically, Sweden essentially did not quit the key principles and approaches of feminist foreign policy because they have become an integral part of most of its processes and policies. At the same time, its government’s declarations that “Swedish foreign policy must be based on Swedish values

and Swedish interests”, rather than feminist approaches, triggered a wave of debate in the human rights and activist community. Amid women’s rights protests in Iran and Afghanistan, and restrictions on women’s reproductive rights in the US and Poland, the refusal of the government of a democratic European country to promote and protect women’s rights was perceived as a worrying signal that questions the “irreversibility” of the accomplished positive transformations.<sup>24</sup>

The original phrasing of the Swedish feminist policy raises three fundamental questions on rights (do women and girls have the same rights as men and boys?); representation (are women represented at all government levels?); and resources (are adequate resources being used to solve the problem of unequal rights?).<sup>25</sup>

The 2019 Handbook on Sweden’s feminist policy defines six long-term objectives: 1) full enjoyment of human rights; 2) freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence; 3) participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peace-building; 4) political participation and influence in all areas of society; 5) economic rights and empowerment; 6) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).<sup>26</sup> These six objectives are integrated into three key areas of Sweden’s foreign policy: foreign and security policy (peace and security, human rights, democracy, rule of law, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), international development cooperation and trade.

Respectively, the Swedish Foreign Service explains in its description of its work methods that they are tied to the methods used in its work domestically. Subsequently, lead-

<sup>21</sup> Claudia Zilla, *Feminist Foreign Policy*, SWP, 18.08.2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/feminist-foreign-policy>

<sup>22</sup> Rachel A. George, *Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy Can’t Be Undone*, *Foreign Policy*, 18.11.2022, [https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/18/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy-billstrom-gender-equality/?tpcc=recirc\\_latest062921](https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/18/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy-billstrom-gender-equality/?tpcc=recirc_latest062921)

<sup>23</sup> Rachel A. George, *Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy Can’t Be Undone*, *Foreign Policy*, 18.11.2022, [https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/18/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy-billstrom-gender-equality/?tpcc=recirc\\_latest062921](https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/18/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy-billstrom-gender-equality/?tpcc=recirc_latest062921)

<sup>24</sup> *Sweden’s New Government Abandons Feminist Foreign Policy. Policy Reversal Is a Step in the Wrong Direction*, *Human Rights Watch*, 31.10.2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/31/swedens-new-government-abandons-feminist-foreign-policy>

<sup>25</sup> *Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction*, UN Women, 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> *Handbook. Sweden’s feminist foreign policy*, 2019, <https://www.government.se/492c36/contentassets/fc115607a4ad4bca913cd8d11c2339dc/handbook---swedens-feminist-foreign-policy---english.pdf>

ership, engagement, control and support are key to gender equality work, both in individual countries and within international organisations. This can include proposals to draft guiding documents, legislation, monitoring and supervisory mechanisms, and operational assistance that will support gender equality. In its time, Sweden became the driver behind the development of the EU Gender Action Plan for equality and promotion of women's rights and opportunities in the EU's foreign relations in 2016-2020.<sup>27</sup> The main idea of the plan was the necessity for change in institutional culture, with a focus on leadership, accountability and sufficient resources in gender equality.

The Swedish version of feminist foreign policy called for significant institutionalisation, reflected in the establishment of a range of agencies and organisational structures. Respective programmes and guiding documents were drafted, including the Swedish Foreign Service's action plan for a feminist foreign policy in 2019-2022.<sup>28</sup> The section on bilateral relations entails that "The feminist foreign policy will be implemented in cooperation and dialogue with bilateral actors at local, regional and national level. The bilateral setting encompasses a multitude of actors, including representatives of governments, political parties, trade union organizations, industry, universities, media organizations, civil society organizations, faith communities and more." Generally, the Swedish Foreign Service announces the expansion of contacts with women's rights advocates, women in elected offices, trade unions, political movements and civil society organisations, to increase the visibility of women as political actors and support women's rights and opportunities to organise and have political power and influence. The Swedish Foreign Service will also help enhance women's capacities as economic actors.

## France

Marlène Schiappa, France's Secretary of State for Gender Equality, announced at the opening of the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women, that France planned to prioritise the issue of gender equality in the world. She noted that 50% of the development aid funding by 2022 will go to projects that benefit equal gender rights, and an additional EUR 10mn will go to the She Decides initiative against sexual violence and in support of reproductive rights.<sup>29</sup> This policy was promoted against the background in which women made up just 25% of French diplomats at that particular moment.

<sup>27</sup> EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, 2016, <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-gender/wiki/eu-gender-action-plan-2016-2020>  
<sup>28</sup> The Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2019–2022, including direction and measures for 2020, <https://www.government.se/499195/contentassets/2b694599415943ebb466af0f838da1fc/the-swedish-foreign-service-action-plan-for-feminist-foreign-policy-20192022-including-direction-and-measures-for-2020.pdf>  
<sup>29</sup> La France est de retour. Le féminisme aussi, 13,03,2018, <https://onu.delegfrance.org/La-France-est-de-retour-Le-feminisme-aussi>

France's MFA declares that gender equality will be considered at two levels: domestic to ensure equality in work and external when it comes to French foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> In 2018, it presented France's International Strategy on Gender Equality for the following four years.<sup>31</sup> It outlined four key areas of France's feminist foreign policy. Among other things, this would apply to decreasing inequality, sustainable development, peace and security, promotion of fundamental rights, climate and economy.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the MFA made it mandatory for all of its 12 agencies that help implement policy abroad to include gender issues in their strategies and action plans.<sup>33</sup>

Respectively, France defines these priorities both for bilateral relations as some of the main tasks for embassies, and within international organisations — primarily the UN and EU. For example, France defined efforts to counter sexual and gender violence and provide more economic opportunities for women as joint priorities of its presidency, together with the Czech Republic and Sweden at the Council of the EU in 2022.<sup>34</sup> Also, France committed to making sure that 75% of the projects that receive official French development aid help achieve gender equality.<sup>35</sup>

In 2021, France and Mexico held The Generation Equality Forum<sup>36</sup> at UN Women, which is considered to have been the most important feminist event since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Representatives of governments, international organisations, business and civil society committed to promoting the ideas of gender equality and sustainable development in the long term. The Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality was created, 1,000 specific commitments were made, and USD 40bn collected for projects in the next five years. France committed to providing assistance in women's reproductive health, and the right to have control over their bodies (EUR 400mn) and education for girls (50% of EUR 333mn as part of the Global Partnership for Education).<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, French diplomacy raised the issue of gender equality and the change of institutional culture on this issue within its own system as well. The French MFA recognised gender equality at work as one of its priorities.

<sup>30</sup> Gender equality at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/gender-equality-at-the-ministry-for-europe-and-foreign-affairs/>  
<sup>31</sup> France's International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018–2022), [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/meae\\_strategie\\_-\\_en\\_cle076525.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/meae_strategie_-_en_cle076525.pdf)  
<sup>32</sup> What is feminist foreign policy? [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/diplomatie\\_fe\\_ministe\\_a5\\_en-v2\\_1\\_\\_cle8c266e.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/diplomatie_fe_ministe_a5_en-v2_1__cle8c266e.pdf)  
<sup>33</sup> Feminist Diplomacy, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>  
<sup>34</sup> Feminist Diplomacy, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>  
<sup>35</sup> Gender equality: a priority for France, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>  
<sup>36</sup> The Generation Equality Forum, 2021, <https://forum.generationequality.org/home>  
<sup>37</sup> feminist Diplomacy, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>

Among other things, this referred to equal access to work, workshops, mobility, career promotion and pay. As of January 1, 2022, 50% of France's ambassadors in European countries and 28% in the world were women.<sup>38</sup>

This feminist approach is monitored with 37 indicators that are reviewed on an ongoing basis. These include flexible working conditions, gender parity on appointment competition commissions, replacement during childcare leave, workshops and further education, expansion of opportunities for working from home for those working in the central apparatus of government, and more.<sup>39</sup>

## Spain

Spain announced its feminist foreign policy in 2021. At that point, only 14% of its ambassadors abroad were women. This number grew to 21% during the course of 2021. Still, Spain's MFA highlighted that it would aspire to reach the objectives of a feminist foreign policy both in foreign policy and within the ministry.

To achieve these goals, the MFA prepared a handbook that defines the key areas of action. This reflects Spain's contribution to creating a more just world, where women and men have equal rights and opportunities. The proposal is based on five principles: transformative approach; committed leadership; ownership; inclusive participation and fostering alliances; intersectionality and diversity.<sup>40</sup>

According to the then Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González Laya, "Equality is a synonym of diversity and thus also a synonym of wealth. Wealth in the exercise of rights by all citizens, but also economic wealth, prosperity and justice. In this sense, our feminist foreign policy promotes and defends our interests as well as values of our society."<sup>41</sup>

The Spanish MFA identified the following main instruments of feminist foreign policy: a) mainstreaming a gender approach in foreign policy; b) accent on gender issues in bilateral and regional diplomacy; c) promoting gender issues and strengthening the position of the EU as a gender equality advocate, including gender issues in the Council Conclusions; d) proactive work in multilateral diplomacy, including at the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe etc.; e) international cooperation for sustainable development, included within the framework of achieving SDG 5 under the 2030 Agenda; f) consular protection

and assistance; g) public diplomacy with which Spain will promote gender equality policy and raise awareness abroad and at home; and h) equality policies within the Foreign Service.<sup>42</sup>

## Germany

Germany has recently announced its intention to introduce a feminist foreign policy. In its 2021-2025 Coalition Agreement, the political parties that formed the current government of Germany agreed to work on implementing a feminist foreign policy. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development committed to this. Among other things, Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that "a feminist foreign policy' is not a women's issue or a policy 'by women for women.' A feminist foreign policy is aimed at all parts of society. This is more equitable and results in more sustainable solutions."<sup>43</sup>

Germany's foreign policy identifies among the key elements: ensuring equal rights, equal participation and resources for women, girls and marginalised groups, and support of diversity.<sup>44</sup> This shapes the German approach, where the standard three Rs — rights, representation, resources — are combined with D for diversity. 3R+D is gradually becoming the foundation for both Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>45</sup>

The theme of the conference held by the German MFA in September 2022 allows us to understand the key priorities of its feminist foreign policy:

- guaranteeing responsibility for sexual violence during conflicts;
- feminist economic theory and practice, sustainable society through inclusive and diverse economic activity;
- feminist cultural diplomacy: promotion of diversity and inclusivity;
- gender and arms control;
- feminist foreign policy in conflicts, achieving feminist security, feminist peace-building;
- strengthening reproductive health and rights at the time of anti-gender movements;
- gender budgeting;
- gender and climate policy.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>38</sup> What is feminist foreign policy? [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/diplomatie\\_fe\\_ministe\\_a5\\_en-v2\\_1\\_\\_cle8c266e.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/diplomatie_fe_ministe_a5_en-v2_1__cle8c266e.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Gender equality at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/gender-equality-at-the-ministry-for-europe-and-foreign-affairs/>

<sup>40</sup> Política Exterior Feminista, <https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/PoliticaExterior/Paginas/PoliticaExteriorFeminista.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy. Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action, 2021, <https://rm.coe.int/2021-02-politica-exterior-feminista-eng/1680a287c3>

<sup>42</sup> Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy. Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action, 2021, <https://rm.coe.int/2021-02-politica-exterior-feminista-eng/1680a287c3>

<sup>43</sup> Conference on Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, 12,09,2022, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/feministische-aussenpolitik/2551352>

<sup>44</sup> Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, 12,09,2022, <http://www.shapingfeministforeignpolicy.org/>

<sup>45</sup> Claudia Zilla, Feminist Foreign Policy, SWP, 18.08.2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/feminist-foreign-policy>

<sup>46</sup> Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, 12,09,2022, <http://www.shapingfeministforeignpolicy.org/>

The German feminist policy pays special attention to gender in conflicts, recognising that conflict is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, and different genders experience its impact differently. Moreover, German diplomacy believes that the widespread stereotype, viewing women as mere victims of war prevents the use of the full potential for effective contribution to the resolution of conflicts and their individual consequences.<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, the present-day German feminist opinion that drives the perspective of foreign policy is divided between classical and radical feminist approaches. The latter can partly be traced in The Green Party election platform<sup>48</sup> — their representative is now Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister. The Greens' election platform presents feminist foreign policy as a goal of the world order where conflicts are not solved through force, while solutions are sought through negotiations instead. Publications by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, affiliated with The Greens, pres-

ent these views more radically. Among other things, they say that states continue to favour the use of weapons and deterrence concepts to solve conflicts. They note that these force models are to be disrupted, and security should not be seen within the military context alone. They stress that strengthening women's rights and needs should be carried out in a way that shapes peace and security policy. Essentially, the authors counterpose women's rights against the military perspective of security.<sup>49</sup>

These approaches can have a significant impact on decisions about support for different actors during war, the provision of arms and other military assistance, and approaches to peace talks — all of them issues that are extremely relevant to Ukraine today. Some German analysts have even questioned how much the pacifist approaches ingrained in the feminist concept can complement an understanding of security, or stand in the way of a clear definition of the existing threats.

<sup>47</sup> Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, 12,09,2022, <http://www.shapingfeministforeignpolicy.org/>

<sup>48</sup> Green Party 2021 election platform, 2021, [https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/Wahlprogramm-DIE-GRUENEN-Bundestagswahl-2021\\_barrierefrei.pdf](https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/Wahlprogramm-DIE-GRUENEN-Bundestagswahl-2021_barrierefrei.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Tausendfreund, What Kind of Feminist Foreign Policy Should We Expect from Germany's New Government? GMF, 30.11. 2021, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/what-kind-feminist-foreign-policy-should-we-expect-germanys-new-government>

## 3

## CONTOURS OF THE EU'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

By contrast to the national policies in individual European countries, the EU as an institution has long stood aside from the feminist foreign policy debate. Its attention has mostly focused on gender equality, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and girls within the EU, and on the respective demands for new candidate-states as they prepare to join the EU. At the same time, the policies aimed at ensuring women's rights were not harmonised with the foreign policy agenda in the wider sense, and were not transformed into a feminist foreign policy as such.

Revising the role of gender issues and women's rights in the EU's foreign policy has taken place over the past few years. This is reflected in the respective strategic documents of European institutions. In 2015, the Council of the EU highlighted the importance of initiatives to promote the rights of women and girls, gender equality and support for women and girls, using development policy tools.<sup>50</sup> Among others, the Council Conclusions on Gender in Development stated that "2015 is a pivotal year for gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls in the global context with the inter-governmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. In that context, particular focus must be put on promoting and fulfilling the rights of women and girls, notably in light of the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action."

In 2015, Riga hosted the Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development summit as part of the European Year of Development. It offered an opportunity to revive the political impulse and reaffirm the EU's commitment to gender equality, social justice, non-discrimination and human rights. Among other things, it stressed that "women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be at the core of the post-2015 agenda, both as a stand-alone goal and as a cross-cutting issue, which

should be integrated into the targets and indicators of all the Sustainable Development Goals. It should also be an essential element of financial and non-financial means of implementation and of the mechanisms for review, monitoring and accountability."<sup>51</sup>

In 2020, the European Commission adopted the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy, the foundation document for gender policy.<sup>52</sup> It represents the political objectives and a range of efforts in all areas of EU policy that are necessary to accomplish a "gender-equal Europe" by 2025. European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli is leading this effort.

The Strategy outlines the following key objectives:

- ending gender-based violence;
- challenging gender stereotypes;
- closing gender gaps in the labour market, including addressing gender pay and pension gaps;
- achieving equal participation of women and men in different sectors of the economy;
- closing the gender care gap;
- achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics.

As one of its important accomplishments, the Gender Equality Strategy highlighted the need to harmonise it with the EU's foreign policy in terms of gender equality and expanding the rights and opportunities of women, despite the Strategy's focus on actions within the EU.<sup>53</sup>

When it comes to the instruments to achieve EU gender policy objectives, the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality for 2016-2019 is worth a mention<sup>54</sup>. It was later

<sup>50</sup> Council Conclusions on Gender in Development, 26.05.2015, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9242-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Council Conclusions on Gender in Development, 26.05.2015  
<sup>52</sup> Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

<sup>53</sup> Gender Equality Strategy: Achievements in Gender Equality, [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

<sup>54</sup> Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/24968221-eb81-11e5-8a81-01aa75ed71a1>



updated and approved for 2020-2025.<sup>55</sup> The annual reports on gender equality are worth mentioning, too, as a mechanism of monitoring and reporting on the key areas of work in this respect.<sup>56</sup>

The year 2020 can be seen as a breakthrough moment in the debate around including the gender perspective in the EU's foreign and security policy. In October 2020, the European Parliament voted in favour of the Fostering gender equality in the EU's foreign and security policy report for the first time ever. The report called on the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission, EU institutions and member-states to "systemically integrate gender mainstreaming into the EU's foreign and security policy."<sup>57</sup> Also, the MEPs insisted on abolishing various forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, race and social status, as experienced by marginalised groups and individuals.

The report highlights the fact that women play a pivotal role as peace brokers in conflict-ridden countries. Women's equitable participation in EU foreign policy negotiations, and peace and security processes, is linked to greater economic prosperity and the advancement of global security, democracy and sustainable peace. Therefore, the MEPs called on the EEAS and member states to ensure women's full participation at the various stages of the conflict cycle, in the context of EU conflict prevention and mediation activities.

In order to increase the role of women in economic reconstruction and sustainable development, the European Parliament declared that 85% of official development assistance should go to programmes that include gender equality as one of the main objectives.<sup>58</sup>

When asking for a rethink of the importance of gender equality as a cross-cutting and cross-sectoral policy of the EU, Spanish Greens/EFA MEP Ernest Urtasun called on the EU and its leaders to support a gender-transformative vision of foreign policy that protects and supports women's rights: "While several countries around the world have already adopted a foreign policy with a strong focus on gender equality, the EU still does not have one. This is why we call on the EU and its leaders to promote a gender transformative vision of foreign policy that protects and promotes women's human rights. At the same time,

we call on the EU to give women a voice and a seat in foreign and security policy by ensuring their representation and involvement in political leadership and decision-making at all levels. The EU should lead by example on gender equality and start by applying these principles within its own institutions."<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the HR policy in the EEAS and EU institutions remained unbalanced. As of 2020, women accounted for just 31.3% in mid-level leading positions and 26% in top positions within the EEAS, and 40% at the European Commission.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, men headed all 12 civilian and military missions of the EU.<sup>61</sup> In early 2023, the EU's HR policy improved somewhat, but men were still leading 19 out of 20 EU missions.<sup>62</sup> (German police officer Antje Pittelkau was the only woman in a top position, leading the EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger in 2021).<sup>63</sup> In order to contribute to gender mainstreaming in foreign and security policy, as well as in all other policies of the EU, MEPs demanded the establishment of a new structure of the council, to bring together EU ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality.

Adoption of the EU Gender Action Plan III "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025" by the European Commission was another important contribution to the inclusion of gender policy in the EU's foreign policy and to strengthening the role of gender issues in relations with international partners.<sup>64</sup> It provides the political framework for the EU's gender policy and centres on five pillars:

1. Making EU engagement on gender equality more effective as a cross-cutting priority of EU external action in its policy and programming work. The European Commission and the High Representative reconfirm that by 2025 85% of all new external actions will contribute to this objective, and gender mainstreaming will be included in all external policies of the EU;
2. Promoting, together with EU Member States, strategic EU engagement at multilateral, regional and country level and jointly stepping up implementation of GAP III in each partner country and region, in close cooperation with partner governments, civil society, the private sector and other key stakeholders;

<sup>55</sup> Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2020-2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A152%3AFIN>

<sup>56</sup> 2022 Report on Gender Equality in the EU, European Commission, [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/annual\\_report\\_ge\\_2022\\_printable\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/annual_report_ge_2022_printable_en.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Fostering Gender Equality in the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, European Parliament Press Release, 23.10.2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201016IPR89563/fostering-gender-equality-in-the-eu-s-foreign-and-security-policy>

<sup>58</sup> Fostering gender equality in the EU's foreign and security policy, 23.10.2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20201016IPR89563/fostering-gender-equality-in-the-eu-s-foreign-and-security-policy>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Presentation of the report "A Feminist Foreign Policy for the EU". 25.06.2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2whNQvqn\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2whNQvqn_8)

<sup>62</sup> EU Missions Worldwide. <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/our-mission/eu-missions-worldwide/>

<sup>63</sup> EUCAP Sahel Niger: Council appoints new head of mission. Council of the EU. Press release, 16.12.2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/16/eucap-sahel-niger-council-appoints-new-head-of-mission/>

<sup>64</sup> EU Gender Action Plan III "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025", [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf)

3. Focusing on key areas of engagement: ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women; advancing equal participation and leadership; implementing the women, peace and security agenda, addressing challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation;
4. Leading by example, by establishing gender-responsive and gender-balanced leadership at top EU political and management levels;
5. Reporting and communicating on results, putting in place a quantitative, qualitative, and inclusive monitoring system to increase public accountability.

In the coming years, the range of issues covered by the EU's gender policy will expand with new elements: combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as gender cyber violence<sup>65</sup>, improving gender balance in leadership positions in the management of the EU's largest companies<sup>66</sup> etc. At the same time, strategic documents and the EU's official rhetoric never went beyond gender policy per se, even when they demanded the strengthening of women's role in foreign and security policy.

Some MEPs, including The Greens, experts and civic activists, have taken the leadership in initiating the debate about a transition to a "feminist" policy of the EU. For example, the Berlin-based Center for Feminist Foreign Policy conducted detailed research into European experience in this sphere and developed a range of recommendations for Brussels in the report, *A Feminist Foreign Policy for the EU*<sup>67</sup>. MEPs from the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and Committee on Foreign Affairs joined public discussion of the report.<sup>68</sup> German MEP Hannah Neumann pointed out that now is a good time to introduce a feminist EU foreign policy for a number of reasons. Firstly, modern challenges and threats call for this. Secondly, many European countries have already gone down this path. Thirdly, this course will enjoy strong support from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister Annalena Baerbock, and the leaders of other countries and political forces.

<sup>65</sup> Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 08.03.2022, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105&from=EN>

<sup>66</sup> Gender Equality: The EU is breaking the glass ceiling thanks to new gender balance targets on company boards, 22.11.2022 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_22\\_7074](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_7074)

<sup>67</sup> *A Feminist Foreign Policy for the European Union*. Center for Feminist Foreign Policy, June 2020. <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/report-feminist-foreign-policy-for-the-eu>

<sup>68</sup> Presentation of the report "A Feminist Foreign Policy for the EU". 25.06.2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2whNQvpt\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2whNQvpt_8)

The authors mention misunderstanding of the concept of gender equality and women's rights as one of the problems on the path towards the implementation of a feminist foreign policy. This thinking reflects the dominant national discourse on gender in EU countries, whereby women are provided a 'step-ladder' preparing them to operate in a male dominated world without aiming to question or change dominant power structures.<sup>69</sup> Other problems listed in the report include the discrepancy between the EU's internal policies and its foreign and security policies in the international arena; the need to expand the notion of gender and include LGBTQIA+ in it, and a clear definition of the objects the EU should accomplish through a feminist foreign policy.

The key recommendations included in the report are as follows: reverse the militarisation of EU external action and prioritise human security; end arms exports from EU countries and companies registered within the EU; proactively support disarmament and non-proliferation; enhance the EU's role in conflict prevention and the search for peaceful solutions; bring the EU's foreign policy in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda; and conduct a more ambitious policy on climate change and environment protection. Obviously, these recommendations call for a serious revision after Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine. If combating structural inequalities, injustice and the protection of vulnerable groups are the core ideas of feminist theories, the current security situation requires stopping Russia's aggression and protecting Ukraine's civilian population first and foremost, then calls for disarmament.

Similarly, attempts to look at nuclear security and Iran through the perspective of a feminist foreign policy often lead to the portrayal of the EU exclusively as a soft power — in a stereotypical manner framed as "Europe as Venus,"<sup>70</sup> which significantly limits the EU's ability to influence the situation.

These examples do not mean that a feminist foreign policy has lost its relevance amid a full-scale armed conflict in the heart of Europe. On the contrary, the Russian-Ukrainian war makes the debate on the role of women in all spheres of life during war and peacetime more relevant, calls for a rapid response to new challenges, and forces a radical rethinking of the entire concept of feminist foreign policy in the new political and security reality.

A value-based policy aimed at promoting the EU's principles of diversity, inclusivity and gender equality in the world, as well as strengthening the role of women in foreign policy, diplomacy and security, will undoubtedly remain an important vector for the EU. On November 9, 2022, the EEAS

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* – p. 27.

<sup>70</sup> Cornelius Adebahr, Barbara Mittelhammer. *A Feminist Foreign Policy to Deal with Iran? Assessing the EU's Options*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2020. [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/AdebahrMittelhammer\\_FemFoPo\\_INTERIOR\\_v2.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/AdebahrMittelhammer_FemFoPo_INTERIOR_v2.pdf)

launched the WomEn Diplomats Network (WEDIN EU), a network of women diplomats, with participants from EU member-states and EEAS, including female leaders of professional networks, and associations of women diplomats from MFAs of member-states.

“Women have the duty to exert and show power including in diplomacy. When women sit at the negotiating table, agreements are more likely to be reached and most

of all implemented. As EU we have to lead by example and empower women also in third countries,” said Federica Mogherini, former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the launch of WEDIN EU.<sup>71</sup> The project is coordinated by Helena König, EEAS Deputy Secretary General and Chair of the Women in the EEAS (WEEAS) network. Similar initiatives are likely to be increasingly influential in the EU’s foreign policy in the future.

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**71** EU Launches Women Diplomats Network, 9 November 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-launches-women-diplomats-network\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-launches-women-diplomats-network_en)



## 4

## FEMINIST DIPLOMACY AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF UKRAINE: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WANT TO MOVE TO

Ukraine is fairly new to the concept of a feminist foreign policy. It is little known to the wider audience in Ukraine. “Ukrainian experts and diplomats tend to interpret feminist foreign policy as the need to increase the presence of women in the diplomatic service. Few think about whether conditions are created to enable women to move up the career ladder or that gender issues should be cross-cutting in all other state policies, including social, educational, economic and others,” says Daria Gaidai, Deputy Head of the Office of Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Olha Stefanishyna, who leads the government Commission for Coordination of Executive Bodies to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men. At the same time, the task of gender mainstreaming is the most urgent for Ukrainian diplomacy, given the need to continue internal reform, and in the context of cooperation with international partners.

When it comes to the prospects for a feminist foreign policy in Ukraine, we should look separately at the MFA’s internal HR policy and its external international aspect.

### 4.1 INTERNAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE MFA

Ukrainian women diplomats note that a stronger focus on gender issues, and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, have been a key trend of the past few years in the MFA’s internal policy. This has brought significant positive results within the short term.

“The last two ministers, Pavlo Klimkin and Dmytro Kuleba, are committed supporters of gender equality. These are the people who introduce changes not because they are trendy and not only because of our commitments under EU integration or international gender equality documents. They do it intentionally, following their personal convictions,” says Natalia Lopatina. “The number of women in the diplomatic service has increased in general and the number of women in leadership positions has increased severalfold in the past eight years. We now have nearly 30% of women in leadership positions in autonomous structural units of the central apparatus, from departments to autonomous units. Many women have lately been ap-

pointed as ambassadors abroad. This is a very positive dynamic. The fact of Ukrainian foreign policy has definitely become more feminine.”

At the same time, some women diplomats voice concern that the current institutional capacity of the MFA and other government bodies may be insufficient to make these accomplishments irreversible, regardless of who the next minister will be. On the one hand, it is obvious that the generational change in the MFA leadership has played an important role in the positive transformation, making Ukraine’s foreign policy younger and more feminine. On the other hand, institutional changes have been cemented in the legislation, and a number of strategic documents adopted to ensure sustainability of this reform in recent years.

Among other things, an institutional mechanism to ensure gender equality has been in place centrally and regionally since 2017. In 2020, the government Commission for Coordination of Executive Bodies to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men was established — it is chaired by the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

Following the gender audit, Ukraine’s MFA, jointly with UN Women, established the Commission on Gender Equality in 2020, chaired by Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and First Deputy Minister Emine Dzhaparova. According to Ukraine’s 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy, the implementation of this Strategy to ensure equal opportunities, aimed at supporting women’s leadership in the diplomatic service, will continue. The Strategy to ensure equal rights for women and men in the diplomatic service of Ukraine by 2025 was approved (the text is not available publicly). The Department of International Organizations includes a gender equality unit. The establishment of the Women Diplomat Club has been announced. Women have a leading role in the MFA structure. The representation of women is growing in the MFA’s central apparatus and its missions abroad — including in the position of ambassador — and working conditions are improving.

Still, some problems remain unresolved. They are deeper than the simplified perception of gender equality as meaning a higher number of women in the team.

Despite all the positive changes over recent years, most women diplomats still point to a stereotyped perception of the role of women in the diplomatic service. Among other things, this includes “biased attitude towards women diplomats from men of the older generation,” “persistence of the patriarchal culture and soviet legacy that leaves a footprint on the behavioural culture in general and the system of state governance in particular,” and the continuity of the institutional memory of older generations of diplomats from the time when mostly men studied at the Kyiv Institute of International Relations, while women could only work in administrative and technical capacities at the MFA.

Hence there is a failure to perceive women as independent professional diplomats and, more generally, a reluctance to change mentality and accept new rules, plus scepticism about gender issues per se.

“When it comes to work, women often have to work more than men to assert themselves professionally. When I started working 15 years ago, many women had to invest a lot more effort in order to be noticed and to make sure that the results of their work were recognised as the woman’s accomplishment rather than given to someone else. Tasks were often distributed unequally. While women were more qualified and had a university degree, the more responsible tasks were given to men and men performed more representation functions,” says Lilia Honcharevych, *chargé d’affaires* of Ukraine in Norway. According to her, the situation is better now, but some stereotypes persist: “For example, when a man and a woman enter a room, the man is often perceived as the boss and the woman as his assistant or a lower-rank diplomat.” Other women diplomats also note that when a diplomatic entity is run by a man, there is a good chance that the ideas of male colleagues will get more attention in discussions and decision-making.

“Your career grows quite dynamically and fast when you move from *attaché* to the position of counsellor,” says Natalia Galibarenko, the first woman to have led Ukraine’s Mission to NATO, and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs before that. “But when I was about to go to be number 2, counsellor, at an embassy abroad, I experienced a certain artificial ceiling for women. It was hard to rise above that benchmark. Therefore, I think many people face this — you have to be better among others in order to compensate for being a woman.”

According to most women diplomats interviewed for this research, some stereotypes on the matter of distribution of duties or thematic areas of work persist even if there are no formal restrictions on the level of the positions women can occupy. Posts in culture, public diplomacy and the media is where women are mostly seen in the diplomatic service. Even when ambassadors are women, they often have men as counsellors or political counsellors, because the general perception is that men should deal with political and security issues. This is where work should focus, and this needs to be taken into account when embassy teams are put together, women diplomats note. Kateryna Bilotil, First

Secretary for Culture at the Ukrainian Embassy in Belgium, confirms this: “When I started working, there were two job openings – SMM and security issues, and two candidates with identical basic experience. Essentially there was no question about who would be appointed to each of these areas. It was clear from minute one that a woman should do public diplomacy while a man should do serious analysis and security issues.” Of course, one example does not represent the whole system. But most female respondents highlighted this trend as an illustration of the generally distorted perception of women in the diplomatic service.

The accent on soft humanitarian issues applies to the traditional perception of the role of the diplomats’ wives and first ladies “who are usually engaged in humanitarian issues, charity nights, cultural and culinary diplomacy.” The war is helping break these stereotypes so that women can go beyond the normally narrow framework of soft diplomacy. Natalia Galibarenko says that “First Lady Olena Zelenska breaks this framework that has been shaped over decades. She has chosen her line – not just supporting her husband but dealing with the issues that are important for the country. This is very important because the First Lady represents the country. This is how we see ourselves, how we present ourselves, and how we create a new framework.”

This combination of female soft power and hard security issues that can be dealt with using soft power tools is another argument in favour of feminising foreign policy. The capacity to evoke emotions, such as speaking as a mother about orphaned children in wartime, and the knowledge of all the details of modern weapons, equips women diplomats with a larger toolkit in negotiations.

Moreover, the presence of women at the table of negotiations has its added value in complicated negotiations or conflict situations. According to Lilia Honcharevych, “when women lead delegations or are present at the table of negotiations, there are more chances to reach a compromise or get certain solutions. Talks tend to be more successful because women are focused on the result. There is a certain trend whereby gender policy-oriented countries are also oriented at peace talks, conflict resolution and mediation. Norway and Sweden are examples. In Norway, you see attempts to engage more women in difficult talks in order to achieve better results. The talks can be very tough but because women are not seen as a source of danger, she helps build trust, which is a necessary component of talks and peace process.” Federica Mogherini, former High Representative for the EU’s Foreign Affairs, also highlighted this concept at the presentation of the EU’s Women Diplomats Network: “When women sit at the negotiating table, agreements are more likely to be reached and most of all implemented.”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> EU Launches Women Diplomats Network, 9 November 2022, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-launches-women-diplomats-network\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-launches-women-diplomats-network_en)

Women diplomats are not uniform in their opinions of quotas as a possible path towards solving the problems mentioned above. They mostly see quotas as “humiliation” or “compromise in the matter of professionalism.” “You need a professional in their right place, not a representative of one gender or another, in diplomatic work. We cannot walk away from the principle of meritocracy.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, I do not think that any discrimination, even positive, is the best solution. Instead, we should focus on creating equal conditions for appointing qualified men and women and their career progress,” says Natalia Lopatina. The respondents speak about the need to improve the qualifications of women, and about establishing an independent external monitoring system, to look at all the cases where people face possible discrimination or the misunderstanding of gender issues by colleagues or bosses. “This should be an independent external commission to investigate violations of gender equality that would work on a permanent basis. Any diplomat – man or woman – could go to the commission to have their case looked at without consequences for their career. Apart from that, it could be useful to have a gender equality course where colleagues would be taught about what violations of gender equality are, what sexism is, how to avoid becoming a victim of such violation or committing such a violation, and how to counter these violations,” Natalia Lopatina suggests.

While highlighting the need to apply the criteria for professional quality to candidates, Natalia Galibarenko has a different opinion on quotas. “I used to always oppose quotas for women because I thought that they belittle us. Why do we need quotas when we are professionals anyway? Then I realized that this is like with songs in Ukrainian on Ukrainian radio. Sometimes good ideas should be imposed so that they have a chance to live, then society understands the positive impact of these changes and they stay. Even if we are not prepared to fill these quotas now, it is important for us to create a system that ensures equal opportunities for all.”

Other women diplomats are in favour of quotas or additional incentives for women so as to equalise the starting positions. They mention “historical trauma” and the marginalisation of women in Ukrainian society, stereotypical thinking, the lack of a tradition of appointing women to leading positions, the reluctance to appoint women to difficult thematic or geographic areas of foreign policy, as well as the occasional lack of confidence and self-criticism of women, or their reluctance to claim their rights, as the key reasons for the basic inequality.

In this sense, it is important not only to ensure that women are appointed to certain positions, but to help them go all the way towards achieving this. Introduced and fully implemented MFA initiatives, such as mentorship for young colleagues – both men and women – workshops and seminars on female leadership, a club of women diplomats

and others, could help enhance the capacity of women in the diplomatic service, and improve their qualifications. «Women empowerment and ties among women are an extremely important factor, – says Iryna Shum, Consul General of Ukraine in Dusseldorf. – Historically discriminated against, women have weak ties among themselves, within the community. I think this is the aspect we need to develop further in the Ukrainian diplomatic service. Germany has interesting experience in this. Its MFA has an informal association of women diplomats that strives to present the interests of women in the diplomatic service, defend the importance of feminist foreign policy and serve as a platform for an open debate on these issues. German women diplomats from all over the world gather regularly – mostly online given the specifics of their job – to invite speakers and share experience. This community exists and provides support from within.” In other words, in addition to HeForShe<sup>74</sup>, a campaign of men’s solidarity with women which the Ukrainian MFA has joined, a nominal SheForShe campaign might help strengthen horizontal ties, mutual support and expertise sharing among women.

The effort to ensure equal rights for men and women in the diplomatic service should take into consideration the difficulty of the life-work balance for women. Women diplomats face double pressure, as they combine professional and family roles, and often meet reluctance from higher-ranking officials to hire them as senior diplomatic staff in diplomatic offices abroad because of children, as this may allegedly distract women from work when their children fall sick, have school events, etc. “Essentially, you grow in your career but you have to prove all the time that you can sacrifice your personal time, personal life in some aspects to show that you will be able to serve in a certain position,” says Natalia Galibarenko.

The outdated habit of not welcoming or putting into practice the appointment of a diplomatic couple in the same embassy abroad aggravates the situation. While there is no such legislative restriction – except for direct conflict of interest, i.e. direct subordination between family members – the attempts of ambassadors to hire diplomatic couples faces numerous difficulties and resistance from the system. The choice between family or career results in frequent divorces within the MFA system, or in situations where women have to “follow men”, voluntarily quitting their own diplomatic careers. Meanwhile, the benefits of working together as a diplomatic couple in one country are obvious: this helps keep the family together and cuts back on valuable diplomatic staff, as well as saving on rent and school costs, and it also creates more incentives and a healthy atmosphere in embassies. By contrast, the rate of divorce and the number of single women diplomats from the older generation point to systemic deficiencies.

<sup>73</sup> Професійності, фаховості (від англ. – merit – заслуги)

<sup>74</sup> HeForShe is a global solidarity movement in support of gender equality launched by UN Women, whereby men and boys become the main agents of change, <https://heforsheukraine.info>

The key task now is not to increase the number of women in the diplomatic service in general, or even in top positions. Women diplomats highlight the fact that the key task is to create favourable conditions for the women who are already working in the diplomatic service, and for the families of diplomats.

One solution is a profound change in the MFA's HR policy to not just allow, but encourage joint long-term postings for diplomatic couples.

Employment opportunities for a diplomat's spouse in the country of posting is another important factor. Ukraine already has such remits for its citizens in some countries. But this practice must be expanded. In the EU, special attention in gender policy in the diplomatic service is always paid to family-friendly policies. Sometimes in order to help a woman work as ambassador, one needs to think about career opportunities for the accompanying or "trailing" spouses, notes the author of *From Parallel to Dual Careers: Diplomatic Spouses*.<sup>75</sup>

Interesting and worth exploring is the practice of combining posts in a diplomatic couple. "For example, when a man and a woman hold equal posts within the MFA system, they can combine these posts when they go abroad. This has a positive impact on their family life and their career growth," says Lilia Honcharevych. "The UK, too, has this practice where spouses can alternate in the role of ambassador. Thus, they can be confident that both are growing and neither is sacrificing their career."

Indeed, the UK was among the first proactive advocates of the idea of feminist diplomacy before it became a trend.<sup>76</sup> Among other things, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office first introduced the practice of sharing ambassadors, where spouses alternate as ambassadors in a foreign country for four months each during a year. Tom Carter and Carolyn Davidson, the UK's Ambassadors to Zambia in 2008-2012, were the first couple of sharing ambassadors.<sup>77</sup> This was their second experience as sharing ambassadors, after sharing the post of deputy ambassadors to Slovakia in 2003-2008.<sup>78</sup> Later on, the MFA of Switzerland borrowed the FCDO's idea and appointed the Burgener couple as Switzerland's Ambassadors to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.<sup>79</sup> France and Germany have seen similar practices.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Annabel Hedry. "From Parallel to Dual Careers: Diplomatic Spouses", 1998. <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/from-parallel-to-dual-careers-diplomatic-spouses/>

<sup>76</sup> Women and the Foreign Service. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/women-and-the-foreign-office>

<sup>77</sup> UK's diplomatic double in Zambia <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7654649.stm>

<sup>78</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Ambassador, The Guardian, 2 Aug. 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/aug/02/zambia>

<sup>79</sup> Husband and Wife Team Form a Diplomatic Duo. SWI, 4 July 2009, <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/husband-and-wife-team-form-a-diplomatic-duo/7484880>

<sup>80</sup> Married couple share German ambassador role, The Jakarta post, 9 June 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/06/09/married-couple-share-german-ambassador-role.html>

Given the massive plans to open new Ukrainian embassies in Africa, Asia and Latin America,<sup>81</sup> where teams are small, resources limited and staff have to cover several countries, the option of sharing posts or allowing diplomatic couples to work at the same embassy can be an additional incentive for working in difficult climatic and security conditions, as well as to boost the MFA's institutional capacity in the Global South.

## 4.2 EXTERNAL ASPECT OF FOREIGN POLICY AND UKRAINE

The importance of understanding the priorities of a feminist foreign policy, and applying some of its elements in Ukraine in the external dimension, should be looked at from several perspectives:

### As a message about compliance with democratic values

Different representation of women and men in foreign and security policy is not just a matter of HR policy in the diplomatic service. It is also a powerful message externally that mirrors domestic processes. "The issue of gender equality is the issue of our compliance with democratic values," says Daria Gaidai. "This is why gender policy and gender equality are among the key areas in which Ukraine's international partners are interested. International partners expect that all policies designed [in Ukraine] will have a strong gender component. If it is not there, questions arise about inclusivity and social equality in Ukrainian society."

Having a balanced gender policy and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men now create a positive context in Ukraine's relations with its international partners. Continuing these positive changes even in the midst of war and unprecedented security challenges, is seen as a marker of "the European values entrenched in Ukrainian society," says Iryna Shum. "The proximity of Ukrainian mentality to Europe has become obvious to many, by contrast to Russian mentality. Increasingly more people in Germany now see Ukrainians as 'one of them'."

At the same time, it is important for Ukraine to fulfil gender commitments and make sure that women are always duly represented in Ukrainian delegations. Lilia Honcharevych points out that "this is an important message. Our partners in Canada, Norway and Sweden pay attention to this. There is a certain pattern whereby when women lead delegations from Ukraine they manage to accomplish better results on the amount and con-

<sup>81</sup> Zelensky announces the opening of Ukraine's embassies in ten countries of Africa. <https://www.unian.ua/politics/zelenskiy-anonsuvav-vidkryttya-posolstv-ukrajini-u-desyatoch-krajinah-afriki-12087963.html>

ditions of assistance. It is important to increase the number of women in parliamentary committees for foreign affairs, defence and security. This, too, will be viewed favourably by Ukraine's partners and contribute to a more fruitful legislative process and interparliamentary cooperation. Norway's parliamentary Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs is currently led by a woman, Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide, former minister of defence and foreign affairs. Here [in Norway], they always pay attention to how much women are engaged in top-level decision-making."

The same applies to the organisation of high-level international conferences. Sometimes, Ukraine unintentionally invites male-only panels. This catches the attention of international partners, and affects Ukraine's image negatively.

### As a guarantee of Ukraine's successful European and Euro-Atlantic integration

Gender equality in security and defence in Ukraine "is one of the key priorities in state policy on Euro-Atlantic integration", according to NATO standards and recommendations.<sup>82</sup>

"Ukraine's progress in gender equality over recent years, including in the security and defence sector, was always a strong illustration of Ukraine as a progressive democratic country that can be an equal partner of Western democracies. Our accomplishments in gender equality always benefited us. This is not just about having more women in power. Systemic change is important because it allows for equal rights and opportunities in different spheres," comments Daria Gaidai, Deputy Head of the Office of Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

While women have been traditionally represented at the top level in the sphere of European integration, expanding their presence in security and defence is an accomplishment of recent years. "When more women deal with the NATO theme, there are more women in the respective Verkhovna Rada committees, in top positions at the Ministry of Defence, this has a positive impact on our dialogue with NATO," Gaidai says. Natalia Galibarenko, Head of Ukraine's Mission to NATO, also points out that "for transatlantic colleagues, a wide representation of women in leading positions is a sign of being civilized, a proof that we are walking away from the Soviets. It is a mark of a modern perspective of the world where all people have equal opportunities."

Moreover, this is in line with the modern approaches within NATO. Experts are uniform in predicting that a woman

is very likely to lead NATO after Jens Stoltenberg, and that woman might be from Eastern Europe.<sup>83</sup> All of this makes wider representation of women in foreign and security policy an investment in Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic future.

### As a tool of war diplomacy and restoration of justice

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine made all the more pertinent the implementation of the UNSC resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security, passed in 2000 when Ukraine was a member of the UN Security Council. Ukraine has successfully fulfilled two National Action Plans (NAPs). It is now updating the NAP through 2025, which the Government originally approved in October 2020.

At the same time, stronger international attention paid to Ukraine, as a result of Russia's armed aggression, allows Ukraine to show leadership in defending gender equality principles in the world. According to Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the UN and member of the UN Women Executive Board Bureau,<sup>84</sup> "Ukraine has made progress in promoting feminist approaches even as the country has been under attack... the new wave of the Russian armed aggression has clear colonial, patriarchal and sexist underpinnings. Its armed forces are... exploiting sexual violence in extreme forms."<sup>85</sup> Therefore, Ukraine should unite around itself those countries with a feminist foreign policy, to ensure the protection of women's and girls' rights in war, initiate investigation of sexual and gender violence, and to hold perpetrators to account.

Apart from that, as Ukraine works on establishing an international tribunal to investigate war crimes resulting from the Russian aggression, it is important to speak about a wider framework for looking at the Chechen, Georgian and Syrian cases in the future, for which Ukraine can create a precedent.

Working with its international partners to rehabilitate and provide psychological assistance to the victims of crimes of violence – including men, women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community – alongside helping people overcome PTSD, and returning children to Ukraine who were illegally deported from the occupied territory to Russia, is another important task for Ukrainian diplomacy in the

<sup>82</sup> Гендерна політика в нормативно-правових документах. Під заг. редакцією К. Левченко, 2020. - с. 112. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/18%20-%20Department/18%20-%20PDF/02.2021/genderna-polityka.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> NATO Seeks New Chief and Women Top Candidates' List, France 24, 10 February 2022. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220210-nato-seeks-new-chief-and-women-top-candidates-list>

<sup>84</sup> Ukraine was elected to the UN Women Executive Board for 2022-2024, MFA of Ukraine, April 20, 2021 <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/ukrayinu-obrano-do-skladu-vikonavchoyi-radi-oon-zhinki-na-2022-2024-roki?fbclid=IwAR1kco4lokCW0PArSMLF7pr62Ggyj10orep022MMDVHfuiACuxgkLWHwnng>

<sup>85</sup> Sergiy Kyslytsya. Online discussion "Responding to the Invasion of Ukraine: The Impact of Feminist Foreign Policies", 26.04.2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9SkQ6J9W8>



coming years. Each of these areas will call for more advanced gender competences of diplomats, and a deeper partnership with the countries that already pursue a feminist foreign policy.

## As a prerequisite for international development aid and Ukraine's post-war reconstruction

Continuing systemic change and gender mainstreaming are important for attracting international aid for Ukraine's post-war restoration.

Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, points out that the inclusion of a gender perspective in all institutional policies are continuing, despite the ongoing war, as are efforts to fulfil Ukraine's international commitments in this sphere under the government's strategies.

In June 2022, Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention. The 2022-2025 Strategy of Public Finance Management Reform entails continued implementation of a gender-oriented approach to budgeting at the national and local levels. Because war makes the problem of employment for women more pertinent, the Ministry of Economy has drafted a National Strategy to decrease the pay gender gap, taking into account these new challenges. As part of its efforts to fulfil its commitments under the Biarritz Partnership, the Ministry of Education has drafted a Strategy to implement gender equality in education by 2030. The Strategy was adopted on December 20, 2022. Ukraine continues to implement an initiative to create a barrier-free environment. All this allows Ukraine to both carry on with important domestic reforms, and to communicate these accomplishments to the outside world, thus helping Ukrainian diplomacy seek development aid.

Levchenko points out that "gender aspects should be taken into consideration at the earliest stage of reconstruction planning in order to guarantee that all strategies, programmes and projects meet the needs of women and men in terms of full engagement, participation and representation, and that all resources will be distributed fairly." The Gender Equality expert group was established for this purpose – its members joined all 24 working groups under the National Council for Restoration of Ukraine From War that cover all spheres linked to Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and development.

Coordinating international development aid projects and post-war reconstruction policies with international partners is an important task of the diplomatic service. The drafting of the Ukraine Reconstruction Plan offers a good illustration of this. It was presented at the Lugano Ukraine Recovery Conference in July 2022.<sup>86</sup> According

to Daria Gaidai, "a huge document was prepared that did not have this gender component initially – and our partners noticed this immediately. Now, gender equality and inclusion are included in Ukraine recovery principles. Demands on the principle of gender equality are everywhere today."

In this sense, the adoption of the State Strategy to ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women by 2030<sup>87</sup> in August 2022 was an important move. "It's not just the Government and NGOs, but our international and development partners were really interested in the Strategy," Kateryna Levchenko says. "They often had a question: we fund the energy sector, and what about gender problems there? We fund the environment, and what do we rely on – how do we single out gender issues in this sphere? There has been some research but we have had no comprehensive state policy in this sphere. This document was prepared exactly with an understanding that it is very useful for us and for our development partners. Especially today, in the context of Ukraine's recovery."

Obviously, the post-war recovery process is not just an opportunity to build a country of a new higher quality, but a chance to introduce international standards in all internal processes.

## As an element of Ukraine's soft power: a model for the successful transformation of other countries

While Ukraine is not in the process of developing its institutional capacities, its positive experience and the results it has already accomplished in gender policy allow Kyiv to share best practice with those partners that are just embarking on their path.

"We have things to share," says Kateryna Levchenko, Vice Chair of Gender Equality Commission at the Council of Europe. "The Council of Europe is a good platform for sharing information and expertise, and establishing cooperation. Our Czech colleagues have recently asked us to share our experience of the Istanbul Convention ratification. To me, this shows that other countries recognise Ukraine's accomplishments in this sphere."

Moreover, experts point out that Ukraine stands out among other countries in the region for its advanced practices in gender policy, the feminisation of its foreign policy, and its protection of marginalised communities. This leaves Ukraine with both the moral right and the instruments for promoting its soft power through the tools of a feminist foreign policy.

<sup>87</sup> On Approval of the State Strategy to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men by 2030, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, August 12, 2022 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/proskhvalennia-derzhavnoi-stratehii-zabezpechennia-rivnykh-prav-ta-mozhlyvosti-752-120822>

<sup>86</sup> Ukraine Recovery Conference, July 4-5, 2022 <https://ua.unc2022.com/>

## As a nation-building tool: Ukraine as a leader of the free world

In a wider sense, the implementation of feminist foreign policy approaches allows Ukraine to make full use of its potential as a leader of the free world, which it has gained with its resistance to the Russian aggression.

Feminism researcher and activist Oksana Potapova rightly points out that the ideas of feminism in foreign policy should be viewed not just as equal opportunities for women and men, but as an effort to combat systemic inequalities, the unjust distribution of power and any discrimination.<sup>88</sup> Thus, when Ukraine is fighting against Russia's imperial ambitions, calling on the world to resist Russian aggression, advocating stripping Russia of its permanent membership of the UN Security Council, or defending the rights of indigenous peoples, it is already conducting a feminist foreign policy to a certain extent. It is in the creation and protection of the model of a liberal, democratic and inclusive society that the key transformative (feminism) power of the Ukrainian State lies.

Experts believe that this is the key message which Ukrainian diplomats should communicate from the platforms of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and many other multilateral platforms.

On the one hand, this creates an additional argument for uniting other countries of the democratic world that already practice feminist foreign policy and are important partners of Ukraine in deterring Russia's aggression – including Canada, Sweden, Germany, the UK and Baltic States – around Ukraine.

On the other hand, Ukraine should articulate its position more clearly, when it comes to the protection of women's rights in other countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran and others. Given the intention to create a Ukrainian International Aid Agency, aimed at "expanding the geography of influence and creating new lines of cooperation with partners"<sup>89</sup> in the Global South, Ukraine should outline the criteria for providing such aid from the very beginning, including in the areas of human rights and women's rights.

War has helped change the perception of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the world profoundly. Among other things, it has allowed Ukraine to relinquish its Soviet patriarchal legacy that persisted in seeing the woman's role in a *Kinder,*

*Küche, Kirche* triangle<sup>90</sup>. A woman's new role in Ukrainian society as a soldier, diplomat, volunteer, expert or entrepreneur has largely led to the re-evaluation of the perception of Ukraine in the international arena.

"We are not perceived as weak, we are perceived as women who can fight for our rights, for whom freedom and justice are important. As they are for Ukraine itself," Iryna Shum elaborates. "Generally, Ukraine looks very feminine as a country. There are many women in Germany now who are changing the perception of refugees and of Ukrainians. They get registered as private entrepreneurs and communicate clearly that they do not just want to live here. They want a) to not burden the German social system, and b) help Ukraine by making money here. This is a very dignified face of Ukraine, and this face is female."

The task of Ukraine's feminist foreign policy is to show this face to the world.

<sup>88</sup> Oksana Potapova, Online discussion "Responding to the Invasion of Ukraine: The Impact of Feminist Foreign Policies", 26.04.2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-9SkQ6J9W8>

<sup>89</sup> Ukraine initiates the establishment of an international aid agency – President in a meeting with Ukrainian diplomats. Office of the President, December 23, 2022 <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-iniciyuye-stvorennya-agentstva-mizhnarodnoyi-dopomo-80053>

<sup>90</sup> *Children-kitchen-church* in German, a phrase that describes the main historical perception of a woman's social role in the conservative system of values. This phrase implies narrowing down the role of women to just three spheres, including raising children, cooking food and going to church.

## 5

# RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT UKRAINE SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

A feminist foreign policy is important for Ukraine on two levels – those of internal processes and interaction with international partners.

This leads to the following recommendations:

### 5.1 INTERNAL PROCESSES:

1. Continue initiated reforms and gender mainstreaming in the MFA's policy; ensure the development of institutional capacities and implementation of already adopted strategic documents in this area; increase the transparency and accountability of these processes;
2. Ensure implementation of declared initiatives, including the work of the Club of Women Diplomats and the institute for mentorship of young colleagues; help build horizontal contacts among women diplomats; launch a women's leadership development programme;
3. Hold campaigns and workshops to raise awareness on gender issues and best practices, and the implementation of a feminist foreign policy for MFA employees at all levels on a regular basis;
4. Explore quotas in the diplomatic service for posts taken, as well as in thematic and geographical areas. This includes increasing the number of women in leading positions, including in countries considered "difficult" posting, as Minister-counsellors and counsellors for political affairs;
5. Conduct gender assessment of the Hennadiy Udovenko Diplomatic Academy curriculum; continue thematic workshops to improve gender competences for all diplomats;
6. Conduct a new gender audit with UN Women in 2024;
7. Create favourable conditions for diplomatic families. Encourage the appointment of diplomatic couples to the same embassy abroad for long-term postings, provided that there are no conflicts of interest; explore the option of introducing sharing ambassadorial approaches for diplomatic couples, especially for embassies with limited resources and small teams;
8. Explore the establishment of an independent external commission to investigate violations of gender equality, which would operate permanently under the MFA framework;

9. Enhance cooperation with the civil society and independent experts, to explore best gender policy practices and ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the diplomatic service.

### 5.2 INTERACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

1. Given modern global trends and the priority issues faced by Ukraine's diplomacy, it would be helpful to consider declaring Ukraine's feminist foreign policy as one that pays great attention to human rights protection, inclusion, gender equality, combating sexual and gender violence, protecting marginalised groups, combating systemic inequalities, and harnessing the transformative power of diplomacy;
2. Make sure that gender equality and inclusion are included in Ukraine's post-war recovery programmes, and as a factor in its receipt of development aid;
3. Make more pertinent the protection of the rights of women, men and members of the LGBTQIA+ community amid an armed conflict, using multilateral diplomacy platforms. Take into account a feminist agenda when designing international events, and the agenda for Ukrainian representation in international organisations;
4. Consider the factor of gender equality and women's rights protection if Ukraine provides development aid to third countries;
5. Given Ukraine's international image as a country that is fighting for democratic values and freedoms, develop and articulate more clearly Ukraine's position on the protection of women's rights in Iran, Afghanistan and other cases of brutal violation of human rights, including the rights of marginalised groups (within Ukraine's current limitations and strategic interests);
6. Take into account the context of a feminist foreign policy in developing bilateral relations with the countries that have already instituted a feminist foreign policy or are implementing its principles, in appointing ambassadors, or sending out top-level delegations, interparliamentary friendship groups and more;
7. Present Ukraine as a country that has already accomplished success in gender policy, and is willing to share its expertise with other countries – e.g. on the ratifica-



- tion of the Istanbul Convention, the initiation of strategic document design in gender policy, etc.;
8. Use the element of feminist discourse to communicate with international partners, in terms of public diplomacy and image policy. Among other things, help build a positive image of Ukraine as a country of strong and successful women in the army, diplomacy, politics, civil society, entrepreneurship and more.
  9. Ensure compliance with the principle of gender balance in Ukrainian delegations, and the organisation of international conferences, expert panels, working groups and committees.

## Annex 1

### RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS RESEARCH:

**Kateryna Bilotil**, First Secretary, Head of the Cultural and Information Centre of the Ukrainian Embassy in Belgium, previously a Second Secretary of the Public Diplomacy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with seven years in the diplomatic service

**Daria Gaidai** – Deputy Head to the Office of the Vice-Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Chair of the Government Commission for Coordination of Efforts by the Executive Authority to Ensure Equal Gender Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men

**Natalia Galibarenko** – Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. Head of the Mission of Ukraine to NATO (since 2021), Ukraine's Ambassador to the UK (2015-2020), First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in 2012-2015. Galibarenko has spent 22 years in the diplomatic service

**Lilia Honcharevych** – chargé d'affaires of Ukraine in Norway; previously – two postings in Sweden and work in var-

ious capacities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' central apparatus. Honcharevych has been in the diplomatic service for 15 years

**Kateryna Levchenko** – Government Commissioner for Gender Policy and Vice Chair of Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe since 2020

**Natalia Lopatina** – First Class Counsellor, Counsellor-Minister of the Embassy of Ukraine in the Turkish Republic in 2018-2022, prior to that – top positions at the Presidential Administration of Ukraine in 2015-2018, Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and long-term postings to Italy and Australia. Lopatina has been in the diplomatic service for 21 years

**Iryna Shum** – Consul General of Ukraine in Dusseldorf since 2021, Consul of the General Consulate of Ukraine in Munich in 2018-2021. Shum has been in the diplomatic service for 12 years

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## IS UKRAINE READY FOR A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?



The understanding of the concept of a feminist foreign policy remains quite limited in Ukraine today. It is mostly narrowed down to gender equality in the diplomatic service.



Studying the experience of those foreign partners who have introduced feminist approaches in foreign policy is important for Ukraine.



Gender-balanced and anti-discrimination policy in various spheres should become one of the preconditions for cooperation with international partners in the context of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, promotion of Ukraine's image and a tool of war diplomacy and restoration of justice.