

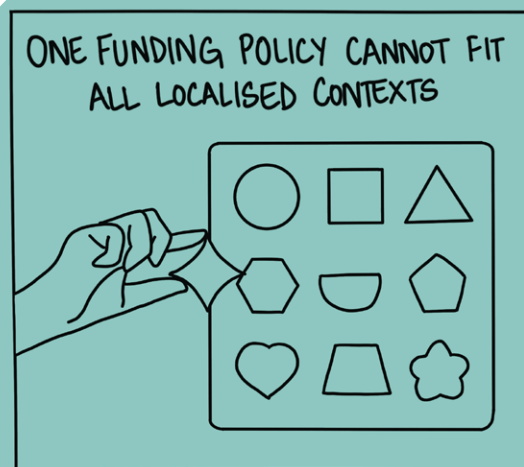


FROM TALKING TO WALKING

USING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY TO FUND FEMINIST ORGANISING

ABSTRACT

Feminist movements play a critical role in protecting and strengthening democracies. Financing them with long-term and flexible funding becomes an indispensable condition, particularly in the context of growing attacks on women's and LGBTIQ+ rights worldwide, risking undoing decades of progress. Yet, despite strong government commitments to sustainable development goals, data show that less than 1% of gender equality official development assistance goes to support women's rights organisations and feminist movements.



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By showcasing two innovative feminist funding mechanisms supported by the Dutch and French governments, two countries with a feminist foreign policy in place, this brief explores what can be learned about how official development assistance (ODA) can support feminist organising. Through a comparative analysis of the two mechanisms, we can distil critical commonalities. We conclude with three funding recommendations for EU and government donors, including significantly increasing the bilateral allocable ODA dedicated to women's rights organisations and feminist movements to at least 10%. Key advocacy opportunities to make this happen are the Financing for Development process (FfD4) to be held in Spain in July 2025, and the negotiations for the next multi-annual financial framework to start in 2025.

AUTHORS

BENEDICTA ALOAKINNOU

Researcher and Consultant on
Feminism and Walking the Talk

MARINKE VAN RIET

Manager Walking the Talk, Hivos

LUCIE DANIEL

Advocacy and Research
Manager, Equipop

MARIA MALOMALO

Senior Research Manager,
Restless Development



FEMINIST
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**THE FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES (FEPS)**

European Political Foundation - No 4 BE 896.230.213
Avenue des Arts 46 1000 Brussels (Belgium)
www.feps-europe.eu
@FEPS_Europe



FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG (FES)

EU Office Brussels
Rue du Taciturne 38, 1000 Brussels (Belgium)
www.brussels.fes.de
@FES_Europa



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Content editors: Giulia Pasquinelli, Researcher and Consultant on FFP, Agnes Mach, Policy Officer (FES EU Office) & Laetitia Thissen, Senior Policy Analyst on Gender Equality, FEPS

Project coordination: Laetitia Thissen (Senior Policy Analyst on Gender Equality), Julia Wild (Project Officer) and Euléane Omez (former Project Management Coordinator) for FEPS and Agnes Mach (Policy Officer) for FES EU Office

Copy editing: Rosalyne Cowie

Layout: Downtown

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FFP AS A CONDUIT FOR INCREASED FEMINIST FUNDING?

Feminist movements and women's rights organisations play a pivotal role in materialising the essential underpinnings of feminist foreign policy (FFP). By acting as drivers for transformative and systemic change,¹ they are often in the frontline to protect and strengthen democracy. However, the latest trends on funding for feminist organisations stand at odds with their societal impact.

State of play: Gender equality funding in ODA

After a decade of progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, we observe a worrisome slowdown in global funding for gender equality. The latest OECD report² on bilateral allocable official development assistance (ODA) by OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members³ indicates that in 2021-2022, only 4% of bilateral allocable ODA (\$5.8 billion) was dedicated to programmes with gender equality as the principal objective, similar to 2019-2020. Moreover, the report shows that 43% of bilateral allocable ODA had gender equality as a primary policy objective or "dedicated funding" (\$64.1 billion), down from 45% in 2019-2020, whereas the bulk (39%) was committed for programmes that integrate gender equality as just one significant policy objective, or "funding that integrates/mainstreams gender equality" (\$58.3 billion). Focusing on funding targeted at ending violence against women and girls, ODA reached \$563 million, on average, per year in 2021-2022, representing less than 1% of total bilateral allocable ODA.

In terms of overall volumes, the EU (and Germany) provided the largest volumes of ODA with gender equality as a principal and significant policy objective, with \$12.3 billion on average per year in 2021-2022. The Netherlands had the largest bilateral allocable ODA share for projects that have gender equality as their principal goal with 28%, totalling \$955 million, while France's share was 5.9%, representing \$432 million.⁴ Most critically, the report highlights that

the bilateral allocable ODA to support women's rights organisations, movements and government institutions dropped to \$631 million, on average, per year in 2021-2022, from \$891 million in 2019-2020, representing a **29% reduction**.

Moreover, it is important to note that the OECD report is based on figures dating back to two years ago based on governments' self-reported information. These should therefore be interpreted with caution.⁵ All the more so as, in late 2023 and 2024, unprecedented and drastic ODA budget cuts were announced in Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and France, risking a further regression in overall funding for gender equality funding after decades of tireless efforts to increase this.

Left peanuts: barely any funding for feminist movements and organisations

If we exclude the bilateral allocable ODA share committed to government institutions, such as women's ministries, the amount allocated to women's rights organisations was only a meagre \$453 million. **This constitutes less than 1% of the total allocable ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment, totalling \$64.1 billion.**

Data from feminist movements and organisations provides an even clearer picture of the underfunding. While the OECD DAC report is based on government data, movements like the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), the Alliance for Feminist Movements and Prospera (the network of women's funds)⁶ have also conducted extensive data monitoring over the years. Their monitoring of public and private funding provides a more in-depth picture of the reality on the ground.

AWID's report "Where is the money for feminist organizing?" shows that, despite new funding commitments, women's rights organisations receive only 0.13% of the total ODA and 0.4% of all gender-related aid. On top of that, only 0.42% of foundation grants are allocated to women's rights. A report published in 2023 titled "Lighting the way: A report for philanthropy on the power and promise of feminist



In 2021-2022, the combined income (\$1 billion in flexible funding) of just three well-known organisations opposing LGBTIQ+ human rights outweighed the grants received by over 8,000 grantees across the global LGBTIQ+ movement during the same period.



movements” calls upon the funding community to invest an additional \$1.5 billion annually until 2026 in long-term unrestricted funding to feminist movements.

Paradoxically, the dire situation faced by women’s rights organisations and feminist movements stands in sharp contrast with what anti-gender organisations received during the same period. To understand the scale, in 2021-2022, the combined income (\$1 billion in flexible funding) of just three well-known organisations opposing LGBTIQ+ human rights outweighed the grants received by over 8,000 grantees across the global LGBTIQ+ movement during the same period.⁷ This makes the case for more and better funding for progressive feminist causes even more urgent!

Strengthening the “resources” dimension of the FFP’s 3Rs

In light of the above observations, this policy brief focuses on ODA as a highly relevant public funding tool to implement the “resources” dimension of FFP based on its “3Rs” principle.⁸ Whilst there is a lot of rightful criticism from feminists, especially from the Global South, on the issues of FFP accountability or *walking the talk*,⁹ it is important to keep in mind that an FFP commitment should be the start of an iterative journey, where collective learnings should lead to improvements. Hence, this policy brief’s guiding question is what have we already learned about feminist funding?

By showcasing two innovative feminist funding mechanisms, this brief explores how FFP commitments can be a conduit for improved feminist funding in support of social movements. Through a comparative analysis of two mechanisms supported by the Dutch and French governments, two countries with FFP commitments, we can distil critical commonalities. We conclude with three main funding recommendations essential for feminist funding at the EU and government levels.

UNPACKING THE TRENDS BEHIND FUNDING FOR FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

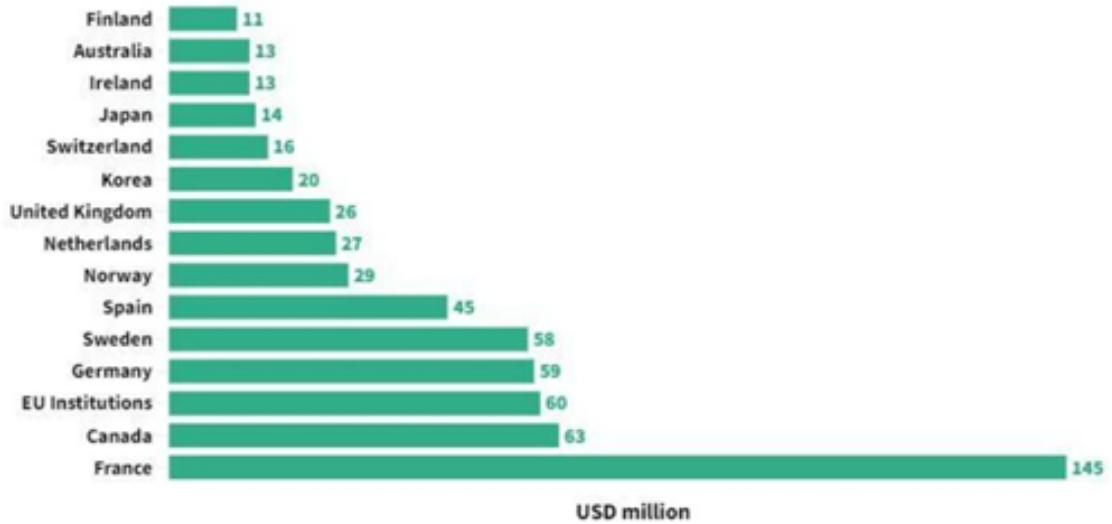
Before focusing on this brief’s two country case studies, it is worth taking a closer look at EU funding, which ranks amongst the largest envelopes for feminist ODA (\$60 million, see Figure 1).

Funding at the EU level: GAP III

Whilst the EU has not made explicit commitments to FFP, its seeds were sown when the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III) was launched in 2020.¹⁰

GAP III, seeking to address the root causes of inequality through gender-transformative actions, aims to strengthen collaboration with different actors, including civil society organisations (CSOs). Indeed, calling on the EU to “lead by example”, GAP III makes ambitious commitments, such as increasing funding for women’s rights organisations and feminist movements, and setting two funding

Figure 1. ODA to women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions. Top 15 DAC members (average, 2021-22)



Source: Creditor Reporting System, OECD-DAC statistics.

targets for gender equality: 85% of all new actions are gender-responsive or gender-targeted (marker G1), and at least one new stand-alone gender-targeted action (marker G2) is implemented in each partner country. Following the publication of the mid-term evaluation report in 2023, GAP III was extended until 2027 to allow for closer synergies with the overall budget planning within the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

There is a clear connection to be made between GAP III and the EU's commitment to increased funding for women's rights organisations and feminist movements. However, a major challenge persists: there are no quantified targets set to track

such funding. While the GAP III evaluation report¹¹ published by CONCORD Europe in 2023 and the official mid-term evaluation¹² acknowledges an increase in such funding, \$60 million still represents less than 0.5% of European ODA dedicated to gender equality.

“

Despite an EU commitment to increase funding, in 2023 only \$60 million or less than 0.5% of European Gender Equality ODA went to women's rights organisations and feminist movements.

”

BRINGING A FEMINIST APPROACH TO FUNDING

To better understand how government funding should be designed to meet the spirit and commitment of an FFP, as well as better meet the (advocacy) needs of feminist movements in the Global South, we are showcasing two innovative examples of feminist funding mechanisms: *Leading from the South* (LFS)¹³ in the Netherlands and *Fonds de Soutien aux organisations Féministes* (FSOF)¹⁴ in France. These mechanisms are often hailed as flagship programmes relating to the countries' FFP commitment, although, as discussed below, the moment of introducing these frameworks differed in both countries.

The following analysis draws from the extensive experience and involvement of the team of authors in the two funding mechanisms in different capacities. This includes representing organisations that received funding as part of these schemes, as well as engagement with the respective foreign ministries to share learnings from these instruments.¹⁵ In addition, the team carried out extensive desk research on both formal and informal reports. The organisation Equipop also facilitated several dialogues with feminist organisations from the Global South to generate and discuss their feedback. The learnings in this policy brief draw directly from the desk research, dialogues with local feminist organisations, exchanges with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as well as the team's direct experience with the funding mechanisms. The quotes also mainly come from internal reports and evaluations and have been anonymised.

Firstly, the two countries' respective FFP approaches and funding mechanisms are briefly introduced. Secondly, the most relevant commonalities are analysed. This enables us to distil key recommendations and conclusions in the final section for more and better feminist funding (at EU and donor government levels).

France

France was the first European country to step in the Swedish footsteps when the government announced its intention to adopt a "feminist diplomacy" in 2018, in the context of the French G7 presidency. One of its first tangible results, advocated for by French organisations and their partners, was the creation of FSOF in 2020. In addition, France also increased its contributions to funds such as the International Fund for Survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence and UN agencies and strengthened its diplomatic voice for gender equality globally. In 2023, France launched its new sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) international strategy. It enshrines SRHR as one of the pillars of the country's "feminist diplomacy".

France is in the process of revising and updating its international gender equality strategy through a consultation process involving feminist organisations and other CSOs, to be published in late 2024. This will form the official framework for France's "feminist diplomacy strategy". Finally, France will host the next Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy conference, following on from Mexico (2024), the Netherlands (2023) and Germany (2022).

Fonds de Soutien aux organisations Féministes (FSOF)

Announced by President Emmanuel Macron in 2019 as part of its FFP commitments, FSOF was launched in July 2020 under leadership of the French MFA and the *Agence Française de Développement*. Endowed with a total envelope of €120 million, covering 2020-2023, and with an additional commitment for the next five years totalling €250 million,¹⁶ FSOF's aim is to reduce gender-based inequalities by specifically supporting feminist organisations in the Global South.

The FSOF has three components focusing on (1) supporting local CSOs through thematic funds; (2) supporting international solidarity projects between French CSOs and their partners in the Global South; and (3) an instrument for mobilising financial resources within existing channels. The policy brief focuses on the first channel only, with a total envelope of €78 million for four years (2020-2024).

So far, there have been eight calls for proposals through the FSOF mechanism, adopting different themes, including – but not limited to – abortion and bodily autonomy, gender-based violence, and justice and SRHR. The themes are discussed with feminist organisations as part of an ongoing dialogue with the French MFA. These discussions have led to guiding principles for applicants, some of which are similar to the Dutch LFS: (1) a minimum of 50% of the total budget must be dedicated to flexible sub-granting to feminist organisations at the country/local level; (2) a training plan must be developed and offered to sub-grantees on the themes, as well as administrative and technical support to develop their organisations and identify a pathway for a viable long-term economic model; and (3) learning and sharing between the organisations to strengthen solidarities and exchanges.

As Figure 1 shows, France stands out as the biggest funder of women's rights organisations and movements and government institutions, with \$145 million, far ahead of the EU, with \$60 million, or the Netherlands, with \$27 million.¹⁷ The case of France is illustrative of how the formal introduction of an FFP in a country translates into substantial increases in funding for feminist organisations.¹⁸

The Netherlands

For years, the Netherlands has championed gender equality, SRHR and LGBTIQ+ rights in their policies and (funding) practices worldwide. However, it was only in 2022 that the (then in place) government officially declared its commitment to FFP.¹⁹ Similar to the French FFP, the Dutch FFP focuses on centring the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people and their meaningful representation in multilateral conferences, for example, in the Ukraine Accountability Conference (2022) and the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference (2023), both held in The Hague.

In terms of resources, two years before its FFP commitment, the government had already introduced the Power of Women or sustainable development goal (SDG) 5 fund,²⁰ of which the LFS

funding mechanism forms an integral part.²¹ The latter is where the FFP trajectory between the two countries diverges. In France, the FFP commitment led to the introduction of FSOF, thanks to strong advocacy and engagement by civil society and allies. Instead, in the Netherlands, the LFS was launched long before the Dutch government officially signed up to FFP.²² The learnings from the LFS around meaningful representation and long-term flexible resources were useful to shape the commitments to resources articulated in the FFP. It shows there are many different roads to obtain FFP commitments.

Leading from the South (LFS)

In 2017, as a result of extensive consultations with feminist movements and allies, the Dutch MFA initiated a new funding mechanism called LFS to directly collaborate with women's funds in the Global South. LFS is a feminist-led consortium managed by four leading women's funds covering Africa, Asia, Latin America and a fund exclusively led by and for indigenous women: the African Women's Development Fund; the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur; Women's Fund Asia; and the International Indigenous Women's Forum. Overall, LFS supports feminist activism and advocacy efforts by intersectional feminist organisations, movements, networks and small community-based organisations at the local, national and regional levels.

Policy-wise, LFS forms part of the government's civil society strategic framework, which, thus far, has consisted of two phases, "dialogue and dissent" (2016-2021), and then Power of Voices and the SDG5 fund (2021-2025). The total budget for the first phase was €1 billion, of which LFS received €42 million (or 4%). Based on an evaluation,²³ the funds for LFS were scaled up to €80 million in funding from a total budget of €510 million, representing 15%.

Overall, LFS offers the following: (1) innovative and flexible funding; (2) investments in the capacity of change agents, as a way to strengthen the feminist ecosystem; (3) advocacy promotion by supporting women's movements and networks; and (4) partnership building across strategic regional and global alliances and South-South learnings.

It is worth noting that the detailed priorities, type of grants and the open calls for proposals are, in principle, set by the funds themselves, directly in consultation with their stakeholders and aligned to the operating procedures of the respective funds. In terms of priorities, there is significant overlap across regions and funds, which can be broadly categorised as (1) climate change and environmental justice; (2) leadership and women's political participation; (3) violence against women; and (4) women's economic justice.

COMPARING THE TWO FUNDING MECHANISMS

Upon analysis, the main innovations introduced by these two funding mechanisms, which bring them in line with feminist principles and with the needs of women's organisations and movements, can be summarised in the following five elements:

1) Challenging traditional power dynamics

Traditional power dynamics, often marked by centralised decision-making and a lack of recognition of local knowledge, have historically marginalised local feminist organisations and women's groups, especially when funding is involved. Both FSOF and LFS seek to reverse that trend. Key stakeholders, including – but not limited to – the grantee partners and rightsholders in the Global South, are involved in the design, implementation and monitoring phases. Largely inspired by the motto *“Nothing about us without us”*, more ownership is granted to the partners as a guarantee for success. In addition, this new approach enhances trust among stakeholders and reduces the power dynamics inherent to grant-making.

LFS is exclusively led by feminist funds in the Global South, as part of the Dutch MFA's commitment to shift the power.²⁴ This way, the LFS funds, but especially the partner organisations they grant funds to, have more agency and autonomy to engage in advocacy in ways that are empowering, not only to them but also the entire society. As far as FSOF is concerned, a slightly more hybrid model is adopted,

whereby French non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and feminist funds can be part of a FSOF-funded consortium. While the majority of activities and funding should go to feminist partners in the Global South, French NGOs play a critical role in meeting the policy advocacy objectives in relation to their own government.

Both funds have reported a change in power dynamics. As the LFS evaluation states,²⁵ *“The LFS created a space for women to design and implement policy proposals that are rebalancing power relations in local communities, while at the same time opening pathways for changing norms that perpetuate gender and intersectional inequalities”*. Within FSOF, the “power to” make decisions has increased, giving local organisations the ability to directly influence the policies and practices that affect them. In addition, “power over” other actors, such as local authorities, has been redistributed in a more balanced way, enabling organisations to put forward their perspectives with greater confidence, visibility, credibility and impact. The “power with” has also been amplified, thanks to closer collaboration between organisations.

It is worth noting that this power shift should ideally also come with a more trust-based approach to funding, creating more space for participatory grant-making models that, for example, some of the LFS funds have piloted. And the intermediary funds are in their turn delegating decision-making powers relating to advocacy and strategy to women's rights organisations directly.

2) Reaching out to new groups = different procedures

The commitment to leave no one behind and hence work with new groups formed an important reason for both MFAs to introduce LFS and FSOF. This not only applies to those partners the MFAs directly work with, but also indirectly through the intermediary funds. In the case of FSOF, funds distributed to large feminist consortia, such as *Feministes en Action*,²⁶ are regranted to smaller local organisations, both new and more established.

By working through an intermediary model, FSOF is able to adapt to the capacity of Global South feminist organisations. As a Beninese partner mentioned:

The formalism of major donors often hinders local feminist organisations' access to funding. As small organisations, we don't always manage to adapt. For us, it was the first fund that didn't require any administrative formalities such as a financial audit.

As part of FSOF itself, the MFA in France also lightened the eligibility criteria, especially removing the co-financing requirement, ensuring smaller organisations were also able to apply.

Through LFS' extensive networks and with lighter eligibility and reporting criteria, the LFS intermediary funds were also able to reach smaller and non-registered organisations²⁷ – receiving funding for the first time, as they are often overlooked by mainstream donors. Accessing donor funding is particularly important for LGBTIQ+ groups without a strong and long (auditing) track record. Empowering and giving voice and agency to those who claim a seat at the table, rather than being on the menu, should be a key principle of any FFP.

3) If you cannot give more, give core

Both LFS and FSOF provide project funding and multi-annual core funding. There is a strong case to enhance stable finances for organisations to be more strategic, resilient and responsive to the growing attacks on women's and LGBTIQ+ rights. **"If you cannot give more, give core"** was a key recommendation formulated during a feminist funding session held during the 68th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March 2024 (CSW68). Core funding allows for maximum flexibility in the funds' use, including for (small) emergencies and stakeholder well-being. Flexibility is crucial in this rapidly changing political context.

4) Linking and learning loop

Within LFS and FSOF, deliberate efforts are made to facilitate linking and learning at the organisational level, as well as at cross-country and cross-regional levels. This forms an important component of feminist funding practices. This approach is distinct from – yet complementary to – more conventional and rigid "monitoring and evaluation" frameworks. It entails the sharing of experiences and lessons, learning from mistakes and exploring alternative solutions that may require people to get out of their comfort zone. To complete the feedback loop, the learnings are incorporated into the organisations' strategy and implementation.

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Feminist solidarity makes us stronger, more powerful and more vocal.



5) Strengthening feminist solidarity at all levels

Anchoring feminist solidarity at local, national, regional and international levels forms the foundation of any feminist commitment. In the words of a feminist activist from West Africa at a FSOF-funded workshop: ***“Feminist solidarity makes us stronger, more powerful and more vocal”***.

It is important for activists not to feel isolated. And it is equally important for them not to be seen as such. Isolation renders feminist voices invisible and inaudible, applying self-censorship to protect themselves. This is exactly what authoritarian and far-right leaders are looking for, and when their regimes hit the hardest.

Both FSOF and LFS incentivise the creation of strategic alliances and the launch of joint campaigns. They both recognise the critical need to build the agency of feminist and women activists to become a part of movements, join forces and collaborate. Weaving together local, national and international action and feminist solidarity is what enables progress. For example, through its intermediary organisations, FSOF facilitated the participation of feminist organisations in regional and international networks, increasing their visibility and influence. The Women Deliver Conference in 2024 is a good example.

Through these initiatives, smaller, unregistered groups are able to participate in these gatherings and claim their seats at the tables. For example, as

an outcome of the LFS, women’s groups successfully claimed seats at global decision-making tables relating to climate change, resulting in increased awareness of the disproportionate impact of climate change on (especially indigenous) women.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that carefully designed funding mechanisms anchored in feminist principles – inclusion, participation, representation, intersectionality, solidarity and commitment to address entrenched power dynamics – can yield positive results.

FSOF and LFS provide innovative and flexible funding schemes, tailored to the needs and nature of women’s organisations, and are able to reach smaller organisations through re-granting opportunities. By reversing traditional centralised decision-making, which often penalises women’s organisations, they also ensure that recipient organisations can contribute to the funding mechanism’s design, implementation and monitoring.

Lighter eligibility and reporting requirements also help reduce the administrative burden of women’s organisations, which can prevent them from applying to traditional grant-making schemes. While there is always room for improvement, these two models can be used as inspiration for funders subscribing to the feminist and FFP principles and looking to adopt more feminist funding modalities.

Advocating for feminist funding

There will be two key opportunities in the coming months (and years) where the recommendations outlined below for more and better funding for feminist organisations in the Global South can be turned into reality by OECD DAC donors. One such opportunity is the Fourth International Financing for Development Conference (FfD4)²⁸ to be held in July 2025 in Spain. It will address the urgent need to fully implement the SDGs and support reform of the international financial architecture. The second opportunity is the negotiations for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, officially starting in 2025. Walking the Talk will certainly be active in these spaces and advocate to finally “fund us like you want us to win”.²⁹

Our recommendations are addressed to the EU, its member states and other donor countries, especially those with FFP commitments.

Recommendation 1: allocate substantial, flexible and long-term funding to feminist organisations and funds worldwide, especially in the Global South.

- In the case of France and the Netherlands, upholding their support of LFS and FSOF, whilst investing in other (intermediary) funds supporting (grassroots) women’s rights organisations.
- **The bilateral allocable ODA dedicated to women’s rights organisations and feminist movements should be significantly increased from currently 1% to at least 10% over five years.**

- Reduce the administrative and accountability procedures associated with feminist funding to open up for new audiences.
- In the case of OECD DAC members who are part of the FFP+ coalition, mobilise internal stakeholders, such as civil servants from other departments within the relevant ministries; other states; donors and UN agencies to increase the total funds available for feminist movements and women’s rights organisations and funds.
- Harmonise and improve existing mechanisms currently funding feminist movements and women’s rights organisations.

Recommendation 2: adhere to “Nothing about us without us” by supporting intersectional feminist movements led by the rightsholders they intend to serve.

- Provide financial and political support for the meaningful participation of intersectional feminist organisations across all decision-making bodies and multilateral spaces, such as the Financing for Development Process.
- Enhance collective learning through a cross-country and cross-mechanism linking and learning process, led by feminists themselves. This will improve their overall quality.

Recommendation 3: foster transnational feminist action and solidarity.

- Provide dedicated funding enabling actors to organise at the international level, and thus, supporting transnational feminist networks and consortia (such as the Association for Women in Development, Prospera, the Alliance for Feminist Movements and FEMNET).

“

Fund us like you want us to win.

”

Endnotes

- 1 See, among others: R. Harvey and C. Safier (2021) *Transformative Change for Gender Equality: Learning from Feminist Strategies* (Kathmandu: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung); L. VeneKlasen and B. O'Donovan-Iland (2024) "Five ways funding is crucial for organising and defeating gender backlash". Institute of Development Studies, 12 March; S. Vaill, B. Ray and P. Elkind (2024) *Change that Lasts: 40 Years of Impact* (Amsterdam: Mama Cash).
- 2 DAC Network on Gender Equality (2024) "Latest data on official development assistance (ODA) for gender equality and women's empowerment". OECD, 15 February.
- 3 The DAC is a unique international forum of many of the largest providers of aid, including 32 members.
- 4 The French numbers come from Focus2030.
- 5 There is some advocacy in support of an overhaul of gender equality funding data, as they are a mess, as explained in A. Farley, F. Smyth, M. Buschmann et al. (2024) "Opinion: Gender equality funding data is a mess. How do we fix it?" Devex, 8 March. In addition, the GAP III evaluation report published by CONCORD Europe in 2023 identifies that tracking resources remains challenging due to inconsistencies in applying the marker correctly. According to the authors of the report, "*this could mean that some projects are marked as contributing to gender equality while they are in reality gender-blind or only paying attention to gender in a superficial manner*".
- 6 AWID has a long history of data monitoring where the money is for feminist organising. The Alliance for Feminist Movements is a multistakeholder body of governments and civil society to increase the strategic engagement and resources for feminist organising. Prospera is the network of 47 women and feminist funds, mainly in the Global South
- 7 "Global resources report 2021-2022. Government and philanthropic support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex communities". Global Philanthropy Project.
- 8 Rights, resources, representation. See policy brief no. 1 from the same series: A. Burni and L. Thissen (2024) "A European feminist foreign policy? The need for a progressive and transformative approach". Policy brief. Foundation for European Progressive Studies, February.
- 9 The complexities of FFP have been most prominent following the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and the disproportionate response by Israel. This article from the Gender Security Project highlights the double standards by FFP countries: K. Jayakumar "Feminist foreign policy articles: How have states with feminist foreign policies responded to the Palestine question?"
- 10 "Gender Action Plan – putting women and girls' rights at the heart of the global recovery for a gender-equal world". European Commission, 25 November 2020. GAP III has now been extended until 2027 to align with the EU Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU.
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- 12 MacKellar, L., D. Peebles, C. Vaillant et al. (2023) "Mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the European Union Gender Action Plan III: Final report. Volume 1, Main report». Publications Office of the European Union.
- 13 Leading from the South.

14 «Le Fonds de soutien aux organisations féministes (FSOF): un outil emblématique de la diplomatie féministe menée par la France». *France Diplomatie*, October 2023.

15 Maria Malomalo and Benedicta Aloakinnou have been working for small organisations that received a grant via LFS and FSOF, respectively; Lucie Daniel's organisation, Equipop, is involved in three projects under the FSOF mechanism, either as lead organisation or as member of a consortium; and Marinke van Riet has led a fund called Voice, which was also a part of the same framework within the Dutch MFA and participated in a Linking and Learning trajectory with LFS.

16 Thus far, the fund has been protected from the announced ODA budget cuts, but its future is currently unknown, awaiting a new French government.

17 The low figure for the Netherlands is because, in the previous year, five-year contracts were signed as part of the SDG5 fund, totalling €510 million in contractual liabilities.

18 Papagiotti, F., L. Thompson and S. Ahmed (2022) "Feminist foreign policy and development finance for gender equality: An assessment of commitments". International Center for Research on Women.

19 With the new far-right coalition in place, it is still unclear what will happen to the FFP commitments.

20 Please see the Policy framework strengthening civil society page of the Government of the Netherlands website, particularly the grant instrument Power of Women.

21 For more information, please see: "Feminist foreign policy explained". Government of the Netherlands, 18 November 2022.

22 "'Dialogue and Dissent'. Strategic partnerships for 'lobby and advocacy'". Government of the Netherlands.

23 "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)". Government of the Netherlands.

24 "Strengthening civil society". Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

25 "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)".

26 *Féministes en Action* is a consortium between six larger organisations in the Global North to support smaller feminist organisations in the Global South.

27 The evaluation showed that 67% of the funding went to smaller organisations, led by women and other groups suffering from intersectional forms of discrimination.

28 "The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development". United Nations.

29 "Fund us like you want us to win: Feminist solutions for more impactful financing for peacebuilding". Background paper for the high-level meeting on financing for peacebuilding. Kvinna till Kvinna.

About the Walking the Talk Consortium

The Walking the Talk consortium brings together five organisations: Equipop in France; Restless Development in the UK; the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy in Germany; Hivos in the Netherlands; and ODI Europe in Brussels, covering the EU. The consortium applies its extensive collective experience and networks in the Global South to embed gender equality and feminist approaches in foreign policies, practices and especially funding – both through ODA and other funding streams. With the wider feminist ecosystem, Walking the Talk is developing a (financial) Common Ask Framework, consolidating the many financial asks feminist organisations have been advocating for – relating to funding quality and quantity. Walking the Talk has started to apply the framework in the fourth Financing for Development process (2024-2025) and will do so for the negotiations for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, which will start in 2025. As part of our advocacy for more and better funding for feminist organising in the Global South, a conference called Financing for Feminist Futures will take place in Madrid in May 2025.



About the authors



BÉNÉDICTA ALOAKINNOU

Researcher and Consultant on Feminism and Walking the Talk

Bénédicta Aloakinnou is a committed feminist lawyer and activist from Benin, holding a master's degree in private law and criminal sciences. Her work has focused, among other things, on lifting the veil on gender-based violence and femicide. In 2017, she founded a local NGO called the Jeunes Amazones pour le Développement. This feminist organisation works hard to break down inequalities, unlock women's leadership and encourage young girls to aspire to excellence on a daily basis in northern Benin, where a number of sociocultural obstacles stand in the way of the advancement of women's rights.



MARINKE VAN RIET

Manager Walking the Talk, Hivos

Trained as an anthropologist, Marinke has galvanised creating #beautifultrouble worldwide in the quest for social justice. She worked in leadership roles for MSI Reproductive Choices in Ghana and Madagascar and for the movement Publish What You Pay, a global coalition campaigning for transparency and accountability in the gas, oil and mining industry. In addition, she set up and led an €86.5 million grant facility called Voice, a consortium between Oxfam, Hivos, Hewlett Foundation and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote diversity, equity and inclusion based on the principle of nothing about us without us. She is currently leading the Walking the Talk at Hivos in the Netherlands. She is currently leading the Walking the Talk Consortium at Hivos in the Netherlands.



LUCIE DANIEL

Advocacy and Research Manager, Equipop

Lucie Daniel is an expert on issues relating to feminist foreign policy, sexual and reproductive rights, and anti-gender movements. She has co-authored reports on the backlash against women's rights and the rise of the far right in Europe. Currently, she is the Advocacy and Research Manager at Equipop, a feminist and international solidarity association based in Paris, Burkina Faso and Senegal, regularly representing the organisation in the media.



MARIA MALOMALO

Senior Research Manager, Restless Development

Maria Malomalo is a pan-African feminist with more than 14 years of experience in women's rights, adolescent programming and action research. Currently, she leads research for the global youth-powered agency Restless Development and is the co-author of the organisation's annual State of Youth Civil Society report. She is the founder of Mwana Pwo, an NGO focusing on adolescent sexual and reproductive health. She is also an advisor for Urgent Action Fund Africa, a feminist funding organisation, and a member of the African Feminist Network for Communication and Development.

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FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



Avenue des Arts 46, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium +32 2 234 69 00
info@feps-europe.eu
www.fepeurope.eu
@FEPS_Europe

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The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a non-profit German foundation funded by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, and headquartered in Bonn and Berlin. It was founded in 1925 and is named after Germany's first democratically elected President, Friedrich Ebert. FES is committed to the advancement of both socio-political and economic development in the spirit of social democracy, through civic education, research, and international cooperation. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is the oldest political foundation in Germany.

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STIFTUNG**
EU Office Brussels

EU Office
Rue du Taciturne 38, 1000 Brussels (Belgium)
<https://brussels.fes.de/>
@FES_Europa

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March 2024

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

A EUROPEAN FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

THE NEED FOR A PROGRESSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

ABSTRACT

The application of a feminist approach to international relations has gained significant ground across the globe since the original decision by the Swedish Social Democratic and Green coalition in 2014 at the time to explicitly adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). While it is excellent news that FFP is becoming more 'normalized' in the public debate and increasingly gaining the attention of government actors, the development of a more ambitious concept, policy, and action should be a continued effort. A more ambitious, progressive, and transformative approach must be continuously advocated by feminists, civil society organisations, and policymakers alike. In particular, the European Union (EU) should be more determined to adopt and put into practice feminist principles in its external action. Given its supranational and inter-governmental nature, an explicit feminist foreign policy approach at the EU level represents the opportunity to amplify the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of marginalised groups globally. As Europe finds itself in the most severe security crisis since the end of World War II, there is momentum to transform its external action, and what can be considered a 'feminist turn in foreign policy', this policy brief reflects on the opportunities and challenges of more clearly linking the external action and (gender) equality agendas into a European feminist foreign policy and put forth some policy recommendations to contribute to current debates.

AUTHORS

ALINE BURINI
Advisor, Politics and Policy,
Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

LAETICIA THISSEN
FFPS Senior Policy Analyst
on Gender Equality

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POLICY BRIEF
October 2024

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IN THE EU AND LATIN AMERICA

BUILDING BRIDGES AND SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

ABSTRACT

Feminist foreign policies (FFPs) are no longer exclusive to Global North countries. The adherence of Mexico (2020), Chile (2022) and Colombia (2024) to this project illustrates that Latin America is a leading region in developing FFPs and opens new opportunities for collaboration with the EU. FFPs originating from both regions exhibit many common themes and priorities, but the Latin American FFPs also contribute new perspectives from the Global South based on their own history, interpretation of feminism and tradition of feminist activism in domestic and foreign policy. In addition, taking stock of the development of FFPs in Latin America offers best practices and lessons learned, such as applying an intersectional perspective to global power dynamics and greater collaboration with local civil society.

This policy brief provides an overview of existing Latin American FFPs, including analysing innovative approaches and the main lessons from their development. It then focuses on identifying opportunities for partnership with the EU, including through working to create more feminist economic systems that incorporate gender perspectives into trade agreements and emphasising the care economy. This area offers many opportunities for strategic political collaboration with the EU and helps ensure greater alignment between internal and external policy.

By focusing on some of the critical considerations that Latin American FFPs are bringing to the multilateral stage, this policy brief asks the following questions: What are some of the best practices that can be shared between Latin America and the EU about the different approaches to developing FFPs? What opportunities are there for jointly advancing feminist principles in different policy areas? Therefore, rather than assuming a universal formula for designing FFPs, this policy brief analyses opportunities for trans-regional knowledge sharing.

AUTHORS

DANIELA SEPÚLVEDA
Executive and Project Director
of the Center for Women Politics Center

EVYŃ BARWÓŃSKA
Policy Analyst for the WFP program
at the International Peace Institute

THAINÁ LEITE
Project Management
Coordinator at FFPS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

POLICY BRIEF
June 2024

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

EMBRACING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY WITHIN EU STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CAPABILITIES

BRINGING FEMINIST FUTURES INTO REALITY

ABSTRACT

Crises have consistently served as transformative catalysts for the European Union (EU), propelling its integration and global standing, uniting diverse voices in coordinated responses and choices. However, as the EU increasingly embraces a narrative of 'polycrisis', we must question whether this crisis-focused mindset traps the EU in the present and limits its ability to address broader issues. The pandemic, economic crises, conflicts and climate disasters uncovered deep-seated systemic issues that require comprehensive and long-term solutions. Reactive policymaking has hindered the EU's ability to proactively shape long-term transformations and tackle the underlying causes of crises, including widespread inequality in rights, opportunities and resources.

Feminist foreign policy (FFP) provides a powerful framework for action and is embraced by a growing number of countries. It calls for actively dismantling entrenched power dynamics and embracing gender equality as a guiding principle in foreign policy, inspiring transformative progress on a global scale. While some EU member states are leading the way on FFP discussions at the EU level often lack a true feminist perspective, treating gender mainstreaming as a mere technocratic formality.

This policy brief calls for integrating FFP into EU foresight practices to prioritise equity, sustainability and resilience in global engagements. By leveraging its capacity for future planning, the EU can make inclusive and purpose-driven foreign policy decisions, building on existing efforts. Inclusivity and diversity should be the cornerstone of this approach, creating the conditions for women and traditionally marginalised groups to actively participate and lead in shaping our future and co-create solutions for systemic challenges and structural inequalities.

AUTHOR

ANASTASIA MONDESIR
Project Associate at
Latin Association

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