

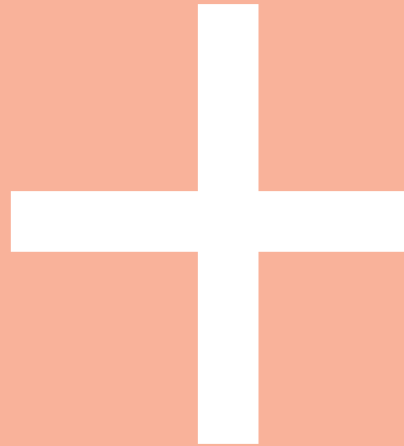
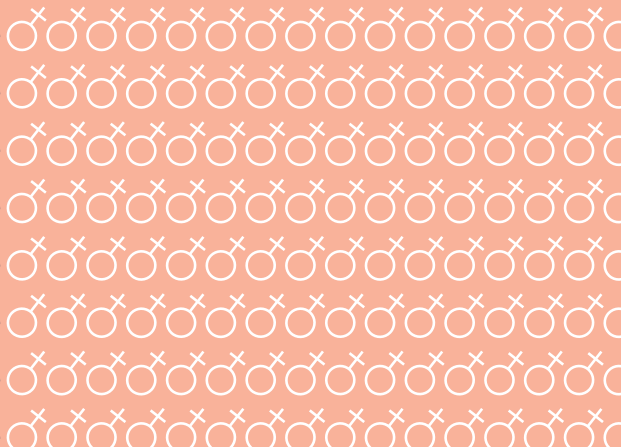
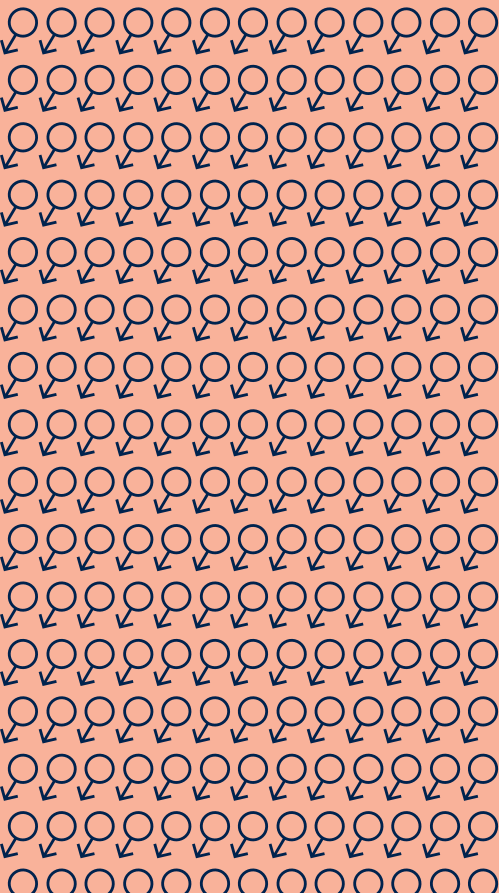


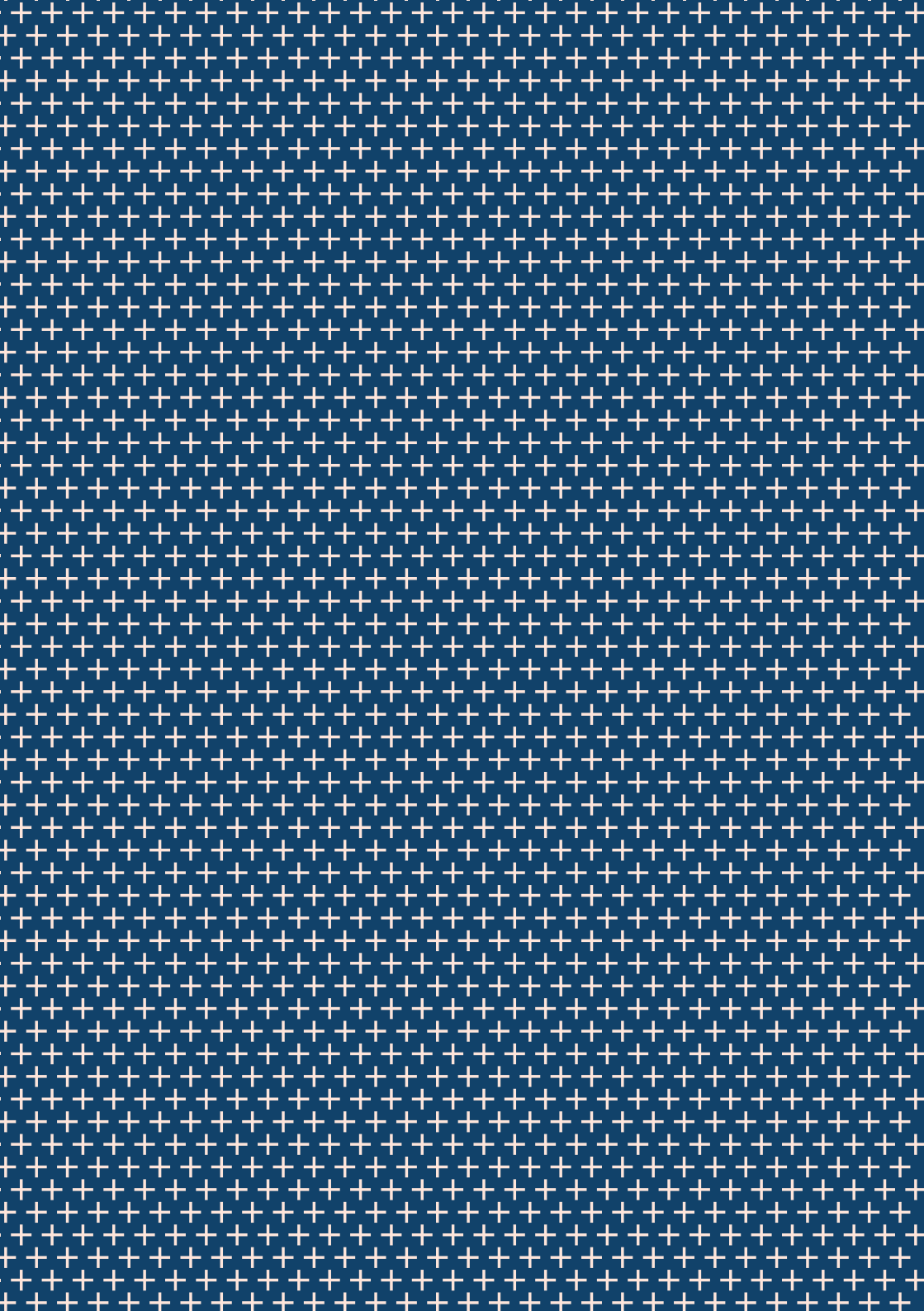
FÓRUM 50%

Never Give Up: A Toolkit on Lobbying for Women's Rights

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Juhász, Adriana Mesochoritsová, Paula Jójárt





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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction	5
1 Gender Equality in Europe: Where Do We Stand	7
2 Systems Change and Advocacy: Theory and Tools	9
3 Institutional Framework for Gender Equality	19
4 Legislative Process and the Ways How to Influence It	25
5 Enhancing Gender Equality on the International Level	31
Links and resources	36
Campaigning for Istanbul Convention: A Case Study of an Advocacy Campaign from Slovakia	41



INTRODUCTION

Even more than a hundred years after having gained the right to vote or to study at universities, women in Europe and in other parts of the world are still not equal with men. There has been a tremendous progress in the field of women's rights in the last hundred years. This progress was made possible by tireless efforts and fights of women's organisations and activists. Their role in promoting gender equality still remains crucial, especially as conservative movements are gaining ground and women's and LGBTQIA+ rights are being jeopardised.

The aim of this toolkit is to provide women's organisations with tools and examples of how to enhance gender equality using various types of advocacy and lobbying. The first chapter briefly sets the context of the current state of gender equality in Europe. Where do we stand and what are the recent trends and developments?

The second chapter provides theoretical background of systems change and advocacy. It also describes the types of advocacy activities and practical tools which can be used when designing an advocacy campaign. The third chapter describes the international and European institutional framework for gender equality introducing key institutions and documents anchoring equality within the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The fourth chapter focuses on the legislative processes describing when and how NGOs can influence them. It contains examples from different countries illustrating advocacy activities carried out by women's organisations. The fifth chapter explains how to promote gender equality on the international level and how to use the international commitments and mechanisms. It focuses

on the UN and its treaties, mainly the CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Practical examples are included again. In the last chapter, useful links and resources can be found.

Practical examples of advocacy activities were provided and written by partner NGOs from Hungary (the Hungarian Women's Lobby), Poland (TEA), Slovakia (Možnosť voľby) and the Czech Republic (Fórum 50 %). More detailed information is covered in national lobbying kits which were published in all V4 countries.

1.

Gender Equality in Europe: Where Do We Stand

According to the Gender Equality Index published by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2020, the EU score is 67.9 points (maximum being 100).¹ *“With 67.9 out of 100 points, the EU has a long way to go before reaching gender equality. The Gender Equality Index score has increased by only 4.1 points since 2010 and 0.5 points since 2017. At this pace of progress – 1 point every 2 years – it will take more than 60 years to achieve gender equality in the EU. We need to speed up,”* states the EIGE.² The index shows the average score for all the EU-28 members states, but also the scores of the individual countries. There are big differences among them: Sweden has the highest score (83.8), while Greece has the lowest one (52.2).³

The index is based on data collected in seven key areas: violence, health, work, knowledge, money, power and time. Domains of health (88 points) and money (80.6 points) are those with lowest levels of inequality in comparison with others, while the area of power features the most serious case of inequality (53.5 points).⁴ The area of violence had no data published in 2020 as it is necessary to collect data systematically in all the EU countries first.

Another international index, the Global Gender Gap Index, is being published annually by the World Economic Forum. According to its report from 2020, the percentage of the gender gap closed was 69%. The index covers 153 countries and it is composed of four dimensions: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.⁵ While the gap is getting narrow in the area of health and survival (97%), it is still very deep in the area of political empowerment (25%). The country with the

highest score is Iceland – 0.877 (the score ranks between 0-1, 0 standing for inequality and 1 for equality). Yemen is at the bottom of the ranking with the score of 0.434.⁶

The Global Gender Gap Index thus shows similar results to the one published by EIGE: the most problematic area is access to power, while in the area of health we are approaching equality. According to the data of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the share of women MPs in the world's parliaments is currently 25.2%. The European average is currently 30.3%.⁷ This means that three quarters of world's parliamentary seats are still occupied by men who keep dominating the politics which makes changes towards gender equality difficult. And since 2015, when women in Saudi Arabia gained the right to vote, there is only one remaining state in the world where women have no right to vote: Vatican.

There has been a growing conservative backlash in Europe in the recent years. Women's and LGBTQIA+ rights are being threatened or even breached and taken away, e. g. in Poland, where the already very limited access to abortion is being further restricted. Gender equality is labelled as "gender ideology" portrayed as a threat for traditional society and mainly for the traditional family. Attacks against the gender agenda are used as a "symbolic glue" for various populist, anti-liberal and conservative movements and groups. These anti-gender sentiments are strongly supported by churches (mainly, but not only the catholic church) but also by populist politicians and often also by far-right groups.⁸

These groups also cooperate internationally, and in some countries, they are gaining ground inside the state administration as well. Their efforts have been centred around the opposition towards the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence). The pressure against the ratification has gradually grown, leading to polarisation of societies and in some countries (e.g. Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary), it resulted in blocking of the ratification process.⁹

2.

Systems Change and Advocacy: Theory and Tools

Enhancing gender equality definitely is an effort that can lead to “systems change”. Lobbying and advocacy are the tools to achieve this change. It is not easy to change any persisting structure or system and therefore a system change is a lengthy and demanding process. It is important to bear this in mind and keep pushing relentlessly even when it seems to be an endless, Sisyphean task. Especially when it comes to gender equality, the progress tends to be very slow and sometimes we can feel like things are moving backwards rather than forward. In many European countries, we are witnessing a conservative backlash as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Advocacy means not only fighting for new rights, sometimes it also means fighting to defend existing ones.

For a better understanding of how advocacy works, it is helpful to start with some theoretical background on systems change. The theory of systems change provides a clear framework and structure which enables us to design the advocacy work properly and systematically.

What is systems change

For the definition of systems change, we will use the concept described by Ashoka.¹⁰

What defines systems change:

- it strives for a change, shift or transformation of structures, thinking, customs, power dynamics and rules;

- it aims at the causes of social problems, not their consequences;
- there are diverse groups of actors working on it together;
- it can take place on local, national or global level
- its aim is to find permanent solutions of social problems.

In order to achieve a system change, it is necessary to work on several levels and use different types of advocacy activities. There are three levels:

- **individual**
- **social**
- **system**

Since the causes of social problems are usually rooted in all those three levels, the solution has to focus on all these levels as well.

Example

Low representation of women in politics is caused by barriers on the individual level (low self-esteem, lack of spare time, difficult reconciliation of work and family life), social level (prejudice against women, politics perceived as a men's world) and system level (internal political party processes including procedures for lists of candidates; the electoral system).

In order to increase women's political participation, it is necessary to support and empower female politicians (individual level), to change public opinion through campaigns and awareness raising (social level) and to push for changes of the electoral systems such as gender quota adoption (system level).

Problem analysis

As a first step in designing an advocacy campaign, you have to define the social problem that you want to solve. What are the roots of the problem? And what are its consequences, its impact on society? It is important to support

this with data and statistics. A clear, evidence-based definition of the problem is crucial and you might need some time to do research and gather the needed data.

A concept that is being used for problem description is called the problem tree analysis. The roots represent the causes, the trunk stands for the problem itself and the branches are the consequences and results.

System analysis: the 5Rs framework

Before you start planning your advocacy campaign, it is important to consider which specific system you need to change and how exactly this system works. A useful tool that can be used for such an analysis is the 5Rs Framework developed by the USAID.¹¹

What do the 5Rs stand for:

Rules: laws and regulations that define the functioning of the system and their makers

Roles: who are the key actors and what is their role within the system

Relationships: what are the relationships between the actors within the system

Resources: what financial, human and other resources does the system use

Results: what are the results that the system produces

Example

Czech women's NGOs have been fighting for many years for women's free choice of where and how to deliver their babies. The desired change aims at the health care system, specifically the obstetrics.

*Important **rules** for this system are not only national laws, but also regulations written by the Ministry of Health, professional standards for doctors and midwives, standards of care provision in specific hospitals, international*

standards and recommendations of the World Health Organisation etc. There is no national law forbidding women to deliver at home. But there is a regulation of the Ministry of Health defining the standards of care provided by midwives which states that they can only provide their services at hospitals. As a result, home births are not forbidden – which would be unconstitutional – but they are simply made impossible by prohibiting the midwives to assist women during births outside the hospitals.

*The **key actors** are the Ministry of Health, doctors – obstetricians, midwives, health insurance companies, hospitals, women as care receivers, but also politicians and media. One of the reasons why it is so difficult to achieve a change is the strong position of the key actors – numerous doctors who are opposing it. They have a lot of power within the system, both formal and informal. The profession of a medical doctor is highly valued in Czech society and doctors enjoy a great respect.*

Regarding the relationships within the system, it is important to mention the unequal position of the midwives compared to doctors. Women as patients, who are the primary care receivers and should thus play a key role in the system, are not being regarded as partners and they are being marginalised.

*When it comes to the **resources**, it is important to analyse what type of care can be covered by the public health insurance. The care of independent midwives is not covered by the public health insurance. There are also significant fines for midwives who assist women during home births.*

*The **results** of the current system are a lack of respect for the needs and wishes of the women during delivery, use of harmful practices and obstetric violence, and high risk for women who deliver at home without professional care of midwives.*

Actors analysis

An important step that you should not forget is a thorough analysis of the actors in the system. Take time to think about all the possible stakeholders who

are somehow related to the problem that you want to solve. Do not forget those that you might want to involve in the solution of the problem, even though they are not directly connected with it. Focus on two key aspects during the analysis:

1. How powerful is the actor?
2. What is his/her position regarding the problem? Is he/she your (potential) ally or opponent?

The more powerful your opponents are, the more difficult it will be to achieve the desired change. There are actors with high official power, such as ministers or party leaders, but there are also actors with informal power, such as opinion leaders, well-known personalities and celebrities. When looking for a personality who might support your cause, it is always good to find someone who has personal experience with the problem you are addressing.

For a comprehensive overview you can draw a map of key actors. Use two axes to place the actors in your map. The vertical axis presents the level of power (the higher you place them, the more power they have) and the horizontal axis presents their position regarding the problem. If the actor opposes the change, put them on the left. Those with neutral opinion belong in the middle and those supporting your cause to the right. Define what it is exactly that you want from the particular actors. What change of behaviour is expected? What should they actually do?¹²

What is advocacy

Advocacy is a term used for activities carried out in order to achieve systems change. Lobbying is just one type of such activity, although probably the best known one. There are many types of advocacy activities besides lobbying. They are shortly described in the following overview.¹³

Lobbying and legislative activities: initiating and consulting new laws and amendments, policies or regulations, work in expert advisory bodies, meetings with politicians or state representatives.

Mobilising public support: motivating the general public to sup-

port the changes and push for their adoption, organisation of public events and petitions.

Media and communication activities: press releases, articles in the media, blogs, campaigns, use of social media.

Legal instruments: using courts to achieve changes, including strategic litigation.

In order to be successful and achieve significant changes, one must combine various types of advocacy activities. That is why it might be helpful to create coalitions with diverse organisations and split the work, each using the type of activities that suit them best.

ROMA WOMEN'S MATERNITY CARE IN HUNGARY

Borbála Juhász

As a result of the strategic litigation of an international advocacy NGO, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and two member organisations of the Hungarian Women's Lobby (HWL), Regina Foundation Miskolc and Emma Association, community building and adult education activities were successfully combined in a small village in the North of Hungary to help Roma women stand up for their reproductive rights in the local hospital in sisterhood with other Roma women.

The starting point of the strategic law case was the fact that in the maternity ward of the Miskolc City State Hospital, anyone accompanying a mother giving birth (husband, girlfriend, sister etc.) had been asked to pay the hospital foundation for the protective gear which is compulsory in the labour room for medical personnel. The sum was between 3000-5000 HUF (8-13 Euros) at the beginning, later for 2500 HUF (7 Euros). Poor Roma families could not afford this, and so most Roma women were alone during their labour, unattended by family members (unlike their non-Roma roommates). ERRC brought a suit on the basis of Roma discrimination against the hospital and won. The hospital was fined to 2 million HUF (5500 Euro) according to the appeal court ruling. The judgement was reserved by the Supreme Court of Justice. Previously, one of the Roma mothers in question,

a woman from a small village in this region, had brought an action on the basis of degrading treatment at the Office of Equal Opportunities (EBH).¹⁴

Legal justice was supplemented in an innovative way by the two HWL members with long-term community development, aiming at empowering Roma women to be able to stand up assertively and successfully for their fellow-mothers at maternity wards and change the discriminatory practice of the hospital towards Roma women. A doula training started in 2020 for married Roma women of Alsózsolca (a village near Miskolc) based on the originally developed training of Emma Association and Regina Foundation Miskolc that was adapted to the rural community's special needs. By November 2020, six women graduated from the adult education course, and have taken part helping their fellow Roma mothers during labours in the hospital. The experience was positive. Rita Kishonthy-Kardos from the Regina Foundation Miskolc believes it is a big step forward as the hospital staff and community doulas have met personally and now there is space for mediation, negotiations and reconciliations around Roma doulas attending. Community doulas present during labours protect poor Roma women from defencelessness caused by two major issues: over-medicalised, patriarchal obstetrical practices on the one hand, and racial and class discrimination on the other.



Illustration: Poster collecting donations on Giving Tuesday for the Roma Community Doula project

Creative street actions for reproductive rights: The Rose Revolution

The vast topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) often evokes the highly politicised and society-dividing topic of abortion, whereas it also includes those areas that can result in overarching coalitions among women's movements across different sides of the political spectrum: labours and maternal health and well-being. Attending home births in Hungary restarted at the end of the 1980s with Dr. Ágnes Geréb, a gynaecologist and obstetrician, who was the first in the country to let fathers accompany their wives giving birth in hospital. The road to the legalisation of attending home birth was a long and difficult one, and it cost Dr. Geréb her freedom and practice rights in a long legal trial over a medical malpractice case. Although the topic of home birth might divide women, nobody questions that women giving birth should be treated with empathy and respect and that the labour is a natural phenomenon. It is best when it can run its own course (if it is safe) undisturbed and unhastened. A supporting, intimate (often family or women-only) surrounding can help the process whether it happens at home, in a birth centre or in a hospital with the least medical interventions possible, used only if necessary or if demanded by the mother based on her informed choice. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Hungary, where over-medicalized birth with prevalent obstetric violence by mostly male obstetricians (most obstetricians are traditionally male in Hungary), an extreme high rate of episiotomy in primipara mothers and a high rate of caesarean sections, the lack of the "golden hour" between the new born and the mother, and almost compulsory formula supplement (although most mothers in Hungary breastfeed for a long time) are very common.

The Másállapotot a szülésetben initiative (Let's change conditions in obstetrics – based on a pun in Hungarian referring to the similarity between a euphemism for pregnancy and changing conditions) started as a grassroots movement in 2016 partly from a mothers' gathering around the Emma Association (a member of the Hungarian Women's Lobby, see above) and their friends. This circle of women focused on one thing only: changing conditions in maternity wards in Hungary. They are independent from politics, religion and other women's rights debates, they did not get formalised as a legally registered CSO. They combined classical

lobbying techniques (letter writing to decision makers, policy recommendations, meetings with ministry officials etc.) with creative information campaigns for the general public and the media. These fun actions have always carried a symbolic meaning and have included human chains, walks with prams and babies in swings, a bubble piping flashmob, open talks, marathon reading of personal birth stories, posting personal messages painted on women's bodies in social media campaigns, icy water dipping in the Kőrös river etc. Their symbol is a rose, and they annually organise the Rose revolution, a nonviolent march carrying roses and placing them at symbolic places, like the Chain Bridge in Budapest to draw attention to women-centred medical care for women during pregnancy and labour. Their actions are nonviolent, photogenic and consequently attract media attention, while being relatively costless. Másállapot activists identify themselves as a women's organised movement who represent women's voices, but they also see men, fathers and brothers as people affected by the issue.¹⁵ They aim at change on the level of individuals, care institutions and society at the same time. It was partly due to their efforts that new obstetrician directives were introduced in 2019 in the name of family friendliness. In these efforts, they joined forces with the feminist Emma Association and the Semmelweis Movement, a more conservative group. Although Másállapotot is critical of the final directive accepted, it was a step forward after long years of uncertainty or even backlash in reproductive rights and obstetric practice.¹⁶





3.

Institutional Framework for Gender Equality

Which European and international institutions provide framework for gender equality? And which documents and treaties are crucial? In this toolkit, we will focus on the European and international level, but your national context is the most important. National legislation provides the framework, and state institutions are responsible for the actual implementation of gender equality. Nevertheless, since these differ from country to country, they are not the subject of this publication.

Even within the EU, there is no unified institutional framework for gender equality. Some member states have ministers responsible for gender equality, often besides other agenda, in other countries, this is an agenda for a state commissioner or a deputy minister. Even though all member states are required to have a state body/institution responsible for gender equality, some countries, e.g. Hungary, are weakening or even dismantling them, typically by merging them with other institutions. In other countries, e.g. Slovakia, they are being controlled by conservative politicians or organisations, often connected to the church and actually opposing gender equality and women's rights.¹⁷ In some member states, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe, these institutions were created in the pre-accession period as a result of the pressure of the EU. Once those countries joined the EU, those institutions have often become rather weak or they have only worked formally.¹⁸

„Equality bodies are national public institutions set up across Europe to promote equality for all and tackle discrimination. They are independent organisations protecting and assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on

*discrimination issues. They play a fundamental role in the non-discrimination architecture of the EU.*¹⁹ In most countries, the equality body is represented by an ombudsman/public rights defender.²⁰ Equality bodies are responsible for protection from all forms of discrimination, not only discrimination based on gender.

Non-discrimination and equal treatment are key principles that have become part of all the EU member states' legal systems. They have been defined in several European Commission directives²¹, which means they had to be adopted in the legal systems of all the member states.

3.1 European Union institutions

The **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** *"is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality."*²² EIGE is an expert body providing data and analysis for the EU policies and raising awareness on gender equality. EIGE does not create policies, it works within the framework of the EU policies.

The **European Commission** is a strong institution responsible for gender equality in the EU as one of its policies, part of justice and fundamental rights. Its main objectives are defined as follows: *"Promoting equal economic independence for women and men, closing the gender pay gap, advancing gender balance in decision making, ending gender-based violence and promoting gender equality beyond the EU."*²³ The Commission can also adopt directives binding for the member states. The commissioner responsible for the gender agenda is currently Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality.²⁴

The **European Parliament** has a committee responsible for gender equality: **the FEMM Committee** (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equal-

ity).²⁵ It is responsible for:

1. the definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the Union and related Union measures;
2. the promotion of women's rights in third countries;
3. equal opportunities policy, including the promotion of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
4. the removal of all forms of violence and discrimination based on sex;
5. the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors;
6. the follow-up and implementation of international agreements and conventions involving the rights of women;
7. the encouragement of awareness of women's rights.

The **Equinet** is a European network of equality bodies which "promotes equality in Europe by supporting equality bodies to achieve equality for all."²⁶ It unites the national equality bodies (described above). Gender equality is just one of its work areas, along with age, disability, gender identity, race and ethnic origin, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

3.2 European Union documents

The **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** guarantees gender equality as one of the EU's fundamental rights. Chapter 3, article 23 is on equality between women and men: *"Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex."*²⁷

There are several **European Commission directives** crucial for gender equality and non-discrimination. Those are:

- Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for

equal treatment in employment and occupation. It is a directive against

- discrimination at work on grounds of gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation²⁸
- Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions²⁹
- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation³⁰

3.3 Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is a leading organisation in Europe focusing on human rights, democracy and rule of law. It has 47 members. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the European Convention on Human Rights implementation, the treaty signed by the Council of Europe members. Gender equality is among Council of Europe's important policy goals. Priority areas of intervention are defined by the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 and working methods include intergovernmental work, cooperation projects and gender mainstreaming.³¹ The Council of Europe also drafted important conventions promoting women's rights, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention.³² The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle violence against women. The conventions also include strong monitoring mechanisms.

3.4 United Nations institutions

The **Commission on the Status of Women** "is the principal global intergov-

ernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established in 1946.³³ The CSW meets annually in March in New York and it is an important event where diverse advocates for women's rights meet. NGOs organise side events which are often attended by leading politicians.

The **UN Women** is a UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. It supports UN member states to set standards to achieve gender equality, it works with governments and NGOs to design laws, policies and services. It has four priority areas:

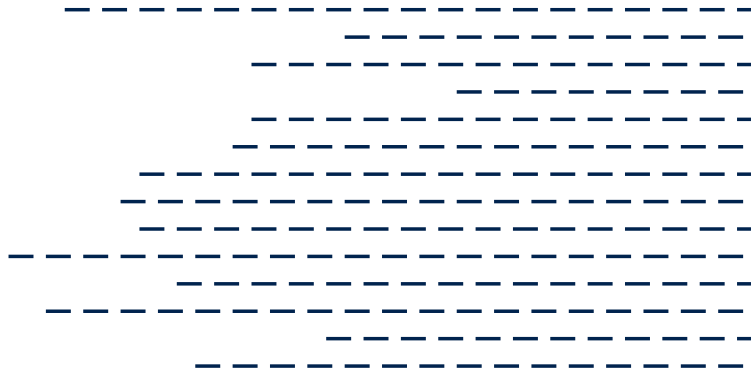
1. Women in decision making
2. Economic empowerment and autonomy
3. Combating violence against women
4. Women in peace processes and conflict resolution³⁴

3.5 United Nations documents

The CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It entered into force as an international treaty in 1981 after the twentieth country had ratified. The CEDAW is the most important international treaty on women's rights. It requires States parties to take *“all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men”* (article 3).³⁵

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform** for Action is the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights. It was a result of two weeks of

intense work of 30,000 activists who met on the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern.³⁶



4.

Legislative Process and How to Influence It

How does the legislative process work? And when and how can NGOs influence it? The following chapter provides answers to these questions as well as practical examples from various countries.

The legislative process is a process of making laws. The key political institution responsible for drafting and adopting laws in most countries is the parliament. That is why parliaments hold the legislative power. But there are also other important political actors involved, mainly the governments or particular ministries (the executive power) that can also draft laws – but they are mainly responsible for their implementation. The courts (the judiciary power) might also be involved in the law-making process. They oversee whether the laws are in compliance with the state’s constitution. The courts can decide to repeal a law in case it is unconstitutional. There might be other actors getting involved in the legislative process, including the NGOs or trade unions.

Law proposals can be drafted either by parliaments (parliamentary proposals) or by governments and their particular ministries (governmental or ministerial proposals). In some countries the citizens themselves can also propose laws, based on citizens’ initiative. Adoption of electoral quotas for women in Poland was a result of a successful citizens’ initiative.

After being drafted, every law has to pass through the parliament and get adopted. The parliaments usually not only vote for or against laws, they can also make amendments. After getting adopted by the parliament – which can have one or two chambers, depending on the country – the last required step

is usually a signature of the formal head of the state, which can be a president or a king/queen.

How to influence the legislative process

How and when can NGOs influence the legislative process? There are many ways and possibilities to do that.

BLACK PROTESTS ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS, POLAND

Ewa Stoecker

The Black Protests in Poland started on 22 October 2020, the day when the Tribunal's statement on abortion was revealed. Since then, women have been protesting in the streets almost every day, despite the pandemic. However, this is the second wave of the demonstrations, which started earlier in 2016, when the abortion law was about to be changed.

*How do these protests differ from the earlier ones? There is much greater involvement of young people, new language – frank and provocative, often the slogans on the banners are based on memes. It is the language of the young generation, started during the election campaign of President Andrzej Duda under the banner of the so-called campaign of eight stars (***** ***) which hid the slogan of "Fuck PiS".*

The protests started with disapproval of the proposal to restrict access to abortion in case of permanent and incurable defects of the foetus (this was one of the three existing premises allowing – at least theoretically – legal termination of pregnancy in Poland). They quickly turned into mass protests gathering many opponents of current power. Among the protesters there are people who boldly and straightforwardly say that legalization of abortion on demand is needed (not necessarily limited to the 12th week), while other protesters only look to restore this one premise and maintain the so-called abortion compromise. These protests channelled the discontent of very different social groups that had been swollen and had been going on for years. There were even some elements of support for

protests by football fans, which at times surprised the representatives of the feminist movement, but was easily explained in the form of a response to the brutality of the police, which football-related circles experience similarly to activists fighting for housing rights or anarchists.

Protests in small towns have definitely been a new phenomenon, re-organized and created mainly by very young people, who often have not yet had the opportunity to exercise their voting rights. It was secondary school students who took to the streets of small towns, terrified by the vision of torture that the present authorities had prepared for them, ready to fight for their rights even at the cost of violating the social taboo of abortion. The fact that demonstrations take place not only in large-city centres, but also in small towns, which were expected to remain the stronghold of the ruling conservative party forever, is unprecedented and has definitely disturbed the current government.

Another issue, perceived by the centres of power with fear and surprise, is anger openly directed towards the Catholic Church. The political commitment of church hierarchs does not surprise anyone in Poland anymore, and so far, it has aroused the indignation of a rather small group of people not related to the Church. This year, for the first time, churches and curias have become permanent stops on demonstration routes. Graffiti appeared on doors and walls in several places and – in Polish conditions – it was considered a revolutionary act. It should also be noted that the anger of the protesters was directed not at the believers, but at church hierarchs, who are among the architects of the current legal solution, known as the compromise. At this point, it should be made clear that it was a compromise between the Catholic Church and the authorities at the time, and the women and those who might need an abortion were not involved in these negotiations. The institution of the church has had a number of scandals in recent years, including covering up cases of children molestation and attacking sexual minorities, so – expressed in the words of one of the archbishops – the joy after the announcement of the tribunal's sentence was another reason to show dissatisfaction and disapproval of their actions. Although Poland is (theoretically) a secular state, the Church boasts plenty of privileges. However, protesters, have been showing disapproval, again unprecedented on this scale, leaving or even unsubscribing from the

Church through an act of apostasy.

Protests have been going on for weeks, demonstrations are held regularly several times a week and take various forms: rallies, walks, blockades, artistic events (e.g. performances or concerts played in the windows of houses). A very important issue is the increasing brutality of the police. There were some earlier cases, such as infamous interventions in Poznań during the Black Protest in 2016, but escalation of violence has been noticeable and it seems to be deliberate. While at the beginning of protests, the police used coercive measures incidentally, now people happen to be arrested without a specific reason, and not only in the very protest. Methods unprecedented after 1989 are used, for example chasing a group of people into a dead end or kettling methods such as closing the street on both sides and tightening the circle while calling for a break-up, which is de facto impossible. Regular police forces are also supported by masses of undercover agents who, at some point in civilian clothes, find themselves mingled with the crowd and attack peaceful demonstrators by beating them with telescopic batons and spraying tear gas. Despite their parliamentary immunity, some parliamentarians of the Left party were also subject to such attacks.

At the beginning of November 2020, the leader of the National Women's Strike, an organization that actively supports and organizes protests, presented their postulates and a Consultative Council composed of experts who are to work on them. However, it has not been known yet whether any meeting of the current authorities with this body would take place.

Ideally, NGOs should be involved from the very beginning. They should participate in drafting the proposal or at least be asked for a consultation. The European Commission often asks for public consultations when preparing new directives, which enables NGOs to send their comments and proposals. Some policies or strategies might be drafted in active cooperation with NGOs. The EU also pushes its member states to enable participation of civil society in policy making processes. Unfortunately, the participation procedures are often only formal and NGOs cannot influence the outcome at all.

In case that NGOs are not invited to consult a law proposal, they can address the law proposers themselves (minister, prime minister or the whole government). They can write a letter stating their demands. This can be a public letter sent to the media in order to create public pressure.

The next important moment is when the law is being debated in the parliament. There are many options for NGOs to get involved. You can ask a member of parliament to submit an amendment. You can approach the members of a committee which is addressing the proposal and present your suggestions on its meeting personally. Alternatively, you can send them your proposals by e-mail or meet the members individually. The most important is the chairperson of the committee. It is always important to know which committee is in charge of the proposal.

Sometimes it is possible to organise a public seminar in the parliament on the topic that is being addressed by the law proposal and invite speakers who will support your cause. You can address other members of parliament by sending them an e-mail, or ask your supporters to do so. You might address all MPs or choose the influential ones, such as the chairs of parliamentary groups. It is always good to meet them personally as well. Besides these “classic” lobbying activities, you can also create public pressure with support of media and public events. You can write press releases, organise public happenings or ask your supporters to approach the MPs via e-mail and/or social media. The timing is important: you should focus your activities on the moment shortly before the proposal is being debated on the plenary session. You can for example address the MPs a few days before the session and organise a public happening in front of the parliament on the day of the session, inviting the media.

Example

There was a law proposal on regulation of prostitution drafted by the City of Prague in the Czech Republic. The proposal already passed through the first reading in the parliament. Women NGOs found the law harmful and very re-

pressive towards people working in prostitution. They met with the chair of the parliamentary committee addressing the law, explained their concerns and agreed to organise a public seminar. The speakers on the seminar, people with expertise and also experience from the field, explained possible negative impacts of the law. As a result, the committee proposed to repeal the law proposal.

After the elections in 2010, a new, strictly all-male government was formed in the Czech Republic. On the day when the parliament was giving it the vote of confidence, the Fórum 50 % NGO organised a symbolic happening in the parliament. Wearing suits, ties and beards, the activists were claiming their seats in the government. Although security guards expelled them from the parliament building, the happening drew massive media attention. During the evening news the new prime minister was questioned about the absence of women in his cabinet and the activists were invited to confront him directly.



Happening of Fórum 50 %

"We want seats in the cabinet!"; Prague, 2010

5.

Enhancing Gender Equality on the International Level

The last chapter provides a quick overview on how international institutions and NGO networks can be used for enhancing gender equality. As lobbying at the European level has been described in several publications, we will provide you with useful links and recommend you some further reading. Furthermore, we will describe how NGOs can use the UN mechanisms for enhancing gender equality focusing on the CEDAW.

When it comes to lobbying for women's rights in Europe, one of the strongest actors is the European Women's Lobby (EWL), "*the largest European umbrella network of women's associations representing a total of more than 2000 organisations in 26 EU Member States, three Candidate Countries, one former EU Member State and one European Free Trade Association country, as well as 17 European-wide organisations.*"³⁷ EWL has published several toolkits on lobbying, providing its members with practical tools and tips. Those include model letters to politicians, press releases and also key data on topics they address. For example, there has been a toolkit to support higher representation of women during the European elections³⁸ or a toolkit to ensure that the Istanbul Convention will create a strong mechanism on preventing violence against women.³⁹

Transparency International has written a publication on how to lobby at the European level: *A Guide to Effective Lobbying in Europe.*⁴⁰

FROM LOCAL INITIATIVE TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: THE ATLAS OF HATE, POLAND

Ewa Stoecker

The Atlas of Hate is an interactive internet map, on which four activists – Jakub Gawron, Paulina Pajqk, Paweł Preneta and Kamil Maczuga – identify and mark in red colour territories in Poland which declared themselves as anti-LGBT zones by local government initiatives. They also monitor places where local administration faces lobby activities connected with the topic.

It all started on 26 March 2019 when the first local homophobic initiative was proclaimed in Nowa Sarzyna, a hometown of Kamil Maczuga. He – as well as others – felt like this was not right and wanted to do something about it. The original idea was to contact partner towns and inform them about local events. Through personal contacts the information reached Malin Björk a Swedish MEP who was moved by this situation and decided to get respond to it. Since news with pictures and graphics were more likely to be used by mainstream media, Paweł applied his technical skills and prepared the interactive map. The initiative gained fans and supporters rapidly. Not only Malin Björk and Terry Reintke, but other parliamentarians from Intergroup got involved and the project reached the European Parliament where Jakub Gawron and Kamil Maczuga supported by an experienced activist, Mirosława Makuchowska from Campaign Against Homophobia (the biggest Polish LGBTQIA+ NGO), presented the issue of local governments' homophobic initiatives. After their presentation, in December 2019, The European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning homophobic resolutions of local governments and called on the Polish public authorities to repeal the harmful documents immediately. In the text of the resolution, MEPs call on the European Commission to work with member states to improve investigations of hate crimes. They also call for increased support for victims of these crimes and for monitoring of hate speech incidents by public authorities and elected officials. They also request firm and concrete measures and the adoption of sanctions against such actions.

Meanwhile in Poland, the Atlas of Hate initiative was growing and expanding.

Many people were willing to conduct various interventions: bringing media attention, interpellating local authorities, organizing local events in order to educate and show their disagreement with such shameful actions. Some partner towns also decided to respond and send official questions regarding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Unfortunately, it is hard to get to know details about those discussions as they are conducted in a diplomatic way and rarely made public.

Unfortunately, the map was growing, as – regardless of abovementioned interventions – more and more local governments decided to declare themselves LGBT-free zones. Others learnt a lesson and consciously avoid using any direct LGBTQIA+ references, but instead they proclaim a document called Local Government Charter of Family Rights – which at closer look holds the same goals: blocking any equality related initiatives, particularly sex education (which is directly connected to LGBTQIA+ issues). Local activists and non-heteronormative citizens were not misled by these tricks and kept monitoring and registering any new initiatives.

Neither activities on local, regional or state level, nor the Commission's rebukes have brought end results. Up to now, none of the local governments has repealed the homophobic resolution.⁴¹ Four of them, however, set aside the administrative courts, finding that, contrary to the constitution, they exclude LGBTQIA+ people from the community of residents. Complaints were submitted by the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH organization).

At some point, nearly one third of the Polish territory turned red: <https://atlasnienawisci.pl/> [this link shows the updated version of the map]. The worst thing is that one of the towns decided to sue one of the activists Paulina Pajqk who was accused of violating the reputation of a local government unit. Interestingly, the notorious and powerful fundamentalist legal organization Ordo Iuris which is behind that action was trying to intimidate all activists, but at the end acted upon only one lawsuit: against an academician who is not a member of any organization that would stand behind her. Fortunately, the authors of the Atlas are assisted by a

coalition of lawyers from the Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH), the Polish Society for Anti-Discrimination Law and Emilia Barabasz, coordinated by Karolina Gierdal from KPH. The suing party demands a 20 000 PLN (about 5 000 EURO) compensation for each local government and apologies in front of the European Parliament. The case is ongoing.

The positive aspects are that this initiative has mobilized not only local activism, but also gave space for citizens to exercise their rights and now the Atlas of Hate is no longer a mere internet map. It has grown into an initiative that brings together people who monitor local governments and engage in not only local or regional, but also state and international initiatives.

The great news was that initiators of the Atlas of Hate have been nominated for the Sakharov Prize awarded by the European Parliament. That reward, named after Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1975, Andrej Sakharov is given for freedom of thought and has been awarded since 1988. Its laureates were, among others Nelson Mandela, Alyksandr Milinkevich, Malala Jousafzai, as well as such organizations as Reporters Without Borders and the Belarusian Association of Journalists. Polish nominees did not win, but being nominated was already yet another occasion for bringing violation of LGBTQIA+ rights in Poland into international spotlights.

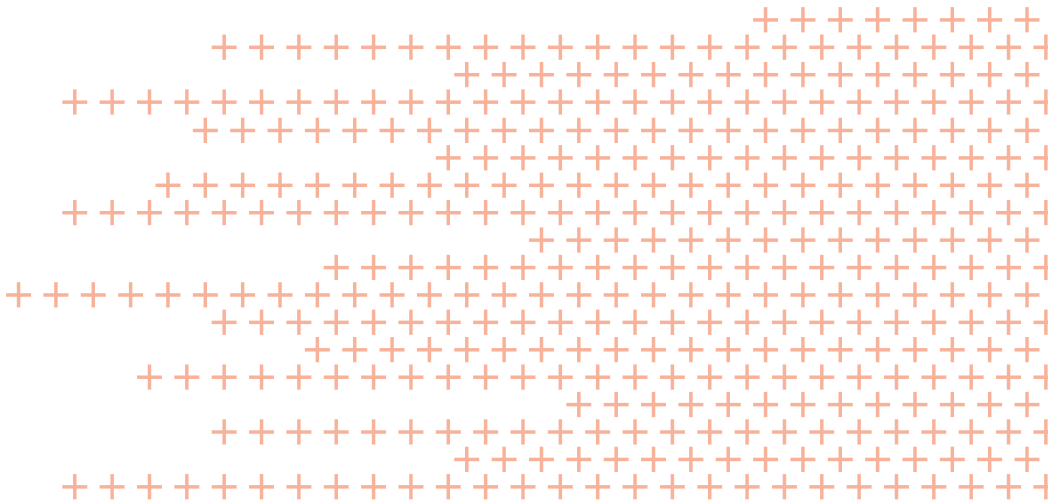
Using the CEDAW to enhance women's rights

The states which ratified the CEDAW are subject to the UN's control mechanism. Every five years they have to prepare a report on the implementation of the rights granted by the Convention and present them to the CEDAW Committee. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is a body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention. During its sessions, the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.⁴²

If a country also signed the Optional Protocol, the Committee can receive communications from individuals or groups of individuals submitting claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee and initiate

inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.⁴³

This means that NGOs can submit their own shadow reports and present them to the CEDAW Committee during a so-called oral hearing. This is an official public hearing. Besides that, NGOs might get an opportunity to meet the members of the Committee informally and discuss key problems and violations of women's rights in their respective countries. This is a very powerful lobbying opportunity. During the public hearing of the state representatives, the Committee relies on the insights provided by NGOs and uses them in the process. The concluding observations with official recommendations of the Committee usually include the topics identified by the NGOs.



Links and resources

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CEDAW Committee available on:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

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Council of Europe and Gender Equality:
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Equinet:
<https://equineteurope.org/>

European Institute for Gender Equality:
<https://eige.europa.eu/>

European Commission on gender equality:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality_en

European Women's Lobby:
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EWL Lobbying Kit on European elections:
<https://www.womenlobby.org/Support-Parity-Democracy-EWL-Lobbying-Kit-now-available-in-6-Languages>

EWL Lobbying Kit on Istanbul Convention, available on:
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FEMM Committee of the European Parliament:
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/about>

Gender Equality Index, published by EIGE, available on:
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>

Global Gender Gap Report 2020, available on:
https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global and regional averages of women in Parliaments:
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Másállapotot a szülészetben mozgalom: Jár is a magyar nőknek korszerű szülészeti ellátás, meg nem is. Az új irányelv nem szünteti meg a kiszámíthatatlanságot. [Hungarian women may or may not get up-to-date obstetric care. The new directive does not do away with unpredictability] in *Mérce* 2020. 19 February 2019
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CAMPAIGNING FOR THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION:

A Case Study of an Advocacy Campaign from Slovakia

MOŽNOSŤ VOĽBY / FREEDOM OF CHOICE, 2020

Authors: Adriana Mesochorítisová, Paula Jójárt

Background of the ratification process in Slovakia:

Although Slovakia was amongst first signatory countries of the Istanbul Convention in 2011 and the government committed to ratify it by 2013, it has not happened up to now. Instead, we have witnessed public discourse being hacked by conservative and religious groups refusing the IC altogether. While spreading false information and myths about the IC, they have intensively lobbied with governmental representatives against its ratification. In 2017, the government officially postponed the ratification indefinitely with the argument that having public and expert discussions first was necessary. The government never initiated such discussions and instead, political leaders fell for misconceptions, lies and false threats spread by conservative and religious representatives and organization with affinity to religious authorities.

The narrative against the IC kept shifting over the time. Initially, it was argued there was no need for the IC as the legislation and/or situation in Slovakia were satisfactory. Later, the opposition based its objections on attacks against the concept of gender and gender equality. It has been purposely reframed as “gender ideology”. Such misinterpretations of gender were used to present the IC as a constitutional conflict and as threat to family and children with an aim to polarize society against it. Public discourse radicalized and contributed to regress in human rights protection, particularly protection of women and LGBTQIA+ people. It led to stigmatization of women, LGBTQIA+ people and human rights defenders, human rights organizations and initiatives, including those primarily those working in the field of gender equality.

Strategy: Since 2013 when we witnessed first signs of the government’s reluctance to ratify the IC, the Možnosť Voľby NGO has developed and implemented an extensive mix of advocacy strategies in effort to support ratification of Istanbul Convention as well as to raise public awareness of the IC and its benefits. First of all, we approached gender equality mechanisms. The Governmental Council for Human Rights, Minorities and Gender Equality and its Committee for Gender Equality are key advisory bodies for the government regarding gender related issues. As the director of Možnosť Voľby, Adriana Mesochoritsová, is a member of both and a vice chair of the latter,

statements supporting ratification were drafted and advocated for adoption through these bodies. At the same time, Možnosť voľby conducted three separate campaigns combining a diverse mixture of tools and strategies: e.g. preparing and disseminating analytical documents and fostering expert discussions, conducting in-depth educational activities, involving public figures, cooperating with theatre and co-organizing discussion for or public outreach (street) events. At the core of our strategy was a campaign reaching the general public through social and traditional media using various audio-visual materials, lobbying with key political actors and through relevant gender equality bodies and deploying intensive and targeted cooperation with media.

Phase I:

Ring the bell against violence against women – Let's support Istanbul Convention Campaign (2014 – 2015)⁴⁴

At the beginning, we had a difficult starting position. A minor group of anti-IC actors had overtaken the public discourse and influenced key political actors blocking ratification of IC. The general public had a limited understanding of IC as such and was subject to numerous myths and false statements presented by anti-IC actors. Our priority became to raise public awareness of the IC, to give voice and visibility to human rights organizations and to use it to spread factual and clear information about the IC. The main challenge of our first campaign was how to communicate the core purpose of the IC pointing to specific content that public can relate to, remember, and act upon.

The campaign had two goals: contributing to ratification of the IC and mobilizing the public in its support. We intended to raise awareness of the general and academic public about the IC. Partial goals included connecting IC with issues of VAW, filling its image with specific content, involve public figures particularly influential men, create positive image of the IC's ratification in the public discourse.

The first part of the campaign was mostly informational. We focused on raising awareness and informing public through media communication and by a series of various public events. We invited journalists to “media breakfasts”, provided them with press kits and had in-depth presentation and conversation with them on the IC. Throughout the campaign, we continued giving interviews, consulting journalists on demand and occasionally writing our own articles.

In the public area, we initiated collaboration with usual as well as unusual partners. For example, we joined forces with cycling critical mass event devoting one of its editions to the IC cause (September 2014). On the occasion of 16 days of activism campaign in November and December 2014, we joined forces with women organizations and other partners, including Bratislava municipality authorities and foreign embassies representatives, and we conducted two public events *Whistling against violence against women*. There we presented the IC through its connection to elimination of violence against women. For that we have developed our first campaign video – an animated video *“We support Istanbul Convention”*⁴⁵ (available with English subtitles at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZeCywAYeF0>) and promoted it during the whistling events. This educational video explains benefits of the ratification for women exposed to violence from their partners. It points out the need for effective implementation of measures outlined in the IC while showing that the Slovak reality is far from sufficient in that regard. At events, we invited people to take photos holding signs with messages in support of the IC. Photos were taken by a professional photographer and shared on social media. Another type of public outreach activity was a theatre show *“I Am the Best”*⁴⁶ addressing the issue of violence against women. After each show, there was a discussion for actors, guests and the audience, including the IC as a topic.

We also prepared the *“Analysis of Istanbul convention in light of public policies”*⁴⁷, a study mapping the situation related to violence against women in Slovakia, and gaps in public policies and their implementation showing how the IC

ratification would help to address them. This was in response to some of early objections against the IC claiming it was not needed at all. In promotion of arguments raised in the study, we liaised with the media. We also consulted political actors, wrote statements and open letters etc.

The second part of the campaign – focused on mobilization of the public – was prepared in partnership with the “Že vraj/So they say” creative team. The aim was to raise awareness on the IC, engage public male figures and mobilize public in support of the IC promoting a petition calling upon politicians to ratify the Istanbul Convention. For this phase, we first used a moment of surprise by staging a “leak of a sensational video”. The video was actually a social experiment played by famous actors Robo Jakab and Zuzana Konečná. It looks like some violence is happening behind one door in a block of flats and random passers-by – authentic people (not actors) - have a chance to intervene. When one young man does, the actors open the door and thank him for showing he cares. Then they explain violence he heard was staged but that in many families, the violence against women is real. Then the actor Jakab calls to end violence against women and to support the IC. The video titled “Robo Jakab is testing our society” (available with English subtitles at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJbG-07rfdY>) was “leaked” before a press conference marking the official launch of our campaign. It was used as a teaser for what was about to come, a “leaked as sensation” article by a tabloid daily cas.sk. This collaboration was pre-agreed and thoroughly prepared in advance. The article titled “Video everyone should see: Actor Róbert Jakab – a violent bully and brute?!” was sensitively written, explaining the social experiment, situation regarding violence against women and the need for the IC ratification. It invited readers to the campaign’s webpage and to support the petition for the IC ratification. The article stayed among the most read articles for 24 hours, had over 6300 shares on Facebook and most visitors landing on the online petition website were directed from this article.

Other videos prepared with the ŽE VRAJ creative team were introduced subsequently. The first official campaign video was called “*Janko Kuric Rings the Bell against Violence*” (available with English subtitles at: <https://www.you->

tube.com/watch?v=O_iEDyPW2jA). It was officially presented at the press conference launching the campaign several days after the “leak” of the social experiment with Robo Jakab. Linking it with the story of the previous video, in this video, Ján Kuric (a popular signer) hesitates when coming home whether to act upon sounds of violence heard behind his neighbour’s door. At the end we see him through a peephole (from the neighbour’s perspective) approaching and ringing the neighbour’s bell. The video ends with an appeal to end violence against women and support the IC, again with the link to the campaign webpage and the petition.

The symbol of ringing the doorbell viewed from a peephole was the core visual applied to other materials used in the campaign, namely photographs of famous (mostly) male figures from various spheres of public life: musicians, sportsmen, actors etc. ringing doorbells and calling for ending violence and supporting the IC. Promotion of photos included links to petition.

The third video *“Famous men stand against violence against women”* (available on in Slovak: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LcroEob-oQ>) also introduced at the launching conference is composed of a mosaic of speeches made by several male public figures – ice-hockey player Richard Lintner, actors Ivo Gogál and Richard Stanke, singer Jakub Petranik, journalist and musician Michael Szatmáry and personal trainer and “Man of the Year” contest winner Martin Šmahel. After presenting the situation related to violence against women in Slovakia, they explain that everyone, including men, can and shall become part of the solution calling upon the IC ratification. The goal of the video was to communicate that violence affects us all and to strengthen the credibility of petition for the IC ratification while presenting male role models who refuse to tolerate violence against women.

Several days after the press conference, we used another press release to promote the final campaign video *“Majk Spirit rings the bell against violence against women”* (available in Slovak at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHZpl9vQbms>). It featured the popular rap singer Majk Spirit singing a short part of his new song that explains violence as unacceptable and

calls upon men to dismiss violence against women and support the IC. This video was the most popular one, especially after being published on singer's Facebook page and shared with his fans.

Results: Besides the organization's website, all materials were promoted on social media, primarily on Facebook. Videos were posted on YouTube and shared from it. In addition, we also used Twitter and Pinterest as complementary tools, but the main focus was on campaigning through the main Facebook page *Istanbulsky dohovor* (IC in Slovak) and partially also through the organization's Facebook page *Možnosť voľby* (Freedom of Choice). We had organic as well as sponsored content that paid off significantly. In the period from 15 April to 31 May 2015, the paid and organic content reached 1,6 million users. Overall reach in terms of views exceeded 2,1 million.⁴⁸

In addition, we reached out to the public radio and TV broadcaster (RTVS) with offer of running some of campaign spots, although it had not been originally planned as a part of the campaign. The response was positive and throughout June 2015, they ran two videos 99 times (a shorter version of *Majk Spirit* and *Men against Violence on Women* video) on Channel 1 and 2 of the public television. Their reached almost 1,7 million viewers, representing 36% of population over 12 years. Also, in addition to that, the Slovak radio ran a similar audio spot.

Last but not least, alongside online, TV and radio presence, in the second part of the campaign, we held petition signing events in several cities across Slovakia, at festivals and in coffee shops, culture centres etc. in cooperation with other NGOs.⁴⁹ In streets, we used photos and videos from campaign to draw people's attention and interest in hearing out activists and signing the petition, resulting in over 2,000 written signatures. In total, the petition was supported by over 4,000 people, including famous figures and over 40 organizations. The petition was communicated to political representatives, including the Chair of the Parliament, the Prime Minister and President.

Summary: Our first campaign brought men to the forefront as part of the

solution to addressing violence against women. We raised public awareness on the IC's content and purpose connecting it to elimination and prevention of violence and contributed to spreading factual and correct information about the IC. It became a much larger campaign than we had originally planned and it was only possible thanks to devotion and free-of-charge contribution of numerous people. These included many public figures but also dozens of professionals from the creative industry who showed interest and commitment to help us end violence against women.

Feedback for our campaign:

“Estonia will take inspiration from your campaign because it affects all.”

Margus Tshakna, Minister of Social Protection of Estonia

“This campaign brings hope that something can change.”

Respondent in the campaign evaluation

“I appreciate your effort and awareness raising campaign on this convention correcting false interpretations and hoaxes. For its successful ratification by the Parliament, it is necessary to explain to the academic and general public the contents and benefits of the Convention to women, their children and other people at risk of domestic and gender-based violence.”

Jan Richter, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
(in office from April 2012 to March 2020).

Core campaign team from Možnosť Volby:

Adriana Mesochoritsová

Zuzana Maďarová

Juraj Potocký

Kristína Vaškorová

Creative team:

Ivana Šateková, Jakub Rekan, Juraj Bartoš

Phase II:

Istanbul Convention for People Campaign (2016)⁵⁰

Since the first campaign, conservative actors kept strengthening their influence, demanding not only to end ratification process but also to cancel Slovakia's signature. They kept spreading false information and presented the IC as a threat. In response, we prepared the *"Istanbul Convention for people"* campaign (2016) – a social media campaign to increase awareness about the IC and its content. We developed 5 posters and a set of 10 postcards as infographics.⁵¹ They explained into details how the IC can protect women's rights and we focused on eliminating myths that kept re-emerging. We used the *Istanbulský dohovor* and *Možnosť voľby* Facebook pages, Twitter, YouTube and our website using key hashtag #istanbulskydohovorpreludi (*"Istanbul Convention for people"* in Slovak. Materials are available in Slovak here: <http://moznostvolby.sk/kampan-istanbulsky-dohovor-pre-ludi/>).

Posters explained 1) the ratification process, 2) the IC benefits 3) four pillars of the IC and measures it proposes 4) the need for the change (roots of violence) and 5) ending violence – on how each of us can contribute to its elimination. Postcards further elaborated on selected topics. Besides online promotion, we distributed them in cafes, libraries, galleries, bookshops and most importantly also to teachers and schools.

Results: The social media outreach (*Istanbulský dohovor* FB) was a combination of organic and paid content again. We reached over 670,000 views and over 540,000 users. As before, most of it was achieved thanks to sponsored content.

In addition, we utilized infographics in our gender sensitivity training programme with a special focus on the IC which we created in 2014-2015 during the first campaign. This training was offered to NGO representatives, journalists, public officers, teachers and others. Between 2014-2017, we delivered it for three different training groups. The program composed of 4 modules

/ 80 hours in-depth experience-based learning that was tailored to specific needs and expectations of each training group. The aim was to build gender competence, strengthen knowledge on gender-based violence in links to the IC purpose, structure and tools it offers. It also covered relevant human rights framework that Slovakia is already state party to - namely the CEDAW and its tools for elimination and prevention of violence against women. Last but not least, it included strengthening of basic advocacy skills in support of the IC and CEDAW because we believe informed and gender sensitive people are those who can make difference in their communities in the long run.

Phase III:

Istanbul Convention... Because Women's Lives Matter Campaign (2017)⁵²

For our third campaign in 2017, we developed a comprehensive short document "*Questions & Answers about Istanbul Convention*" in which we addressed continued misinterpretations about the IC. We purposely avoided framing it as "myths and facts." It turned out that such narrative tends to reinforce myths in people's perspective instead of correcting and emphasizing factual information. It is available in Slovak at: <http://moznostvolby.sk/otazky-a-odpovede-o-istanbulskom-dohovore/>

We shared it with the public and MPs through a round table event held in the parliament. We also continued with the strategy of fostering media relations. We provided for publishing complex and in-depth articles in mainstream media to balance the growing anti-IC narrative. In order to disrupt false framing that all religious people were against the IC, we developed partnership with progressive religious representatives and intellectuals to offer religious people an alternative religious narrative on the IC – a one that is understanding it and supportive. As part of it, we prepared an article and interview with theologian Ondrej Prostreďník published in the PRAVDA daily with the title "*Religious people want Istanbul Convention too.*"⁵³

In addition, we developed the analytical study *“Istanbul Convention: How to Move forward – Best Practice Examples”*⁵⁴ offering good practice from implementation of the IC in the EU countries. The aim was to showcase how the IC can effectively improve lives and protection of women from gender-based violence. We disseminated it in an academic seminar, shared with political representatives and other stakeholders and promoted it in cooperation with media as well.

Instead of closure: developments in 2018–2020.

Despite all the efforts and energy dedicated to raising awareness and mobilizing public support for the IC, the anti-gender backlash intensified. In 2018, we faced the *Joint Declaration of various religious groups* against IC that requested not only to stop the ratification process but also to withdraw the signature. Yet voices in support of the IC were already woken up and in response, there was a statement of other religious representatives refusing this statement. We also issued a joint statement with the *Aspekt* feminist organization. The fight against the IC was adopted by governmental as well as opposition parties and became a topic of presidential elections. In 2019, two main governmental parties, SNS and Smer, supported by opposition parties (the populist party “Sme Rodina” and the ultra-nationalist far-right party of Marian Kotleba) pushed declaration against the IC through the parliament during the second round of the presidential election. Rather than a regular ratification procedure, it was a political declaration about Slovakia not intending to ratify the IC.⁵⁵ At the core of its justification was an assumed conflict with the Constitution regarding the marriage definition – due to the IC gender definition. This action was primarily motivated by supporting the governmental candidate who seemed to be losing. This strategy was not successful and instead Zuzana Čaputová was elected as the first female president.

In response to the false narrative on the IC’s problematic nature from the legal perspective which was fostered in the public discourse repeatedly by numerous political representatives, we prepared a thorough analysis *“Strengthening human rights framework of public discourse on Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Is-*

*tanbul Convention) in the context of the Venice Commission's decision.*⁵⁶ It was developed with the objective to refute constitutional concerns and provide the public, particularly media and academia, but also the general public with relevant sources of information to recognise and refuse false interpretations of the IC. We shared the study MPs and other institutions. We also promoted the study in cooperation with media and Adriana Mesochoritsová (author) gave interview for portal zenyvmeste.sk⁵⁷

The IC became a topic of the 2020 parliamentary election too. The timing was intentional as well – the parliament refused to ratify the IC just two days before the election with a significant majority of votes. Subsequently, president Zuzana Čaputová sent a letter to Council of Europe that Slovakia will not become state party to the Convention (that it will not ratify it).

This is also a possible scenario in advocacy and we need to be ready for it as feminist activists. It does not undervalue our work though. Thanks to our tireless campaigning and despite limited resources, we achieved to raise awareness on the IC and mobilize people in declaring support for it. We believe that one day, this effort will – with a new government – materialize in the change of decision on ratification, and this time it will not be contaminated with prejudice and fundamentalist views.

Footnotes

1. Gender Equality in Europe: Where Do We Stand

¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>

² <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/country>

³ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/compare-countries>

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020>

⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

⁶ Idem, p. 9

⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global and regional averages of women in Parliaments: <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=10&year=2020>

⁸ Kováts, E. – Põim M. (eds.): *Gender as symbolic glue: The position and role of conservative and far-right parties in the anti-gender mobilizations in Europe*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Budapest 2015.

<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/11382.pdf>

⁹ Valkovičová, V. – Maďarová, Z. : *From weirdoes to political actors - the journey of Slovak gender ideology rhetoric*.

<https://www.gwi-boell.de/en/2019/05/03/weirdoes-political-actors-journey-slovak-gender-ideology-rhetoric>

2. Systems change and Advocacy: Theory and Tools

¹⁰ Ashoka, *Embracing complexity: Towards a shared understanding of funding systems change*, 2020.

FOOTNOTES

<https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/story/embracing-complexity-towards-shared-understanding-funding-systems-change>

¹¹ *The 5Rs Framework*. USAID, 2016.

https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/5rs_techncial_note_ver_2_1_final.pdf

¹² Machálek, P., Štefanec, M., Drahokoupil, Š.: *Rukověť zdánlivě bezmocných: Jak naplánovat advokační kampaň*. Open Society Fund, Prague 2020, p. 35-38.

https://osf.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Rukov%C4%9B%C5%A5-zd%C3%A1nliv%C4%9B-bezmocn%C3%BDch-2020_Nadace-OSF.pdf

¹³ Idem

¹⁴ Balogh, Lídia-Gellér, Judit: Roma nők hátrányos megkülönböztetése a szülészeti ellátás során: két magyarországi jogeset, háttérrel [Discriminative treatment of Roma women during maternity care: two Hungarian legal cases with background]. *Fundamentum* 2019/1-2

<http://fundamentum.hu/sites/default/files/fundamentum-19-1-2-17.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://masallapotot.hu/>

¹⁶ Másállapotot a szülésetben mozgalom: Jár is a magyar nőknek korszerű szülészeti ellátás, meg nem is. Az új irányelv nem szünteti meg a kiszámíthatatlanságot [Hungarian women may or may not get up-to-date obstetric care. The new directive does not do away with unpredictability]. In *Mérce* 2020. 19 February 2019.

<https://merce.hu/2020/02/19/jar-is-a-magyar-noknek-korszeru-szuleszeti-ellatas-meg-nem-is/>

3. Institutional Framework for Gender Equality

¹⁷ Adriana Mesochoritsová a Paula Jójárt: Má to zmysel! Občianska angažovanosť v oblasti ľudských práv žien a rodovej rovnosti, p. 4.

¹⁸ Císař, O. – Vráblíková, K.: *Popelka na cestě do Bruselu: České skupiny prosazující rovnost mezi ženami a muži a Evropská unie*. Sociální studia, Brno: FFS MU, 2007, no. 3

¹⁹ Definition of national equality body used by the Equinet:

<https://equineteurope.org/>

²⁰ List of the national equality bodies:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/>

who-we-work-gender-equality/national-gender-equality-bodies_en

²¹ The list of the EC Directives on equality and non-discrimination:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en

²² European Institute for Gender Equality:
<https://eige.europa.eu/>

²³ European Commission on gender equality:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality_en

²⁴ European Commission, Helena Dalli:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/dalli_en#timeline

²⁵ FEMM Committee:
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/about>

²⁶ <https://equineteurope.org/>

²⁷ Charter of Fundamental rights of the EU:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

²⁸ The full text of Directive 2000/78/EC:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0078>

²⁹ The full text of the Directive 76/207/EEC:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31976L0207>

³⁰ The full text of the Directive 2006/54/EC:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006L0054>

³¹ Council of Europe and gender equality:
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality>

³² The text of the Istanbul Convention:
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

³³ UN Commission on the Status of Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

³⁴ UN Women:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en>

FOOTNOTES

³⁵ CEDAW full text:

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

³⁶ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>, full text available on: https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~/_media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf

4. Legislative Process and How to Influence It

5. Enhancing Gender Equality on the International Level

³⁷ European Women´s Lobby:

<https://womenlobby.org/Mission-vision-and-values-588?lang=en>

³⁸ EWL Lobbying Kit on European elections:

<https://www.womenlobby.org/Support-Parity-Democracy-EWL-Lobbying-Kit-now-available-in-6-Languages>

³⁹ EWL Lobbying Kit on Istanbul Convention:

https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/EWL_Lobbying_kit_CoE_Convention_on_VAW_May_2010_for_print.pdf

⁴⁰ A Guide to Effective Lobbying in Europe by Transparency International:

<https://www.transparency.cz/wp-content/uploads/Lobbying-in-Europe.pdf>

⁴¹ Stan na dzień 21.09.2020, za informacjami z OKO.press:

<https://oko.press/atlas-nienawisci-nominowany-do-nagrody-im-sacharowa-zasluga-rzadu-kosciola-i-prezydenta/>

⁴² The CEDAW Committee:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

⁴³ Idem

Campaigning for the Istanbul Convention: A Case Study of an Advocacy Campaign from Slovakia

Phase I: Ring the bell against violence against women – Let’s support Istanbul Convention Campaign (2014 - 2015)

⁴⁴The campaign was supported as part of the project “Podpora ratifikácie a implementácie

Dohovoru Rady Európy o predchádzaní násiliu na ženách a domácemu násiliu a o boji proti nemu”, financed by the EEA mechanism 2009-2014 funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and managed by Open Society Foundation in Slovakia.

⁴⁵ Screenplay by Adriana Mesochoritiso­va and Zuzana Maďarová, graphic author Ivana Šáteková, production creative team Ževraj (Ivana Šáteková, Juraj Bartoš and Jakub Reken).

⁴⁶ The show was developed by the Prešov Theatre that deals with social topics. The play was written and directed by Judita Hansman and Ivan Blahut starring Judita Hansman and Elena Kolek-Spaskov (as mother and daughter).

⁴⁷ Mesochoritiso­vá A. (ed.) et l.: *Analýza Istanbulskeho dohovoru vo svetle verejných politik SR*, Možnosť voľby, Bratislava, 2014, 2016; Authors: Zuzana Bargerová, Barbora Holubová, Nataša Just Hrnčárová, Dušana Karlovská, Sylvia Králová, Zuzana Magurová, Adriana Mesochoritiso­vá. First edition was released in 2014, second revised edition in 2016. <http://moznostvolby.sk/analiza-istanbulskeho-dohovoru-vo-svetle-verejnych-politik-sr/>

⁴⁸ The data represent the cumulative daily reach-out. The reach was mostly achieved by sponsored contents showing that the paid content was worth it.

⁴⁹ Spišská Nová ves (organized by NGO HANA, Divadlo na opätkoch, Možnosť voľby), Poprad (PROGRESFEM, Možnosť voľby), Stupava (Možnosť voľby), Košice (in cooperation with Fenestra), Trebišov (NGO Kotva) and in Trenčín at the Pohoda music festival (Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti, Amnesty International Slovensko). In addition, several coffee shops, culture centres etc. collected signatures in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Liptovský Mikuláš.

Phase II: Istanbul Convention for People Campaign (2016)

⁵⁰ It was implemented under project with same title “Istanbul Convention for people” (Istanbulský dohovor pre ľudí) from grant scheme of Ministry of foreign affairs of Slovakia.

⁵¹ Concept and texts: Adriana Mesochoritiso­vá, Lenka Krištofová. Graphic design: Lucia Mendelová (posters), Mária Karasová (postcards)

Phase III: Istanbul Convention... Because Women’s Lives Matter Campaign (2017)

⁵² The campaign was part of the project funded by Slovak Ministry of labour, social

FOOTNOTES

affairs and family as part of Gender equality Granting scheme and co-financed by support provided by Slovak-Czech Women's fund in cooperation with Philip Morris Slovakia s.r.o

⁵³ The article written and interview conducted by Lenka Krištofová is available on: <https://zurnal.pravda.sk/spolocnost/clanok/454292-aj-veriaci-chcu-istanbulsky-dohovor/> in Pravda, and extended version here <http://moznostvolby.sk/aj-veriaci-a-veriace-chcu-istanbulsky-dohovor/>. Both in Slovak

⁵⁴ Mesochoritisová, A. (ed.), Guráň P, Magurová, Z.: Istanbulský dohovor: Ako ďalej alebo príklady dobrých praxí, Možnosť voľby, 2017. <http://moznostvolby.sk/istanbulsky-dohovor-ako-dalej-alebo-priklady-dobrych-praxi/>

⁵⁵ Parliamentary press no. 1409, approved on 29 March 2019. <https://www.nrsr.sk>

⁵⁶ Mesochoritisová, A.: Posilnenie ľudskoprávneho rámca verejného diskurzu v SR o Dohovore Rady Európy o predchádzaní násiliu na ženách (Istanbulskom dohovore) vo svetle rozhodnutia Benátskej komisie, Možnosť voľby, 2019. <http://moznostvolby.sk/posilnenie-ludskopravneho-ramca-verejneho-diskurzu-v-sr-o-dohovore-rady-euro-py-o-predchadzani-nasilium-na-zenach-vo-svetle-rozhodnutia-benatskej-komisie/>

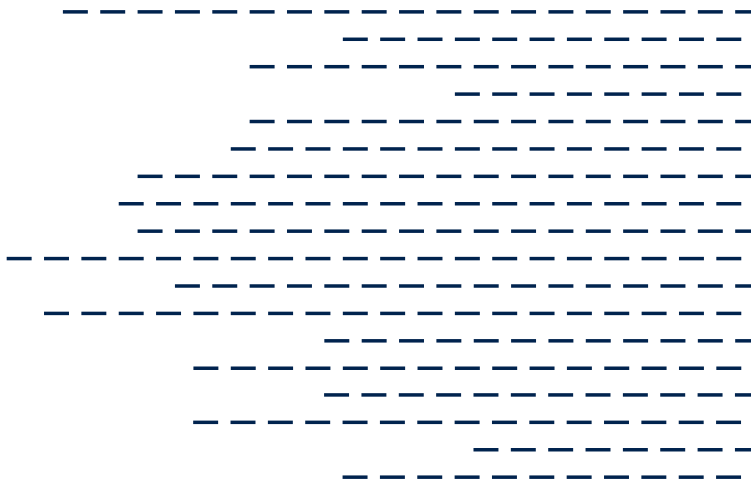
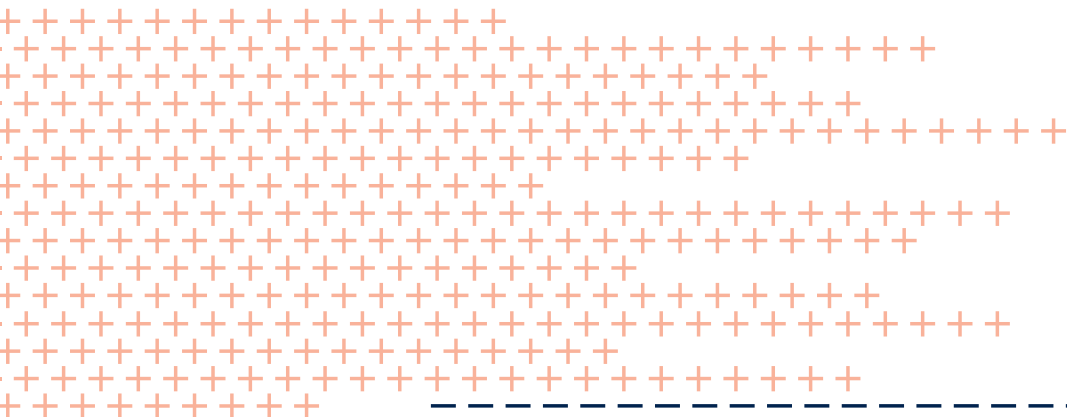
⁵⁷ In the Interview Adriana Mesochoritisová explains the study to the broader public and contextualize it in situation of Slovakia. <https://www.zenyvmeste.sk/istanbulsky-dohovor-rozhovor-mesochoritisova-rod-ideologia-gender>

Never Give Up:

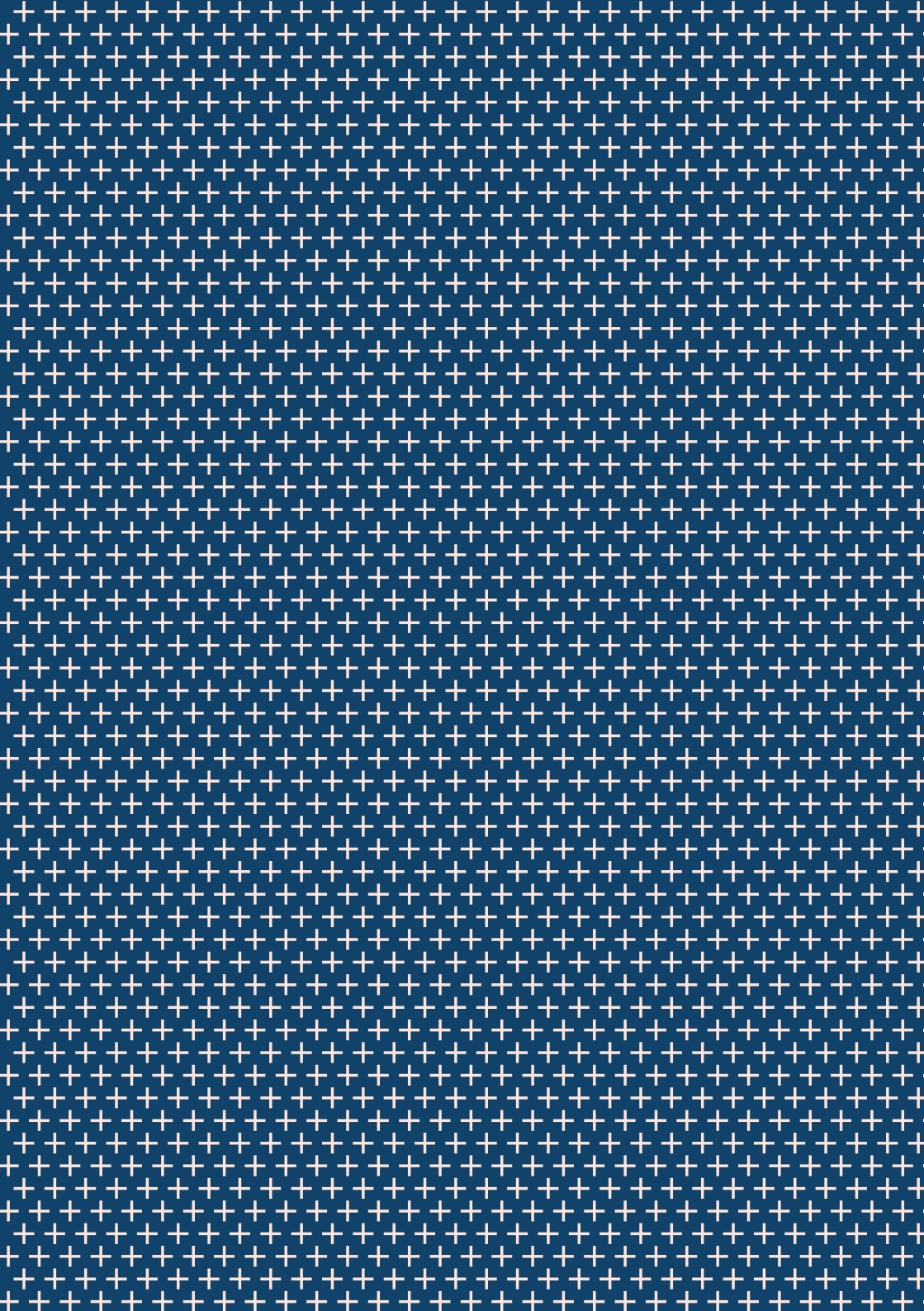
A Toolkit on Lobbying for Women's Rights

Jana Smiggels Kavková

Contributions by Ewa Stoecker, Borbála Juhász,
Adriana Mesochoritsová, Paula Jójárt



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