

A Feminist Foreign Policy for the European Union

As envisioned by the Gender in Geopolitics Institute



ABOUT US

Created in February 2020, the **Gender in Geopolitics Institute** is the **only think tank** in France which **uses gender as a tool to explore** and understand the complex realities of international affairs.

In the **post-MeToo era**, when there has been an awakening of mentalities and an awareness of the importance of talking about gender issues, it is essential to adopt **a gendered vision**, sensitive to the condition of women and the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, in order to understand our societies, and above all, to think of a more inclusive and egalitarian world.

WHAT IS A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ?

By definition, a feminist foreign policy aims to be **a concrete strategy for a state to promote**, in its diplomatic relationships, ideals and good practices to achieve gender equality and to fulfill human rights for all genders.

This policy intends to **consider gender issues** in all the activities of international institutions and their operators, within all geographical areas.

The goal of this political struggle of defending and promoting gender minorities' rights is also presented as **a tool to serve other foreign policy priorities, including but not limited to development, peace and stability**, and more broadly every objective linked to the implementation of **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.



WHY PROMOTE A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ?

A presentation of the three main reasons why the European Union should but also needs to implement a Feminist Foreign Policy in order to achieve its objectives.

1

An issue of international solidarity

The development of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted **certain human rights violations**. More precisely, the reports on gender inequality during this period have shown **a gap between rhetoric and actions**. Effectively, while its contribution makes the European Union the **2nd most significant contributor** to the OECD Official Development Assistance, **only a few of these resources are used to achieve gender equality**.

0,04%
this is the share of the EU budget dedicated to equality in 2022.

The first anniversary of the Gender Equality Forum, by the end of June 2022, has reminded the commitment taken by the European Union **to make significant progress and achieve a gender-equal Europe by 2025**.

68.6 out of 100
is the score of the EU according to the Gender Equality Index, an increase of only 5% in ten years.

In light of the new emerging issues, **greater efforts are necessary**, if not mandatory, to achieve **respect for human rights as well as international solidarity**.



Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are defined as the right to **have full control over the basic aspects of one's private life** without being subject to stigma, coercion, discrimination or violence.

This includes a complete education on sexuality, safe and secure abortion and birth control rights, family planning policies, STI prevention and treatment, and protection from abusive practices. **SRHR are a key to social progress** and the fight against poverty or even inequality.

Despite recent progress, access to **those rights remains unequal depending on the geographic position**. Globally, it is estimated that:

Six European countries still retain highly restrictive abortion laws and do not allow abortion on request or on broad social grounds.

As shown above, the choice of how to have an abortion is not always guaranteed. Yet, **the right to make one's own decisions about one's body and one's future is one of the foundations of bodily autonomy**. Without the protection of these rights, other Sustainable Development Goals, such as the reduction of poverty or hunger, may be jeopardised.

3

A response to sustainable development goals

Adopted in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals are a global call to action aiming in designing a more equitable and sustainable form of development. This strategy is composed of seventeen interrelated objectives among which achieving gender equality is the fifth one.



The recent succession of global crisis has shown that women and gender minorities are more vulnerable and more affected by the impact of such disturbances, whether they are economic, political, sanitary or related to climate change. As an example, during environmental disasters, women's lives, livelihoods, health, safety and security are even more jeopardised than in normal times.

Therefore, due to this correlation and interdependence between the different goals, not only gender equality should be one to achieve, but it must be integrated as an analytical perspective into every single other ones. One of the key to implement such approach is the promotion of a feminist foreign policy that has the ambition to bring out real structure change.





WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME IN THE UE ?

A summary of the political, social and economic barriers which prevent the European Union to attain its objectives and achieve sustainable development goals.

WORK EQUALITY

There are still **several barriers to gender equality as well as women's and young girls' empowerment.**

Consequently, their participation in the economic, political or social life of the society is affected. For instance :

- Women are **more likely than men to be engaged in precarious employment.**
- **Less than two (39%) out of five members of the European Parliament is a woman.**



FUNDINGS

There is a **significant gap between strong rhetoric to promote gender in the international arena and insufficient financial support to address gender equality needs in a sustainable way.**

Notably :

- **Only 4% of the EU's bilateral development aid includes gender equality as a primary objective.**
- In comparison, Spain and the Netherlands alone stand at **24% and 19%** respectively.



European diplomacy **plays a leading role on the international scene.** In fact, the European Union is one of the most active organisations in multilateral forums to **protect and promote women's rights.**

Specifically, through the adoption of the **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and a Regional Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations**, the EU is advocating for:

- Women's **greater participation in peace-building activities;**
- **A higher protection against violations** of their rights;
- **Better access to justice and anti-discrimination services.**

Although **women lead peaceful movements and community recovery programs** in post-conflict situations, they tend to constitute the **majority of refugee and displaced populations, as well as the recurring targets of war tactics** such as **sexual violence.**

In addition, **women are often left out of formal peacemaking processes** and many peace agreements **do not include provisions for their needs.**





WHAT DOES THE GENDER IN GEOPOLITICS INSTITUTE RECOMMEND ?

A non-exhaustive list of examples the European Union could use in order to enforce a feminist foreign policy within its global strategy in a meaningful and effective way.

Define

Define concretely the European feminist foreign policy through the drafting of a strategic document, including indicators, a budget and a regular impact assessment. **It must be written in the European administrative organisation** in order to be respected by all MEPs and to guarantee its implementation.

Integrate

Integrate a gendered perception into the European instruments' missions, and more generally into **every decision initiated by the European Commission**.

Encourage

Encourage the **organisation of feminist networks at the European level** through **better regulation of digital tools** as well as **limit the development of masculinist and conservative movements**.

Reinforce

Reinforce the links between member states in contributing to sustainable political and social change in favour of feminist diplomacy. This link must be permanent and lead to a progressive unification of protection standards.

Take

Take into consideration gender in the strategies to fight against sexist and sexual violence and ensure the proper application of legal frameworks such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

Ensure

Ensure that **ODA funding is dedicated to measures that enable concrete changes in favour of gender equality**, such as comprehensive sexuality education, access to safe and effective contraceptive methods, the fight against menstrual insecurity, the construction of new community maternity units, and the improvement of medical care for women's diseases.

Guarantee

Guarantee the **fair representation of women in the political participation in the institutions of the European Union** in order to achieve them a concrete and exponential decision-making power.

Support

Support European projects committed to gender equality. The distribution of this budget should be independent of the state concerned.