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## Conference

# Walking the Talk: Feminist Foreign Policy in Action

Monday, 23 October 2023

Venue:

Renaissance Brussels Hotel  
Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels

### Context

Feminist Foreign Policy has gained significant ground in policy discourse over the past years, with many countries in Europe and worldwide proclaiming a feminist approach to their external actions. Offering a strong intersectional lens to rethink existing power structures both in global politics and in societies, it enables deep processes of self-reflection and rethinking external policies. What can be learned from the existing concepts and best practices, and how can they be applied at the EU level or beyond? This conference aims to provide some perspectives on selected fields of EU external action.

The conference will also formally launch the Feminist Foreign Policy Progressive Voices Collective, co-chaired by Ann Linde (Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Sweden) and Benedicta Lasi (Secretary General of Socialist International, Ghana), aiming to develop policy recommendations for a European Feminist Foreign Policy approach. Learn more [about the project here](#).

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## Agenda

09:30 – 09:40

### Introductory Remarks

- **Christiane Kesper**, Director, FES EU Office

09:40 – 10:15

### Impulse session: **Why do we still need a feminist foreign policy? (Re)defining its meaning.**

Sweden had been the pioneer of feminist foreign policy by daring to launch this transformative policy approach long before many others followed suit. Since then, various countries have joined the club, including France, Canada, Spain and Mexico, and most recently Germany and Chile. Therefore, this talk involving key voices in the field shall set the general tone of the conference. Under what circumstances did FFP emerge? To what extent have its interpretations evolved over time? Do we all mean the same when we speak about FFP? Why do we still need it?

#### Keynote speakers:

- **Ann Linde**, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden
- **Benedicta Lasi**, Secretary General, Socialist International
- **Jennifer Thomson**, Senior Lecturer, University of Bath

Chair: **Ainara Bascuñana**, Head of Communication, FEPS

10:15 – 11:30

### Panel I: **FFP in times of crises: making the WPS Agenda a must-have rather than a cosmetic afterthought**

As the world has been facing multiple external crises beyond its borders, achieving substantial increases in responsiveness requires the capacity to integrate gendered consideration in ad-hoc, emergency decision-making from the early stages. Precisely as immediate responses are required to intervene in conflict-ridden or other areas impacted by natural disasters, the ability to mobilise gender-sensitive assessment tools becomes all the more essential. The implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda) is a precondition to ensure that the rights, agency and protection of women and girls are guaranteed at all times and to secure an equitable role for women at all stages of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace-building and post-conflict rehabilitation. Drawing on existing practices, experts in this panel will, amongst others, discuss how the EU and other international bodies can become trend-setters in ensuring that FFP is no longer considered a cosmetic afterthought but much rather becomes an integral part of any external action to consider the real policy impacts on people in the receiving countries.

Panel discussion with:

- **Jonna Naumanen**, Senior Advisor to the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- **Daniela Sepúlveda Soto**, Project Director, Plataforma para la Política Exterior Feminista en América Latina (PEFAL)
- **Salma Malik**, Associate Professor at the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad
- **Romana Michelon**, Secretary General, WIIS Brussels

Chair: **Laeticia Thissen**, Senior Policy Analyst for Gender Equality, FEPS



11:30 – 11:45

**Coffee break**

11:45 – 13:00

**Panel II: Applying a feminist lens to the (post-war) recovery and transformation of Ukraine**

Ukrainian women play a key role in their country's war effort within defence forces as well as in humanitarian response and providing critical services in local communities. In spite of their active involvement at all levels on the ground, this well-established shift away from stereotypical gendered roles in Ukrainian society fails to be mirrored in its political decision-making, where women remain heavily underrepresented. This reality has been aggravated by the war-induced centralization of power and the need for quick decision-making to the detriment of consulting civil society. This makes it all the more urgent to ensure that women are involved in strategic decision-making on the post-war recovery and transformation of Ukraine – not only to use the reconstruction as an opportunity to meet the needs of the whole society, women included, but to profit from their extensive knowledge about the situation on the ground. Therefore, panellists will explore how we can ensure that a feminist lens is applied and support building an equitable future in peace-building processes.

Panel discussion with:

- **Hanna Shelest**, Head of the Security Programmes, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” and Editor-in-Chief at UA: Ukraine Analytica
- **Halyna Padalko**, Member of Women’s Branch, SD Platform in Ukraine
- **Natalie Pauwels**, Head of Unit ‘Inter-Institutional, Coordination of Relief and Reconstruction’, Ukraine Service, DG NEAR, European Commission
- **Elene Panchulidze**, Research Coordinator, European Partnership for Democracy

Chair: **Andriy Korniychuk**, Policy Analyst on International Affairs, FEPS

13:00 – 13:45

**Lunch Break**

13:45 – 15:00

**Panel III: Untangling the hidden gender bias in external trade policy**

It is often assumed that trade policy will have a positive impact on people’s economic lives. Yet, feminist research has demonstrated how trade laws are far from gender-neutral. Welfare gains are rarely distributed in a gender-equitable manner. From a human-rights perspective, these observations are worrisome. Any FFP approach, therefore, needs to envision how to operate the necessary paradigm shift to better address the inherent power struggles in international trade policies. This panel discussion will thus explore how to move the focus away from state interest towards the multifaceted vulnerabilities and well-being of people.

Panel discussion with:

- **Inma Rodríguez-Piñero**, MEP, Socialists & Democrats
- **Catherine West**, Member of Parliament and Shadow Foreign Minister for Asia and the Pacific, United Kingdom
- **Gea Meijers**, Coordinator of Working Group Gender and Trade, WIDE+

Chair: **Romy Klimke**, Senior Researcher and Lecturer, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

15:00 – 15:30

**Coffee break**



15:30 – 16:30

**Closing session: FFP as a vector for sustainable development goals and human rights**

Considering the worrisome gender backlash across the globe, this session will facilitate a conversation about gender dynamics in diplomacy and multilateralism. Informed by ecofeminist thinking and migration policy considerations, the challenges and opportunities of women in multilateralism will be discussed. By bringing together female leaders from across different countries and institutional affiliations, it will create a space for interaction on urgency to integrate gender considerations in any policy efforts to advance SDGs and human rights. This session will thus critically take stock of the progress made so far and the needs and expectations of the EU's partner countries to live up to gender, climate and migrant justice in line with a truly intersectional feminist foreign policy approach.

Panel discussion with:

- **Svenja Schulze**, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
- **Aranca González Layla**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation of Spain and former Executive Director of the International Trade Center
- **Heléne Fritzon**, MEP and Vice President of the Socialists & Democrats
- **Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, of National Defence and Coordinating Minister of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Ecuador
- **Chiara Adamo**, Head of Unit 'Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance', DG INTPA, European Commission

Chair: **László Andor**, Secretary General, FEPS

16:30 – 16:45

**Closing**

- **Agnes Mach**, Policy Officer on Gender Justice, FES EU Office
- **Laetitia Thissen**, Senior Policy Analyst for Gender Equality, FEPS

16:45

**Reception and Networking**